

A Consilient Science and Humanities in McEwan's Enduring Love

Curtis D. Carbonell
New Jersey City University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, **Purdue University Press** selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

Recommended Citation

Carbonell, Curtis D "A Consilient Science and Humanities in McEwan's Enduring Love." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12.3 (2010): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1425>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1425)

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 12 Issue 3 (September 2010) Article 12
Curtis D. Carbonell,
"A Consilient Science and Humanities in McEwan's *Enduring Love*"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss3/12>>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 12.3 (2010)
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss3/>>

Abstract: In his article "A Consilient Science and the Humanities in McEwan's *Enduring Love*" Curtis D. Carbonell provides a reading of a Third Culture novel that foregrounds the relationship of the sciences and the humanities. In Ian McEwan's novel we see a perfect example of how literary thinkers are listening to the world of science and speaking to it in return. This article responds to Stephen Greenberg's ideas about how Neo-Darwinian themes in the novel point to social themes by arguing that what underlies both of these is a deeper structure: the tension between C.P. Snow's Two Cultures, which is only one cycle in a longer engagement/conflict between science and the humanities. In particular, Carbonell reads McEwan's primary character, science-minded thinker Joe Rose, as juxtaposed by two foils that represent the humanities: a Keats's scholar, his wife Clarissa, and a religious fanatic and erotomaniac, Jed Parry. Carbonell analyzes the novel demonstrating that Joe's rationality is not quite so rational. McEwan represents Joe as a complex character to complicate a falsely simplistic dichotomy of the sciences and the humanities. The novel is best read, therefore, as an example of how a Third Culture might be envisioned as a true melding of the two categories.

Curtis D. Carbonell

A Consilient Science and Humanities in McEwan's *Enduring Love*

Ian McEwan's sixth novel, *Enduring Love* is a fitting place for a literary and cultural studies thinker to investigate a Third Culture text. The reading of the novel in the proposed context allows for the insights about the relationship between the sciences and the humanities. When McEwan makes characters speak particular positions for us, it is so that we can learn what is necessary for humanist and scientific rationalities to collaborate, e.g., a suspicion of received narratives, a belief in human universals, a commitment to reproduction (conceived as both biological and social) and to "love" (conceived here as interdisciplinary heterosexual romance). First, I consider an essay of McEwan's that argues for a shared ground between the two great branches of learning and second, I analyze the novel directly. I demonstrate that the sort of social themes investigated within novels actually point to a deeper foundational structure in *Enduring Love*: that of the engagement of the sciences and the humanities. In particular, I explore this structure by reading the characters as representatives of C.P. Snow's two cultures (on this, see, e.g., see Leavis and Yudkin). Joe, the rationalist and scientist, represents science, while his wife Clarissa and his stalker, Jed Parry, represent the humanities.

I offer a critical appraisal of such an intriguing Third Culture novel by responding to Jonathan Greenberg's "Why Can't Biologists Read Poetry? Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*." Greenberg's examination begins with the idea that the use of Darwinism within the humanities is often viewed as spurious. Moreover, he suggests that biologists cannot read poetry very well with its opposite, namely that poets cannot read science as well. What he is after is an extension of Snow's claim that two fundamental cultures exist in the academy: The literary culture of the humanities and the reductive culture of the sciences. Greenberg, however, uses this dichotomy to suggest that McEwan's novel does not simply rely on exploring how scientists and poets differ in their thinking. He attempts to provide "a cultural reading of Darwinism" (94) through the explication of the novel. In so doing he provides a reading of "a novel that engages contemporary debates about neo-Darwinism by representing a series of interrelated conflicts between scientific, literary, and religious worldviews. The novel seeks not to pronounce authoritatively on the validity of neo-Darwinism but — as novels tend to do — to imagine human beings with conflicting temperaments and beliefs placed in situations of crisis. Through these crises, the novel investigates and tests the legitimacy of the characters' different worldviews. The major themes of the novel are, moreover, important Darwinian themes, and thus what may initially look like mere disciplinary disputes between the "two cultures" play out in a range of surprising ways — as conflicts about sexual fidelity, childbearing, self-deception, and the power of narrative" (Greenberg 94-95). Thus, Greenberg highlights social-related themes over science-oriented themes, mostly from evolutionary biology. He sees wisely that McEwan's use of ideas from the life sciences relates directly to the main themes of the novel, "conflicts about sexual fidelity, childbearing, self-deception, and the power of narrative" (95). Writers, indeed, explore these sort of themes in novels, but themes not couched typically in the language and concepts of Darwinian evolutionary theory or sociobiology. However, while Greenberg focuses on these obviously salient themes by foregrounding the social, he avoids analyzing how McEwan uses his novel to explore ideas taken directly from thinking in contemporary popular life sciences. Whereas Greenberg argues that the Darwinian themes surface relative to the social relations of the characters, I work in the other direction: that the social elements comprising the relationships of the characters and their actions encourage us to consider the challenge not of only Snow's Two Cultures debate and its most current formulation, John Brockman's Third Culture concept, but of the claim there exists a fundamental divide between the sciences and the humanities. I read McEwan as exploring this false dichotomy to suggest that the poles are not so disparate and that there is a common ground between the two.

McEwan announces finding shared ground as his project in "Literature, Science, and Human Nature." The essay appears in *Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative* (Gottschall and Wilson), an anthology dedicated to exploring how literature and Darwinism intersect. In his essay, McEwan espouses the idea that there is shared ground between the science and humanities. The ability of human beings to tell stories, in both domains, links them. His essay suggests that we can learn about our shared human nature by looking to literature as well as science and that, in fact, only literature

can provide us with a look into how we conceptualized our pasts. Moreover, he argues that literature is much more accessible to us than modern science. We can recognize the quality of another's mind by simply reading a text, while science requires other skills, usually mediated by mathematics. What we recognize as literature, McEwan claims, are universals the writer has communicated — "At its best, literature is universal, illuminating human nature at precisely the point at which it is most parochial and specific" (Gottschall and Wilson 6). This simple statement is loaded with the academic conflicts between the extremes of cultural relativists versus biological determinists. What McEwan does, however, demonstrates a way out of the bind that would view human nature as culturally and/or biologically determined by, instead, shifting the focus. For him, what is interesting is how the specifics illuminate the universal. The irony is that much of "high" art and literature that seeks to utilize the universal to claim authority for a text (i.e., that Shakespeare should be in the canon because his representation of say, Hamlet, reflects universals of human behavior) does so at the expense of popular culture. But in such an anthology that seeks to insert the life sciences into literature and, with some of its more ardent proponents (e.g., Joseph Carroll), seeks to challenge much of contemporary critical theory and practice, McEwan offers us inadvertently a way to see how popular culture can be universal. For example, there can be very little that is more parochial and culturally specific than something like *South Park*. This animated social commentary presents the basest form of humor to do more than entertain. In fact, its very use of something like the representation of *World of War Craft* as a contemporary new media addiction reflects a very specific moment in the computer gaming industry's affect on culture (see Parker). However, by demonstrating how consuming such an activity can be addictive and prevalent within "geek" culture, it not only reflects very real phenomena in a niche market within society, but it may, indeed, as McEwan's lead suggests, point to something more universal, like the instinct for human beings to do a number of things: create narratives (real or virtual), become engrossed in social circles and milieus, feed pleasure centers, etc. The trick becomes apparent when admitting that canon-makers universalize particular qualities through their selections, just as McEwan has done, as have I.

McEwan, like most literary Darwinists, is not championing popular culture in his article, even if his novels walk fine lines between high-brow literature and popular fiction. What he does is argue how science and the humanities (what he calls "literature," in a typical disciