14. The Belief in Modern Scientific Rationalism in Ian McEwan's "Saturday" [1]

Ercüment YAŞAR [2]

APA: Yaşar, E. (2026). The Belief in Modern Scientific Rationalism in Ian McEwan's "Saturday". *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (52), 235-255. **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20722308

Abstract

British novelist Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* (2005) presents a perspective consistent with the historical outlook presented in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?* (1989) and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* (1993), two ground-shaking articles in the academic circles centrally asserting the victory of the Western liberal democracy over the other alternative ideologies such as fascism, nationalism, socialism and religion claiming universally valid objectivity. In this context, the Eastward spread of the Western values after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism which resulted in the absence of any political system having the potential to be an alternative to the liberal democracy is a subject matter forming the background of the analysis presented in this article; however, this article also presents a theoretical framework centred around the most essential issues discussed in the debates on modernity and post-modernity in the light of a contemporary novel including literary reflections of social and political developments. In this respect, the primary objective of this article is to examine the conflict between the belief in modern scientific rationalism, which claims that truth possesses universal objectivity and whose roots extend back to the scientific revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries, and post-modern subjectivism, which emerged in the second half of the 20th century, whose roots go back to scientific findings in the field of physics in the first half of the 20th century from the perspective employed by McEwan in his *Saturday* (2005).

Keywords: McEwan, saturday, modernity, post-modernity, westernisation, scientific rationalism

[1] **Beyan (Tez/ Bildiri):** Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur. Bu makale "Ian McEwan'ın Cumartesi ve Güneş Romanlarında Çağdaş İngiliz Orta Sınıfının Temsili" isimli yükskelisans tezi çalışması kapsamında metinde köklü değişiklikler yapılarak üretilmiştir.
Çıkar Çatışması: Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman: Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.

Kaynak: Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.
Benzerlik Raporu: Alındı – Turnitin /iThenticate Oran: %19
Etik Şikayeti: editor@rumelide.com
Makale Türü: Araştırma makalesi, **Makale Kayıt Tarihi:** 04.04.2026-**Kabul Tarihi:** 16.06.2026-**Yayın Tarihi:** 17.06.2026; **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20722308
Hakem Değerlendirmesi: İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme

[2] Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Kırklareli Üniversitesi, Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı / Assist. Prof., Kırklareli University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Western Languages and Literatures, Division of English Language and Literature (Kırklareli, Türkiye), **eposta:** ercumentyasar@klu.edu.tr, **ORCID ID:** https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3663-3339 **ROR ID:** https://ror.org/00jb0e673 **ISNI:** 0000 0004 0399 5728 **Crossref Funder ID**: 501100020600

Ian McEwan'ın "Cumartesi" Romanında Modern Bilimsel Akılcılık İnancı [3]

Öz

İngiliz romancı Ian McEwan'ın *Cumartesi* (2005) adlı romanı, Francis Fukuyama'nın *Tarihin Sonu mu*? (1989) ve Samuel P. Huntington'ın *Medeniyetler Çatışması mı*? (1993) adlı eserlerinde ortaya konulan tarihsel bakış açısıyla tutarlı bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Bu iki eser, akademik çevrelerde büyük yankı uyandırmış ve evrensel geçerliliğe sahip bir nesnellik iddiasında bulunan faşizm, milliyetçilik, sosyalizm ve din gibi diğer alternatif ideolojiler karşısında Batı tarzı liberal demokrasinin zaferini merkezi bir iddia olarak savunmaktadır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü ve komünizmin yıkılmasının ardından Batı değerlerinin Doğu'ya yayılması ve bunun sonucunda liberal demokrasiye alternatif olabilecek herhangi bir siyasi sistemin ortadan kalkması, bu makalede sunulan analizin arka planını oluşturan bir konudur; ancak bu makale, aynı zamanda, toplumsal ve siyasi gelişmelerin edebi yansımalarını içeren çağdaş bir roman ışığında, modernite ve post-modernite tartışmalarında ele alınan en temel meseleleri merkeze alan bir teorik çerçeve de sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu makalenin en temel amacı, çağdaş bir İngiliz romanı özelinde, gerçeğin evrensel bir nesnellik taşıdığını iddia eden ve kökleri 16. ve 17. yüzyıllardaki bilimsel devrimlere dayanan modern bilimsel rasyonalizm/akılcılık inancı ile 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında ortaya çıkan ve kökleri 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında fizik alanındaki bilimsel bulgulara dayanan post-modern öznelcilik arasındaki çatışmayı Ian McEwan'ın *Cumartesi* romanında ortaya koyduğu perspektiften incelemektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: McEwan, cumartesi, modernite, post-modernite, batılılaşma, bilimsel akılcılık

---

3 **Statement (Thesis / Paper):** This article has been produced after major changes within the scope of the master's thesis titled "The Representation of the Contemporary British Middle Class in Ian McEwan's Novels Saturday and Solar".
It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed during the preparation process of this study and all the studies utilised are indicated in the bibliography.
Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest is declared.
Funding: No external funding was used to support this research.

Source: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were followed during the preparation of this study and all the studies used are stated in the bibliography.
Similarity Report: Received – Ithenticatge, Rate: 19 %
Ethics Complaint: editor@rumelide.com
Article Type: Research article, **Article Registration Date:** 04.04.2026-**Acceptance Date:** 16.06.2026-**Publication Date:** 17.06.2026; **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20722308
Peer Review: Two External Referees / Double Blind

Introduction

Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005) is a five-chapter realist novel narrated by a third person omniscient narrator who feels a certain degree of emotional attachment to the protagonist of the novel, Henry Perowne, a 48-year old eminent scientifically-minded neurosurgeon with a lawyer-wife, a recently-published poet-daughter, a young musician boy, a great British poet father-in-law, and a sick mother. Like James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1920) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), McEwan's *Saturday* is a single-day English novel narrating an exceptionally dramatic day experienced by members of an upper middle-class family on Saturday, 15 February 2003 in Fitzrovia, London. In this novel, McEwan structurally practices most of the elements in the realist novel convention including the Aristotelian unity of action, time, and place. In this context, although McEwan is the writer of *Atonement* (2001), a post-modern metafictional novel structurally deconstructing the realist novel form of the 18th and 19th centuries, in his *Saturday*, he writes a complete realist novel which strictly practices the five elements of dramatic structure developed by the German playwright and novelist Gustav Freytag *Die Technik des Dramas* (1863) having origins in Aristotle's *Poetics* in which the plot of a tragedy is supposed to be a whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end. In this conventional tripartite-structure based on exposition, complication and resolution parts in the Aristotelian sense, the existing social order at the beginning of the story is challenged by something and the sudden change in the plot creates some sense of disorder in the reader but the sense of harmony at the beginning of the story is re-established in the resolution part towards the end of the novel in which the main conflicts of the story are resolved and the story comes to a conclusive ending. In this respect, "the disorder that threatens the characters' lives and social concord is overcome and most comedies end either with marriage or a dance, the traditional signs of harmony and order in society" (Peck & Coyle, 1993, p. 81) but in tragedy, "what we witness is the falling apart of all signs of order as we are confronted by the most shocking form of disorder, death itself" (Peck & Coyle, 1993, p. 81). McEwan does not strictly follow the tripartite-structure in a typical tragedy. At the end of the novel, death is not instrumental to the establishment of the harmonious and peaceful order which is challenged throughout the novel. The order at the beginning of the novel is threatened by Baxter and his two companions twice in a minor car accident and home invasion respectively; however, the protagonist Henry Perowne, as a successful neurosurgeon, is able to fix Baxter's broken skull from the fall in Henry's house although he fails to cure his chronic illness. In this context, at the end of the novel, death is not used as an instrument by the author to establish harmony at the end of the novel but *Saturday* should be classified as a realist novel since McEwan applies most of the elements of a typical realist novel such as realistic linear plot grounded on cause and effect chain with exposition, complication, and resolution, realistic and multi-dimensional characters, realistic setting in terms of time and place, comprehensive details about everyday life, real life themes and problems, the use of a plain and descriptive language, external and internal conflicts, the use of third-person omniscient narration, and didacticism. The primary target of this article is to scrutinise the contemporary manifestations of the belief in modern scientific rationalism in the context of McEwan's *Saturday* with concrete examples from an early 21st century novel which gives a panoramic picture of the period characterised by exceptionally significant social, economic, and political changes including the Eastward spread of modern technology and political ideas from the Western countries to the Eastern ones.

The Significance of *The End of History?* and *The Clash of Civilizations?* in Terms of the Novel's Thematic Framework

Since the novel basically deals with the problems resulting from the clash between modern objectivism and post-modern subjectivism, before *Saturday* is read, the reader should get familiar with the

arguments claimed in the ground-shaking articles such as Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?* (1989) and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* (1993) which makes the mind-set of the protagonist of the novel much more accessible for the reader. In Fukuyama's analysis, modern liberal democracy has been challenged by four different rivals such as fascism, communism, nationalism and religion and these challenges have resulted in a decisive victory of the liberal democracy over the others. Fukuyama sees these challenges as a clash between the idea of monopoly of power in the Eastern tradition and the idea of pluralism in the Western liberal democracy. In the article, he asserts that "what we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history" (Fukuyama, 1989, p.1). In his opinion, Western liberal democracy is "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution" (Fukuyama, 1989, p.1). In the post-historical period, in his own terminology, Fukuyama (1989) claims, we will experience "universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (p. 1). Instead of "the struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 17), there will be "economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 17). Depending on his observations of the Western and non-Western cultures, he anticipates that "desire for access to the consumer culture" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 9) in the non-Western cultures foreshadows the increasing Eastward spread of the Western values and decisive victory of the liberal democracy over the other forms of government practised in many different countries in the world. On the other side, in Samuel P. Huntington's classification, the existing civilisations fall into eight categories such as "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization" (Huntington, 1993, p. 25). when they are comparatively analysed, Huntington draws his general conclusion from the particular examples throughout human history including the 20th century and he asserts that "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, or Orthodox cultures" (Huntington, 1993, p. 40). The cross-cultural friendship between the Western civilisation and the others is not possible because the essential components of the Western culture do not correspond with the essential values forming the cultural identities in the non-Western cultures. His most central hypothesis is that the conflicts among humankind in the future will primarily result from cultural reasons rather ideological or economic ones: "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among human kind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural" (Huntington, 1993, p. 22). In this respect, the arguments in Fukuyama's and Huntington's articles provide the reader of *Saturday* with a better understanding of the post-9/11 cultural and political climate from a British perspective with literary references by McEwan. With the help of these two articles, the reader is able to acquire a deeper understanding of this Western-centric perspective, which has gained a certain degree of acceptance in the academic circles, in the light of literary depiction of a contemporary English author.

A Short Background of the Belief in Modern Scientific Rationalism

The belief in modern scientific rationalism historically goes back to the birth and rise of modern science which is widely classified as a radical departure from the ancient and medieval science and cosmology in terms of methodological and theoretical foundations. With the publication of some revolutionary scientific works such as *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543) by Nicolaus Copernicus, *New Astronomy* (1609) by Johannes Kepler, *New Astronomy (*1609) by Johannes Kepler, and *The*

Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (1687) by Isaac Newton, the modern cosmology, based on the heliocentric model of the universe, gains a decisive victory over the pre-modern cosmology having origins in the studies by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle and Greco-Roman astronomer and mathematician Ptolemy whose geocentric models of the universe were commonly used in the scholarly circles until the birth and rise of the modern cosmology. With this radical departure which is theoretically marked by Francis Bacon's *New Organon, or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature* (1620), the modern scientific methodology is born because Bacon offers an inductive reasoning method relying on experimentation and observation of the nature instead of the deductive reasoning used for many centuries until the 16th and 17th centuries in the scholarly circles to understand the operations in the nature. Furthermore, with the increase in the modern scientific studies in the new methodology, the nature was considered to be a mechanism which can be decoded when it is investigated under the guidance of scientific rationalism drawing general conclusions from particular observations and experimentation: "Where pre-modern Europeans had regarded the cosmos as being alive, the instigators of the Scientific Revolution argued that it was best understood as an inanimate collection of mechanical parts" (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 490). For the leading scientists and philosophers of Enlightenment, the clock became a very commonly used analogy to explain the essential principles in the nature: "The clock was their favorite metaphor for the operations of nature (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 490). In this way, the pre-modern image of nature with a female soul was replaced by the idea of nature as a mechanical clock. In *Making Modern Science, a Historical Survey*, Bowler and Morus (2005) draw the attention of the reader to the fact that Plato "explicitly described the universe as a living being with a female soul" (p. 490) in his *Timaeus*. The Neo-Platonist scholars like the English alchemist Robert Fludd continued this tradition of portraying the world soul as a woman (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 490). The universe is considered as a female being before the scientific revolution and the modern scientific revolution reverses it and brings a new approach into cosmology. According to Bowler and Morus (2005), in this new approach, nature changes into a soulless machine set in motion by God himself (p. 490). As one of the founding figures of the modern philosophy, Descartes, as known well, sees animals as merely complex machines without soul. From this perspective, nature turns into a kind of sophisticated mechanism working by the fixed laws of the nature. In this respect, until the publication of some ground-shaking works throughout the 20th century in different branches of science, the modern scientific rationalism plays a decisive role in the scientific and scholarly circles.

A Short Background of the Belief in Post-modern Subjectivism

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, some new findings in physics cause some challenges to the idea of objectivity in science. Over time, the deterministic approach to the nature in the modern scientific method is replaced by the subjectivist approach having its origins in the indeterminacy of the subatomic world. Even though the death of God by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* (1882) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1891) may be taken as a milestone for the gradual transition from modern objectivism to post-modern subjectivism, the revolutionary studies in physics at the beginning of the 20th century take the primary position in this scientific paradigm shift. The relativity theory by Albert Einstein in *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905) and *General Theory of Relativity* (1915), the uncertainty principle by Werner Karl Heisenberg (1925), and the incompleteness theorem by Kurt Gödel in his doctoral thesis at University of Vienna (1931) are the most basic milestones in physics in the first half of the 20th century. With the publication of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) by Thomas S. Kuhn, the belief in the objectivity in science is shaken off its foundation in the second half of the century. On the other hand, this transition from objectivism to subjectivism manifests itself in different forms in the social sciences, philosophy, linguistics, literary theory, and literature as well. The death of the

transcendental signified by Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), the death of the author by Roland Barthes in *The Death of the Author* (1967), the death of the author by Michael Foucault in *What is an Author?* (1969), the death of the real by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981), the death of the subject by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1967) *Writing and Difference* (1978), and the end of meta-narratives/grand narratives by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) can be listed as the most essential reflections of this transition from objectivism to subjectivism in the academic circles in the world. Except all these studies attacking the idea of objectivity, with their central claim for equal rights between man and woman, the feminist intellectuals attacked the patriarchal system itself throughout the 20th century. In this sense, the death of patriarchy and fragmentation of authority owing to the intellectual and artistic contribution of the feminists in the 20th century can be taken as a reflection of the paradigm shift in the scientific approach basically pioneered by the revolutionary studies in physics. Consequently, that the belief in the objectivity of the truth, the idea that the world exists concretely outside of our thoughts and emotions, has lost ground to the idea of relativity, the idea that truth is influenced by individual perception and experience, has been the subject matter of academic and artistic studies in different forms including literature. From this perspective, in his *Saturday,* McEwan makes a lot of explicit and implicit references to this historical background shaping the background of the philosophical and political conflicts between the modern-minded and post-modern-minded characters throughout the novel.

The Clash Between the Belief in Modern Scientific Objectivism and the Belief in Post-modern Subjectivism in *Saturday*

The surname of the protagonist of the novel, Henry Perowne, goes back to Anglo-Norman and Middle French origins: "The aptly named Perowne, a name from Anglo-Norman and Middle French meaning 'stone', the base of a monument or platform outside a church, is the voice of the pillars of the community" (Sanchez-Arce, 2018, p. 16). Henry Perowne is the spokesman of the modern scientific rationalism who is opposed by his daughter Daisy and his son Theo for some ideological and political reasons resulting mostly from the post-9/11 conditions in the world. Being a recently published poet and a blues guitarist respectively, Daisy and Theo stand in sharp contrast to Henry's belief in scientific rationalism since they draw their material from emotions in poetry and music whereas Henry depends on his reasoning and experimental skills in neurosurgery when he draws general conclusions from particular observations which is fundamental to scientific thought. On the other hand, Henry's wife Rosalind is a lawyer; however, the reader is given relatively limited information about her character throughout the novel. Nevertheless, in terms of occupational requirements, Rosalind stands next to Henry since theoretically there is no room for emotions for lawyers who are expected to make objective judgements in the best way possible. Henry's strong belief in objectivity of the truth manifests itself in his approach to other people in his personal life when he defines and prescribes the people around him thanks to his professional authority. As a scientist who feels professionally superior to some other people, he isolates himself from others "by putting up mental walls around him" (Carlbrom, 2009, p. 7) after hearing some arguments challenging his ideological standpoint. In the modern sense, his professional knowledge is instrumental to his desire for power maintenance; therefore, it is highly likely that "Perowne's liberal-bourgeois perspective" (Amiel-Houser, 2011/2012, p. 129) justifies his feeling of superiority over the ones from the lower classes. This subtle form of violent action resulting from the right of the superior one over the inferior one resembles the colonial perspective of the early European sailors which prioritises ultimate practice of domination over the natives thanks to their comparatively more advanced technology and scientific knowledge during the discovery of America as a new land in human

history. In the novel, the contemporary manifestation of this modern self-belief of the technologically superior one is seen through the large demonstration taking place on Saturday, 15 February 2003 against the United States-led coalition attacking Iraq with the claim of spreading democracy and pluralism to the region. This demonstration drives Henry, Daisy and Theo into long political discussions yet their discussions do not arrive at an agreement on the issue. In this context, McEwan draws some portion of the thematic material of the novel from political reflections of the First Gulf War in 1990 and the Second Gulf War in 2003. In the novel, Henry is not closely interested in the demonstration as much as Daisy and Theo and he prefers to stay relatively neutral to the issue but it is meaningful that Henry's home is invaded and his family members are taken captive by Baxter and his two companions after their unpleasant encounter due to a minor car accident while Henry is afraid of some probable foreign attack scenarios threatening London under the pressure of September 11 attacks. Interestingly, Henry is able to get rid of Baxter and his companions Nark and Nigel thanks to his calmness deriving from his professional supremacy after he diagnoses Baxter with Huntington's disease with the help of his careful observation.

Additionally, Henry frequently aims to dominate his ideological discussions with Daisy in her early twenties and eighteen year-old Theo but, slightly to his surprise, his kids are engaged with the political discussions relevant to September 11 attacks and artistic issues including poetry and music. Daisy ambitiously tries to acquaint Henry with the artistic pleasure in poetry but he is reluctant to follow her arguments. Theo does not agree with his father despite all his desire to change the young talented blues guitarist's mind. Instead, he rebuts all the arguments developed by the objectivist scientist. To set an example, the family members have different opinions on the Eastward expansion of Western liberal democracy. The objectivist Henry Perowne makes serious judgments on Saddam Hussein and the regime itself in Iraq before the fall of Saddam who represents the oriental monopoly of power against the idea of Western pluralistic democracy but his claims are rejected by his subjectivist kids who do not appeal to the binary oppositions in their perception of reality. As for Henry, the Anglo-American intervention in Iraq may lead to the expansion of Western liberal democracy into Middle Eastern countries deprived of political pluralism but Theo and Daisy are deeply hesitant on this issue. The conversations between Henry and Professor Miri Taleb are important to understand Henry's perception of the world politics. Professor Taleb does his Ph.D. at University College London and he speaks excellent English. He studies Sumerian civilisation and he teaches at Baghdad University for more than twenty years. Henry agrees with Professor Miri Taleb in their discussions on Iraq and Saddam Hussein because Professor's own experience in Iraq justifies Henry and his support to the war in Iraq. When his reaction to the discussions on the war in Iraq in the novel are taken into consideration, Henry seems to be under the influence of the optimistic view supported by several educated people in the Western countries and America. Meanwhile, although "Perowne's optimistic humanism" (Hillard, 2010, p. 142) follows a somewhat fluctuating trajectory throughout the novel, he manages to maintain his optimism in one way or another throughout the novel. In this optimistic view, the war may bring political stability and social order to the Middle Eastern countries and the political leaders drunk with unlimited power can be balanced when Western liberal democracy is deeply rooted in their culture with its checks and balances mechanisms. In this context, *Saturday* may be seen as a novel that "makes us travel through the mind of a middle-class scientist who sympathizes with Anglo-American intervention in Iraq" (Groes, 2009, p. 11). In the light of the talks between Professor Miri Taleb and Henry Perowne, it seems that Henry is impressed by the real life experience shared by the professor. He comes to the idea that the modern liberal democracy and modern democratic ideals are universally objective principles that should be followed by the non-democratic countries. Accordingly, the supporters of the modern democratic principles should have the right to teach the basics of the modern democracy to the others. Thus, Henry

is the voice of objectivism in these political discussions.

McEwan displays the influence of modern scientific rationalism on individuals by showing their glorification of the inventions by human intellect in *Saturday*. The city is perceived as a masterpiece of human reason and in a sense, present day London, symbolising miraculous achievements of human reason, becomes the Athens of Enlightenment in the novel. Henry celebrates the present situation of London as the finest expression of scientific rationalism. It is "a success" (McEwan, 2005, p. 5) and "a biological masterpiece" (McEwan, 2005, p. 5). This "brilliant invention" (McEwan, 2005, p. 5) makes him happy and hopeful for the future of humanity and as a neurosurgeon educated in the well-established medical science tradition in one of the greatest capitals in the world, Henry is inclined to express everything depending on the medical terminology. While looking out of the window, he keeps glorifying the inventions of human reason. The example aiming to prove that humanity has made remarkable progress throughout history is given from architecture. The narrator reveals Henry's admiration for the square laid out by Robert Adam in the 18th century: "An eighteenth-century dream bathed and embraced by modernity, by street light from above and from below by fibre-optic cables" (McEwan, 2005, p. 5). In his perception, the square both symbolically and concretely represents the success of modernity with the use of advanced technology of its time for the welfare of humanity. He thinks that the invention of electricity providing advancement in this field has produced prosperity while increasing standards of human life. Besides, his praise of London reminds the central position of London in the history of modern science and technology. In this aspect, London is the cradle of the industrial revolution achieved in the West and driving force of modernity paving the way for transition from hand production methods to self-acting machines powered by steam and electricity respectively. Therefore, London, in Henry's eyes, draws admiration with respect to its function in gradual betterment in the material conditions of life when the conditions in the past are juxtaposed against those of present day: "Perowne's city is a clean, light, and sanitized Eden, a complete inversion of darkest London" (Groes, 2009, p. 108). Henry keeps depicting a heavenly image while looking at the material advancement of London when he observes some overfull litter baskets. He develops a different approach saying "the overfull litter baskets suggest abundance rather than squalor" (McEwan, 2005, p. 5). While driving his high-level technology car in the city centre, he is pleased to have such a brilliant invention of human: "Shamelessly, he always enjoys the city from inside his car where the air is filtered and hi-fi music confers pathos on the humblest details – a Schubert trio is dignifying the narrow street he's slipping down now" (McEwan, 2005, p. 76). In this regard, the high-technology air filter system in his car improves his driving quality and in this way it becomes a concrete indicator of broader success achieved by the modern automotive industry. Observing Cleveland Street makes him pleased because "Cleveland Street used to be known for garment sweatshops and prostitutes" (McEwan, 2005, p. 76) in the past. He is satisfied with the transformation of the street in time because of the fact that "Now it has Greek, Turkish and Italian restaurants – the local sort that never get mentioned in the guides – with terraces where people eat out in summer" (McEwan, 2005, p. 76). The peaceful coexistence of the international restaurants in the city centre reflects the multicultural face of contemporary London where people treat each other with respect despite their differences in a tolerant and pluralistic society. This peaceful coexistence is a form of international neighbourhood and Henry speaks in praise of this new kind of neighbourhood with a mixture of satisfaction and self-confidence. In his opinion, the citizens of the global village are satisfied with the present situation because this "increasing globalization is supposed to bring people closer together" (Carlbom, 2009, p. 16).

When Henry's central position in the novel is taken into consideration, "the machine age is a matter of celebration in *Saturday*" (Head, 2007, p. 184). Henry observes the city from inside of his silver Mercedes

S500 and he gets some pleasure deriving from his secure position. It is the achievement of modernity that makes him pleased. He drives an invention of modern technology and he has an optimistic vision about what has been achieved by the modern civilisation. Obviously, the silver Mercedes becomes the symbol of the technological advancement and scientific rationality because when compared to a rider on horseback, the driver feels less tired and more comfortable inside the car. Moreover, Henry Perowne sees it as part of his own body as it is clearly stated by the omniscient narrator of the novel: "A Silver Mercedes S500 with cream upholstery – and he's no longer embarrassed by it. He doesn't even love it – it's simply a sensual part of what he regards as his overgenerous share of the world's goods" (McEwan, 2005, p. 75). He does not drive it for a week "but in the gloom of the dry dustless garage the machine breathes an animal warmth of its own" (McEwan, 2005, p. 75). In Henry's perception, his car is not a regular machine but a breathing living being. His optimistic vision of modernity indirectly leads Henry Perowne to oppose the post-modern discourse which attacks modernity by claiming that its ideals such as objectivism and rationalism resulted in totalitarianism and ecological destruction. The Enlightenment project is seen as the source of two modern scourges, totalitarianism and ecological destruction (Stanford, 1998, p. 243) in the post-modern discourse. When we remember the rise of the totalitarian governments in different European nations between World War I and World War II, the Communist regimes in the Eastern European and Asian countries during the Cold War period, and the rise of the authoritarian Middle Eastern leaders throughout the 20th century, the idea that the belief in the objectivity of truth causes violence can be historically and politically contextualised. Accordingly, the recent increase in the discussions on sustainable development of the new sources of energy to meet long-term global demand in the world concerning consumption of the natural resources wisely and eco-friendly in the academic and intellectual circles becomes much more understandable.

Henry Perowne's skeptical approach to the supernatural explanations also discloses the influence of modern rationalism on him. In a sense, in his understanding, "truth is to be discovered scientifically, not through the unruly and passionate imagination or through one's feelings or intuition" (Bressler, 2007, p. 97). For this reason, he professionally avoids explaining the seemingly mysterious incidents by appealing to some sort of mystical power. For instance, he wakes up suddenly in an unusual mood early in the morning and he sees a plane which emerges from the trees and disappears behind the Post Office Tower. Even though he gets worried for some moment about disappearance of the plane for a while, he does not see it as a mysterious incident but something that can be explained in a rational way:

> If Perowne were inclined to religious feeling, to supernatural explanations, he could play with the idea that he's been summoned: that having woken in an unusual state of mind, and gone to the window for no reason, he should acknowledge a hidden order, an external intelligence which wants to show or tell him something of significance. (McEwan, 2005, p. 17)

He motivates himself not to fall into some different forms of supernatural explanations. The middle-aged neurosurgeon stands in sharp contrast to his blues guitarist son Theo who is interested in popular science magazines. The narrator does not give the reason clearly why Henry does not pay attention to the arguments claimed in the magazines but it is likely that these popular science magazines distort reality and scientific findings to reach the large masses. Accordingly, Henry thinks Theo is deceived by the magazines on UFOs: "As Henry understands it, Theo's world-view accommodates a hunch that somehow everything is connected, interestingly connected" (McEwan, 2005, p. 30). As for Henry, Theo thinks that "that certain authorities, notably the US government, with privileged access to extra-terrestrial intelligence, are excluding the rest of the world from such wondrous knowledge" (McEwan, 2005, p. 30). He is sure that "his curiosity, mild as it is, has been hijacked by peddlers of fakery" (McEwan, 2005, p. 30). According to him, Theo thinks that "the universe might be showing his father a

connection, a sign which he chooses not to read" (McEwan, 2005, p. 30). The way Theo draws his arguments says nearly nothing meaningful to Henry. Theo's internally consistent explanations are not meaningful to Henry since they resemble the argumentation behind the belief that everything is under the perfect control of the divine providence. The narrator gives important remarks about Henry's rationalism while speaking about his belief in God:

> The random ordering of the world, the unimaginable odds against any particular condition, still please him. Even as a child, and especially after Aberfan, he never believed in fate or providence, or the future being made by someone in the sky. Instead, at every instant, a trillion trillion possible futures; the pickiness of pure chance and physical laws seemed like freedom from the scheming of a gloomy god. (McEwan, 2005, p. 128)

Henry and Theo are placed against each other here once again. The reference to the Aberfan disaster is meaningful here because that collapse on 21 October, 1966 near a coal mining Welsh village killed 116 children and 28 adults because of violation of safety regulations reportedly. The narrator points out the fact that Henry believes in chance and physical laws to explain the creation of the universe and the life inside of it rather than believing that it is a masterpiece created and ruled by the all-powerful God himself. On the other hand, Theo does not follow his father's scientism and he believes that there can be a hidden hand that governs the entire universe omnisciently. The idea that there can be some aliens or something unknown yet capable of governing the universe seems to be acceptable to Theo because he reads this kind of arguments in the scientific magazines. However, Henry rejects the idea that everything is interconnected in some ways beyond human reach. He defines the magazines in Theo's room as the "peddlers of fakery" (McEwan, 2005, p. 30) to reject post-modern subjectivism that paves some way to supernatural explanations and mystery.

Throughout the novel, Henry prefers scientific explanations to spiritual ones although he is hesitant about human nature after his successful operation on Baxter's skull at the end of the novel. He takes the advantage of his scientific knowledge while diagnosing Baxter with Huntington's disease after the car accident. Baxter's lack of self-control and the stain on his hand drive the neurosurgeon to diagnose it as Huntington's disease. He rationally uses his professional scientific knowledge against Baxter after Baxter takes a stand in an intimidating manner at the accident site. Until his hesitation at the end of the novel, he does not pay attention to the mind against the brain: "It isn't an article of faith with him, he knows it for a quotidian fact, the mind is what the brain mere matter, performs" (McEwan, 2005, p. 67). Here, for the experienced neurosurgeon well-educated in the medical terminology, the mind and the brain are identical. There is no need to take them as two different entities having origins in human psyche and human body respectively. He is sure that the supernatural is "the recourse of an insufficient imagination, a dereliction of duty, a childish evasion of the difficulties and wonders of the real, of the demanding re-enactment of the plausible" (McEwan, 2005, pp. 67-68). It seems that McEwan wants the reader to think over the discussions related to the psychological and biological existence of human. In this context, it should be remembered that the studies on history of sexuality and madness by Michael Foucault have influenced the academic circles heavily since 1960s. As it is well known, Foucault traces the historical background of sanity and insanity to their historical and cultural roots, specifically within Western history, in his books such as *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975). These studies have profoundly influenced the emergence of a general consensus in the academic circles that the cultural understanding of rationality and irrationality is the result of a social construction process. Furthermore, the conventional division between psychology and psychiatry is fundamental to these discussions dealing with the problem that psychological problems of human have their roots in human mind or brain. In

this context, the narrator reveals the disagreement between the father and the daughter on this issue: "Daisy tried to convince her father that madness was a social construct" (McEwan, 2005, p. 92). In the father's view, she is educated at university in this way and she accordingly believes that madness is not the subject matter of biological but sociological studies. She follows the post-modern approach that sees mind as the realm of madness; however, Henry believes that both of them are same. In a sense, he follows the Darwinian approach to the brain and the mind problem since Darwinian approach attacks the belief in the biological uniqueness of man in the nature: "Humans alone had traditionally been endowed with higher mental and moral faculties – so by suggesting that we were only improved animals, evolutionism threatened our unique status and might even undermine the fabric of the social order" (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 154). In a broad sense, Darwinian approach does not accept uniqueness of human in the nature in terms of having some unique intellectual and moral skills. Through the lenses of the evolutionist biology, there is nothing that can be detected as supernatural or divine in the universe:

> In the scientific naturalism favored by Darwin and Huxley, however, it was important to show that there were no supernatural agents in the world, so even the human mind was a product of the activity of the brain, which in turn had been shaped by evolution." (Bowler & Morus, 2005, p. 154)

The Darwinian approach breaks the uniqueness of human being and it rejects the supernatural agents in the universe even though the post-modern approach opens some ways to non-scientific explanations which examine human as a unique case having some privileges in the natural order. In the modern sense, the brain is the best instrument in seeking and explaining the external reality. In the novel, McEwan details the modern insistence upon biological determinism while explaining the relationship between genetic heritage and character formation:

> It's a commonplace of parenting and modern genetics that parents have little or no influence on the characters of their children. You never know who you are going to get. Opportunities, health, prospects, accent, table manners – these might lie within your power to shape. But what really determines the sort of person who's coming to live with you is which sperm finds which egg, how the cards in two packs are chosen, then how they are shuffled, halved and spliced at the moment of recombination. Cheerful or neurotic, kind or greedy, curious or dull, expansive or shy and anywhere in between; it can be quite an affront to parental self-regard, just how much of the work has already been done. (McEwan, 2005, p. 25)

Modern approach to morality is reminded by the author in this way by referring to the idea that parents have a very limited influence on the character formation of their children. According to the modern genetics, in a broad sense, the character formation of a child is mainly determined by the child's biological heritage. This approach explains the moral orientation and character formation by depending on biological determinism which excludes free will of human and socially-constructed aspects of character formation. Although Henry Perowne strictly depends on the biological material in detection of human diseases, Baxter's emotional reaction to *Dover Beach* by Mathew Arnold drives the reader into some kind of dilemma since it is poetry that saves the family from destruction thanks to the poem's influence on Baxter as it is inferred from the last pages in the novel. In other words, after long discussions dealing with the opposition between science and poetry between the father and the daughter, Daisy wins over Henry Perowne: "Baxter heard what Henry never has, and probably never will, despite all Daisy's attempts to educate him" (McEwan, 2005, p. 278). The narrator reveals that Baxter is ill and he feels better but the rationalist neurosurgeon will never taste the artistic pleasure because of his insistence upon scientific explanations which prevents him from looking at life from multiple points of view. The opposition between Henry and Baxter is made clear in their reactions to *Dover Beach* as well as in their physical appearance because "McEwan places Baxter in the opposition

of Perowne's negative other" (Amiel-Houser, 2011/2012, p. 135). Henry is the representative of Enlightenment ideals such as scientific progress, rationalism, and technological development; however, as Perowne's negative other, Baxter is the symbol of irrationality, femininity, and intuitive perception. Daisy's talks on literature do not change Henry's approach to science and literature and later on when Baxter breaks in their home, he does not enjoy any poetic pleasure in *Dover Beach* either yet Baxter is impressed by the poetic beauty of the poem. Baxter falls into ecstasy after listening to Daisy's recitation of *Dover Beach*. Daisy recites Mathew Arnold's *Dover Beach* to please Baxter who invades Henry's house after the car accident since Henry's observation about Baxter at the scene of the accident makes him wonder whether he has some health problems or not but Henry does not recognise the much-anthologised poem by Arnold whereas Baxter is deeply influenced by the poem without knowing anything on the technical analysis of the poem. Like Perowne, Baxter cannot notice that it is a widely known poem by a famous English poet but he loses his self-control after Daisy's recitation. It weakens Baxter's determination to destroy the family members. He is unexpectedly distracted after Daisy's recitation. Henry and Theo seize the proper moment to strike Baxter and he falls down the stairs and in this way poetry indirectly saves the life of Henry and his family. In this respect, Henry remains neutral to his emotions and he does not surrender to the irrationality in the car accident and home invasion scenes in the novel. Additionally, after Henry collides with Baxter in a minor car accident, the narrator places the lower class Baxter against the upper middle class neurosurgeon: "They are together, he and Perowne, in a world not of the medical but of the magical" (McEwan, 2005, p. 95). Perowne finds himself in the world of obscure and unreason where his life is in danger but he successfully takes control of his feelings by putting them in the service of his reasoning.

As a side note, McEwan places Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach* at the centre of the novel probably because the poem expresses a crisis of faith caused by the clash between science and religion through the anonymous first-person speaker observing the decrease in the Christian faith in the 19th century industrial England. It is known that the poem was first published in 1867 but the genetic studies on the poem say that it was probably written in 1851. Arnold's well-known discontent with the condition of Victorian England and his crisis of faith in his personal life are helpful to understand this poem in dramatic monologue form dealing with the loss of true Christian faith when it is challenged by the growing belief in the power of science. The clash between faith and thought/science is seen as a clash between ignorant armies at the end of the poem by the anonymous speaker. When Arnold's writings in prose and verse are closely observed, it seems that the dualistic existence of man is a primary subject matter for the remarkable poet of the Victorian Age. In his *The Study of Poetry*, Arnold shares his dissatisfaction with the growing public interest in the positivistic-deterministic understanding of science in the 19th century England. He writes against this rising trend of the time since he asserts that science alone is not enough for progress of humanity: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, console us, sustain us" (Arnold, 1913, pp. 55-56). In Arnold's view, the spread of science in the society cannot meet the emotional needs of humanity. In his anticipation of the future, religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry: "Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry" (Arnold, 1913, p. 56). From this perspective, since *Dover Beach* concerns itself basically with the clash between faith and thought, it is a highly instrumental symbol used in the novel by the author to present the dualistic existence of human more closely to the attention of the reader. In this context, the contrast established by McEwan between Henry and Baxter throughout the novel seems much more meaningful to the cultivated reader of *Saturday*.

On the other side, the car accident and the home invasion make Henry unhappy for some reasons but

the primary reason seems to be his unhappiness deriving from uncertainty and disorder caused by these two unexpected external threats. George Simmel (1949) thinks "punctuality, calculability, and exactness" (p. 13) are the most distinctive characteristics of the city life. In the novel, Henry is the most integrated character into the modern city life. To set an example, Perowne does not care about the anti-war protestors in the London streets in order to arrive on time to his squash game with his colleague Jay Strauss. His mind is busy with the possibility that he will miss the already planned squash match while Baxter, Nark, and Nigel threaten him after the minor car accident. As discussed in *Flesh and Stone, The Body and Stone in Western Civilization*, it is possible to say that "the lack of physical touch" (Sennett, 1994, p. 21) is a distinctive element of the modern city life. From a critical point of view, in modern life, people do not touch each other but crash. The car accident in the novel can be taken as an example supporting this claim. Meanwhile, Henry insistently tries to find an opportunity to drive his car not to break his weekly routine: "This is surely the moment to slip away, while the possibility remains that he can still rescue his game" (McEwan, 2005, p. 99). It reflects his strong desire to keep his routine life up. For Henry, to miss the already planned squash match with his friend evokes a sense of disorder in his rationally ordered life. He does his best to avoid the possibility that his daily routine will be destroyed by an unpredictable car accident. It is more likely that McEwan uses this example in the novel to reflect the strong desire of a typical rationalist not to break his routine. In this context, Henry's search for absolute determinism in the medical field corresponds to his search for certainty in his personal daily life. A lot of details informing the reader about the modern professional life in London are given by the narrator throughout the novel. To set an example proving this, the narrator depicts the middle class life and working routine in the city by making an explicit reference to Henry's working hours: "Forty-eight years old, profoundly asleep at nine thirty on a Friday night – this is modern professional life" (McEwan, 2005, p. 7). The reader learns that "he works hard, everyone around him works hard, and this week he's been pushed harder by a flu out-break among the hospital staff – his operating list has been twice the usual length" (McEwan, 2005, p. 7). The successful neurosurgeon Henry and his lawyer-wife Rosalind cannot spend enough time together because of their busy professional lives in the city. In this way, the scientifically-minded protagonist of the novel tends to sustain the punctuality, calculability, and exactness in his everyday life since the irrational, unpredictable, and obscure aspects of life do not please him. On the contrary, neither Daisy nor Theo has a professional job and so they do not work for long hours unlike their parents Henry and Rosalind. Theo is interested in music and Daisy wants to be a well-known poet. Indeed, Daisy has a published book but she yet is not as famous as her grandfather, John Grammaticus. Grammaticus represents the classical understanding in poetry and literature as an upper class man. In Greek, his surname means the teacher of grammar. Therefore, he represents the rule-based literature of the classical period against Daisy who writes in the contemporary free verse style. John Grammaticus lives in the Chateau St Felix and he is a prize-winner poet who does not need to work thanks to his upper class background providing him with free-time to spend on literature.

In the novel, the narrator compares Henry Perowne to Charles Darwin in order to give the background of Henry's intellectual formation. This comparison also makes the battle between reason and intuition or emotions more visible. Like Darwin in his later years, Henry's dissatisfaction with emotions goes up to higher levels and he gradually turns into a more passionate rationalist: "Perhaps he's becoming, in this one respect at least, like 'Darwin in his later years' who found Shakespeare dull to the point of nausea" (McEwan, 2005, p. 58). In his *Autobiography,* after deciding to become a scientist, Darwin dedicates his life to scientific studies which transforms him into an absolutely rationalist man. This transformation reduces his touch with his emotional ties. The best form of this transformation can be observed when Darwin (2002) confesses his being regretful of not enjoying poetry after becoming a scientist for many years:

> I have said that in one respect my mind has changed during the last 20 or 30 years. Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. (p. 84)

In the light of his extraordinary experience gained thanks to some laborious studies on animals and plants in the nature, Darwin transforms from a young man enjoying literature into a man of scientific rationalism step by step while placing his reason instead of his emotions and intuition. For this reason, he gets away from subjectivity in literature for the sake of objectivity in science. McEwan's frequent references to Darwin and his studies throughout *Saturday* are exceptionally important because he uses such an interesting figure of transformation to support the dichotomy he establishes between thinking/thought and feeling/faith throughout the novel. McEwan juxtaposes Charles Darwin and Henry Perowne in order to show the opposition residing in the nature of objectivism and subjectivism. Like Darwin, Henry cannot enjoy literature and so he does not finish the literary books given him by his daughter Daisy. Interestingly, Henry's approach to Darwin's works is a kind of belief because of the fact that he does not follow an analytical way in his reading of Darwin. Instead of a meticulous analysis after some close reading applied to the text, he just skims some parts of the books given him by his daughter Daisy. For instance, he does not finish reading Darwin throughout the novel but he repeats *there is grandeur in this view of life* several times which is a sentence written by Darwin in the last paragraph of *The Origins of the Species*. Perowne's unwillingness to read the literary works given by his daughter clearly indicates his insistence upon the rationally ordered way of life. He is aware of the fact that Daisy sees him as an "unredeemable materialist" (McEwan, 2005, p. 134). Meanwhile, despite the generation gap between them, she is hopeful although he does not finish literary works given him: "The books are piled at his bedside, and she'll be arriving with more tonight" (McEwan, 2005, p. 134). It shows his resistance to literary intuition and imagination because "he hasn't even finished the Darwin biography, or started to Conrad" (McEwan, 2005, p. 134). It is meaningful that "under her instruction he is reading Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*, but Daisy's literary suggestions don't generally please the scientist in him; magic realism he dismisses as kitsch" (Rees-Jones, 2005, p. 334). The opposition between science and literature is used to reveal the aims of the two different members of the family by the author. He finishes *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary* but he cannot penetrate into the books analytically. His inferences from these literary masterpieces are too shallow as revealed by the narrator of the novel. He focuses on the adultery and the setting in the novels superficially. So, he finds neither analytical point nor artistic pleasure in the novels. Literature does not provide a broader understanding of the world and the reader is informed that "Henry can't help unscientifically thinking" (McEwan, 2005, p. 65). He thinks that "this notion of Daisy's, that people can't "live" without stories, is simply not true" (McEwan, 2005, p. 68). As for Henry, it is possible to live without literature, imagination and emotions because "he is living proof" (McEwan, 2005, p. 68). When Daisy praises magical realism in literature, Henry says that "please, no more ghosts, angels, satans or metamorphoses" (McEwan, 2005, p. 68) and he finishes his opinion with "It's all kitsch to me" (McEwan, 2005, p. 68). It is possible to say that Daisy's defence of magical realism and Theo's reading popular science magazines are clear indicators of the unbridgeable gap between the father and his children whose character formations are shaped by different value systems.

Henry Perowne, representing the powerful self of modernity, makes irony of the relativist discourse which defends pluralism against modern objectivism. When he sees three figures in black burkhas while waiting at the red lights on Devonshire Place, symbolically, the powerful self of the middle class man

confronts with the other. In this scene, Henry Perowne's bourgeoisie gaze appears when he confronts with the threat of the Other (Amiel-Housuer, 2011/2012, p. 143). He immediately begins to criticise these people depending on his strong belief in his own life style. While watching them, he remembers the accusations directed to modernity and it reminds him of the debates on the relationship between religious life style and consumerism in today's world. He ironically says that "the relativists" (McEwan, 2005, p. 124) would defend this religious way of dressing against the "western consumerism" (McEwan, 2005, p. 124). He thinks that "the cheerful pessimists from Daisy's college" (McEwan, 2005, p. 124) would say "that it's sacred, traditional, a stand against the fripperies of Western consumerism" (McEwan, 2005, p. 124). Henry tries to refute the argument of the post-modernists by making reference to the male Saudis in his office because they get dressed in the Western way unlike the women in black burkhas observed by Henry at the red lights: "But the men, the husbands – Perowne has had dealings with various Saudis in his office – wear suits, or trainers and tracksuits, or baggy shorts and Rolexes, and are entirely charming and worldly and thoroughly educated in both traditions" (McEwan, 2005, p. 124). In this respect, he refutes the idealised argument that Muslim women in black burkhas can be seen as a challenge to the Western consumerism. In Henry's opinion, the difference between wearing of the male and the female Saudis is a self-contradiction of the relativist discourse which is intellectually attractive to Daisy and Theo. He thinks that "this commercial wellbeing is robust and will defend itself to the last" (McEwan, 2005, p. 126). The real challenge to the religious life is not rationalism but consumerism:

> It isn't rationalism that will overcome the religious zealots but ordinary shopping and all that it entails – jobs for a start, and peace, and some commitment to realisable pleasures, the promise of appetites sated in this world, not the next. Rather shop than pray." (McEwan, 2005, p. 126)

As for Henry, the consumerist life style transforms people by providing them with pleasure which is defined as "the promise of appetites sated in this world, not the next" (McEwan, 2005, p. 126) by the narrator. In his view, otherworldly pleasures are fulfilled in this material life which seems to be a self-contradiction in Henry's eyes. Dominic Head (2007), in his analysis on *Saturday*, points out "an undeveloped contradiction" (p. 184) in the approach based on the idea of adopting the scientific culture of the West without adopting its social ethics and daily life practices. Indeed, the internalisation of Western values by Eastern countries is a topic of current historical significance. In Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?* (1989) and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?* (1993), two articles that have attracted considerable attention in academic circles since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of communism, the writers concern themselves with this problem of the clash between the West and the East from relatively similar perspectives. Head (2007) touches on a different aspect of the same problem:

> The culture of Western scientific advancement, after all, is also the culture that is widely perceived to generate global environmental degradation (even if the consumerist demands of the wealthiest nations are increasingly being emulated in developing countries); and this is the culture that is identified as the enemy by Islamists militants." (p. 184)

In this context, McEwan's Henry observes the people coming from non-Western origins but living in London and their integration into the secular city life while preserving some portion of their original culture drives him into confusion. In Henry's mind, secular life and religious life form a dichotomy because he consciously or unconsciously believes that religious people should refrain from material pleasures. Therefore, when he sees religious people who do not completely abstain from worldly pleasures, he positions them as people who have become slaves to the consumer culture. In this respect, Henry seems to have internalised the idea that there are irreconcilable cultural differences between the

Western and the Eastern societies. He also believes that consumer culture fundamentally undermines the idea of distancing oneself from material pleasures, which is inherent in the essence of religion.

McEwan's rationalist protagonist faces another challenge to his rationalism during his visit to his mother Lily Perowne. Henry becomes very sensitive for a while after visiting his mother's house. Henry's rationalism comes to a halt after the melancholy deriving from his mother's separation from her own house and some other belongings because of her disease. His mother cannot live alone because she suffers from vascular dementia and her memory misleads her repeatedly. She cannot keep names and functions of objects on her mind properly. For this reason, Henry decides to donate her personal items to the poor in need of them. Then, Henry begins to think over the meaning of life and the objects while carrying his mother's belongings to donate to the poor. He says that "objects became junk as soon as they were separated from their owner and their pasts" (McEwan, 2005, p. 274). Feeling sad about his mother, some self-realisation grows up rapidly which moves him to think life may have some deeper meanings: "As the shelves and drawers emptied, and the boxes and bags filled, he saw that no one owned anything really" (McEwan, 2005, p. 274). This sudden and striking self-realisation after his mother's death is an unusual moment in his life and he begins to look at the objects from a different point of: "Our possessions will outlast us" (McEwan, 2005, p. 274) because "it's all rented, or borrowed" (McEwan, 2005, p. 274). Henry, Rosalind, Theo, and Daisy take twenty-three bags out for the dustmen after working all the day long. This emotional experience awakens some emotional ties in Henry's perception of his surroundings for some time and he comes to the conclusion that objects live longer than their owners. In this sense, the idea of death plays a significant role in the main narrative as an element which irreparably disrupts a life that flows in a rational order from the writer's perspective: "For McEwan's characters, the introduction of death acts as a philosophical trigger, engendering a tension between two poles of human thought: doubt and faith, the rational and the intuitive" (Hillard, 2010, p. 142). It is interesting that Henry's momentary inward looking leads him to think about the deeper existential meanings of life but he returns to his usual life as it is depicted at the end of the novel. This spontaneous overflowing of emotions does not last for a long time in the neurosurgeon's life. The author does not leave this point in the dark. The reader is informed that Henry sleeps with his loving wife Rosalind as usual and, in this way, this momentary self-realisation ends with sleeping to save energy for the next day of the middle class family.

The self-glorification of the life style, which is rejection of pluralism that takes its origins from the relativity of truth, is a reflection of the belief in modern objectivism in the novel. Henry's strong belief in uniqueness of his own life style leads him to feel insecure and worried about it because it creates a strong fear of loss. Hence he is afraid of some probable danger coming from outside like many other British people having this strong fear after the terrorist attack happened in the United States of America. It seems like a hidden fear based on the apocalyptic point of view which foreshadows an irreversible attack to the secular middle class way of life. McEwan deals with the faith of a rationalist scientist in the uniqueness his modern life style. Throughout *Saturday*, Henry repeatedly gives utterance to a sentence from the last paragraph of *The Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859) by Charles Darwin. He repeats "there is grandeur in this view of life . . ." (Darwin, 1968, p. 459) which is used to make reference to strong belief of the middle class neurosurgeon in the uniqueness and superiority of his own life style. He blesses his own way of life against other life styles: "That's the only kind of faith he has" (McEwan, 2005, p. 255). According to the narrator, his faith in his own life style is the only faith of the "talented neurosurgeon and devoted materialist" (Hillard, 2010, p. 140). In the bathroom, Henry remembers the sentence by Charles Darwin which he reads at the previous night in the bathroom:

> The plastic radio in the form of a leaping blue dolphin, attached by the suckers to the mosaic wall in the shower, plays that same phrase, until he begins to sense a religious content as its significance swells – *there is grandeur in this view of life*, it says, over and again." (McEwan, 2005, p. 55)

This repetition resembles a ritualistic belief because Henry does not finish the books by Darwin given him by Daisy but he repeats a sentence by Darwin several times with some emotional ties with the idea asserted by one of the founding fathers of modern biology. In this sense, it shows Henry's faith in the uniqueness of his life style rather than a meticulously analysed world-view. He just believes in something and repetition becomes the most important component of this ritualistic usage which strengthens his faith in his own life style. Moreover, Henry's reaction to the burning cargo plane can be seen as another evidential scene that indicates Henry's fear of uncertainty. He sees a burning plane while looking out of the window and he wishfully thinks that it is "not an attack on our whole way of life then" (McEwan, 2005, p. 39). He is worried that it can be a terrorist attack to London organised by some fundamentalist Islamic terrorists. This unexpected incident awakens his unconsciously buried fear of Usame Bin Laden and Al-Qaida inside. He tries to get rid of this fear with the hope that "it's suffered simple secular mechanical failure" (McEwan, 2005, p. 18). He is obviously in search of a rational explanation to the problem to get rid of the pessimistic mood immediately. As soon as he learns that it is not an attack on his way of life but a regular cargo plane, a Russian Tupolev from Riga to Birmingham, having a fire in one of the engines, he seems relieved to have finally found out the material reason the failure. The feverish debate between the father and the son relevant to mechanical problem with the plane ends with the scientific explanation and he comes to agreement with Theo that it is not an attack to their way of life. Being relieved to some extent but still concerned about the news on the television to get information about fundamentalist terrorists and their probable attacks to London, Henry is never truly satisfied with his life owing to the unavoidable external threats. He always considers that the symbols of their life style are under a probable attack from an unknown enemy. He is always psychologically ready to be persuaded that "the harmless streets like this and the tolerant life they embody can be destroyed by the new enemy –well-organised, tentacular, full of hatred and focused zeal" (McEwan, 2005, p. 76). Meanwhile, he directs his attention to the harmless Cleveland Street full of multicultural restaurants and it increases his hopefulness for the life in the future. The street "used to be known for garment sweatshops and prostitutes" (McEwan, 2005, p. 76) but now it is the symbol of tolerant and multicultural face of London. The street becomes the symbol of the modern life style under the attack of an unknown and unpredictable enemy in his eyes. Except "the attacks on Perowne's domestic security" (Brown, 2008, p. 84), he is sure that an unpredictable attack from some unknown enemy can destroy his whole life which may cause irretrievable nation-wide consequences.

Henry's turbulent feeling of insecurity is seen in his relationship with his own car as well. His affection to his Mercedes becomes a symbol of his identification with his comfortable life style. The car in the garage is compared to a horse in a barn: "He walks down a faint incline of greasy cobbles to where the owners of houses like his own once kept their horses" (McEwan, 2005, p. 74). The comparison is detailed further: "Attached to his key ring is an infrared button which he presses to raise a clattering steel shutter. It's revealed in mechanical jerks, the long nose and shining eyes at the stable door, chafing to be free" (McEwan, 2005, pp. 74-75). The silver Mercedes S500 is depicted by the narrator like a horse waiting to leave its barn impatiently. Henry's relationship with the car deserves to be explained in further detail for a better understanding of Henry's optimistic rationalism because his scientific materialism manifests itself in his being fond of material pleasures. His intense desire to own this high-quality car and his sudden craving for its material value and comfort when he sees it in the garage indicates the deeply rooted materialism in his consciousness: "He doesn't even love it – it's simply a sensual part of what he regards as his overgenerous share of the world's goods" (McEwan, 2005, p. 75). In his conceptualisation

of the material life from the mechanistic view of nature, the modern automotive industry has achieved something above the pre-industrial standards of life combining what nature has given us with the power of modern science and technology. He has not driven it for a week "but in the gloom of the dry dustless garage the machine breathes an animal warmth of its own" (McEwan, 2005, p. 75). As it is implied by the narrator, the use of modern auto-mobiles corresponds with the function of horses in the pre-modern times. With the use of science and technology wisely, man becomes the master of the nature. The narrator brings Henry's belief in the power of human reason into the reader's attention by referring to his anthropocentric point of view: "Henry finally accepted himself as the owner, the master, of his vehicle" (McEwan, 2005, p. 75). After getting in the car, he feels safe and secure in his car thanks to the advanced security system of the car. He presses the button to secure the car and the door locks are activated in rapid sequence. The contribution of the modern science and technology to middle class life is explained by the narrator of the novel while the mind of the protagonist is being revealed: "An ancient evolutionary dilemma: the need to sleep, the fear of being eaten. Resolved at last, by central locking" (McEwan, 2005, p. 121). The central locking system solves the problem of security and it gives the driver the opportunity to sleep regardless of the enemy or any dangers from outside because the central locking system of the car removes the necessity to be on the alert while sleeping. In this context, his paying considerable attention to security of his car and home indicates his search for certainty in life. Their house has got "three stout Banham locks, two black iron bolts as old as the house" (McEwan, 2005, p. 36) and "two tempered steel security chains, a spyhole with a brass cover, the box of electronics that works the Entryphone system, the red panic button, the alarm pad with its softly gleaming digits" (McEwan, 2005, pp. 36-37). The reader is informed by the narrator that these high-security precautions are taken against the probable threat from the lower classes: "Such defences, such mundane embattlement: beware of the city's poor, the drug-addicted, the downright bad" (McEwan, 2005, p. 37). The house is protected by means of three stout Banham locks, two black iron bolts, two tempered steel security chains, a spyhole with a brass cover, the box of electronics that works the Entryphone system, the red panic button, and the alarm pad with its softly gleaming digits. All these specific protective devices protect the middle class family from the "city's poor, the drug-addicted, downright bad" (McEwan, 2005, p. 37). They feel safe and secure in their well-protected house isolated from the probable danger coming from the lower classes and any other dangers threatening their security. Even the windows of the house are designed to protect the family members from the danger: "He opens the second shutter, letting it concertina into the casement, and quietly raises the sash window. It is many feet taller than him, but it slides easily upwards, hoisted by its concealed lead counterweight" (McEwan, 2005, p. 4). Henry opens the casement of his well-sheltered house and he sees "the black arrowhead railings like a row of spears" (McEwan, 2005, p. 4) while looking out of the window. On another page of the novel, Henry and Rosalind are kissing each other while "they are standing by the front door with its triple locks and the keypad's comforting glow" (McEwan, 2005, p. 238). The doors and the windows of the house are designed carefully in order to provide a comfortable and peaceful life to the family members. The author emphasises Henry's obsession with his home security in another scene. Before setting the burglar alarm, Henry remembers that Theo is at home and "he puts on an old hiking fleece, and is about to set the burglar alarm when he remembers Theo inside" (McEwan, 2005, p. 71). In this way, it is highly likely that Henry's search for absolute certainty in his everyday life is the mirror image of his search for determinism in science.

Yet quite interestingly, although Henry relies on the central locking system as an achievement of the modern science and technology, their peaceful life is disturbed twice when Baxter and his two companions cause damage in Henry's Mercedes and break in Henry's home. The unexpected car accident represents "the intrusion of brutal, inescapable reality into comfortable lives" (Rennison, 2005,

p. 110) although the narrator informs the reader that "in neurosurgery he chose a safe and simple profession" (McEwan, 2005, p. 141). From this perspective, with the car accident and the home invasion, "the secure world of the salaried middle class" (p. 180) is destroyed as observed by Bennett et al. (2010). After the accident, Henry sees that his car loses its originality owing to the damage by Baxter's BMW. He feels frustrated after the accident while closely observing the damage on his car. He sees that "something original and pristine has been stolen from his car, and can never be restored, however good the repair" (McEwan, 2005, p. 82). In the car accident scene, Henry feels unhappy for another reason too since, as well as the damage on his car, the unexpected car accident breaks his weekly program including playing squash with his colleague Jay Strauss. In the light of this example, what makes him unhappy is not the broken plan itself but the feeling of uncertainty. Not only does Henry want his belief in scientific determinism not to be interrupted by sentimentality in literature, but he also feels uncomfortable when his daily routine is broken due to some unexpected daily incident. Shortly and precisely, given that his educational background and intellectual formation, the rationally-minded scientist of the novel is constantly in search of certainty in every sense.

Conclusion

To conclude, McEwan's concern with the political and social paradigm shift that began with the end of the Cold War offers his readers a multifaceted framework for understanding that period. As it is well known, this period, which has been marked by radical changes, has witnessed a shift from a bipolar balance of power to a unipolar one: "During this decade, the global political landscape shifted from a bipolar to a unipolar world order, causing traditional power structures to collapse" (Yazgı, 2024, p. 15). In his novel *Saturday* (2005), Ian McEwan presents the reader with a literary framework for understanding the fundamental areas of conflict surrounding the spread of the Western values towards the East, which gained momentum in the post-Cold War period. Although the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of communism as a social and economic system did not result in the emergence of a system that could serve as an alternative to the Western liberal democracy and the secular lifestyle, various interpretations of Islam centred in the Middle East have continued to exhibit some reactions in response to the retreat experienced in the face of the West. McEwan views September 11 attacks and the political and social tensions after this historical turning point as a cultural clash between the two different world-views that are diametrically opposed to each other in terms of their theoretical foundations. Through the main characters of the novel, he presents both the West and East conflict and the conflict between the modern and post-modern values to the reader's attention, the latter being one of Western culture's internal conflicts. From this perspective, the contemporary Western lifestyle inspires admiration in non-Western societies while at the same time provoking hostility towards itself. In this respect, Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* is a realist novel that reflects the prevailing social and political atmosphere of the period in the Western countries in the early years of the 21st century following the September 11 attacks, through characters built on a specific structure of characterisation. The Eastward spread of the Western values after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism, which resulted in the absence of any political system having the potential to be an alternative to the neo-liberal system is a subject matter forming the background of the discussion in the novel. Because the mind-set of the novel's protagonist, Henry Perowne, reflects the perspective outlined in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History?* (1989) and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1993), this study frequently makes explicit and implicit references to these articles, which address the issue that the most serious challenge to the Western secular way of life after the political defeat of communism by capitalism is the Middle Eastern-centric interpretations of Islam. This article also presents a theoretical framework centred on the most essential issues discussed in the debates on modernity and

post-modernity in the light of a contemporary novel including literary reflections of social and political developments. On this basis, the novel examines the conflict between modern rationalism, which claims that truth possesses universal objectivity and whose roots extend back to the scientific revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries, and post-modern subjectivism, which emerged in the first half of the 20th century based on the revolutionary discoveries in physics. Thus, the reader has the opportunity to evaluate the most fundamental conflicts in the world politics in the early years of the 21st century through the eyes of a contemporary British novelist. Furthermore, the author provides examples throughout the novel from various perspectives, giving readers a better understanding of contemporary debates in the fields such as biology, physics, and genetics. From this perspective, *Saturday* offers its readers an opportunity to analyse how a Western author views some of the fundamental issues of our time from the arguably common social perspective of his own society. Consequently, considering that the main character, who to a certain extent represents the author's world-view, achieves a relative victory at the end of the novel, *Saturday* should be regarded and evaluated as a novel in which the belief in modern scientific rationalism remains unshaken despite all the challenges revealed to the reader in different symbolic ways.

References

Amiel-Houser, T. (2011/2012). The ethics of otherness in Ian McEwan's Saturday. *Connotations*, 21 (1), 128-157. https://www.connotations.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/amiel-houser02101.pdf

Arnold, M. (1913). The study of poetry. In William Savage Johnson (Ed.), *Selections from the prose works of Matthew Arnold* (pp.55-86). The Riverside Press.

Bennett, T. & Savage, M. & Silva, E. & Warde, A. & Gayo-Cal, M. & Wright, D. (2010). *Culture, class, distinction*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Bowler, Peter J, & Morus, Iwan Rhys. (2005). *Making modern science: A historical survey*. The University of Chicago Press.

Bressler, C. (2007). *Literary criticism: An introduction to theory and practice*. Pearson Prentice Hall.

Brown, Richard. (2008). Politics, the domestic and the uncanny effects of the everyday in Ian McEwan's Saturday. *Critical Survey,* 20 (1), 80-93. https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/critical-survey/20/1/cs200108.xml

Carlbom, C. (2009). *The complexity of class a study of ideology and the power of literature in Ian McEwan's narrative* [Doctoral dissertation, Lund University].

Darwin, C. (2002). *Autobiographies*. Penguin Books.

Darwin, C. (1968). *The origins of species by means of natural selection or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*. Penguin Books.

Fukuyama, F. (1989). The end of history?. *The National History, summer*, 1-18. https://www.ekof.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Fukuyama-The-End-of-History.pdf

Groes, S. (Ed.). (2009). *Ian McEwan: Contemporary critical perspectives*. Continuum International Publishing Group.

Head, Dominick. (2007). *Contemporary British novelists: Ian McEwan*. Manchester University Press.

Hillard, G. (2010). The limits of rationalism in Ian McEwan's Saturday. The Explicator, 68 (2), 140-143.https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.ntu.edu.sg/dist/6/2252/files/2017/08/SS5-Hillard-2010-Rationalism-26qx7xs.pdf

McEwan, I. (2006). *Saturday*. Vintage.

Peck, John,. & Coyle, Martin. (1993). *Literary terms and criticism* (2nd ed.). The Macmillan Press.

P. Huntington, S. (1993). The clash of civilizations?. *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (3), 22-49. https://www.studocu.com/en-us/document/georgia-southern-university/trigonometry/the-clash-of-civilizations-an-analysis-by-samuel-p-huntington/148961566

Rees-Jones, D. (2005). Fact and artefact: Poetry, science, and a few thoughts on Ian McEwan's Saturday. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews,* 30 (4), 331-340. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/030801805X64915

Rennison, N. (2005). *Contemporary British novelists*. Routledge.

Sanchez-Arce, A. M. (2018). Performing innocence: violence and the nation in Ian McEwan's Saturday and Sunjeev Sahota's Ours Are the Streets. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 53 (2), 194-210.

Sennett, R. (1994). *Flesh and stone the body and the city in Western civilization*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Simmel, G. (1949). *Sociology* (Kurt H. Wolf. Trans.) The Free Press.

Stanford, M. (1998). *An introduction to the philosophy of history*. Blackwell Publishers.

Yazgı, C. (2024). The political unconscious in Ian McEwan's Amsterdam: the post-cold war paradigm shift and morality in the era of the late capitalist market. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (40), 880-896).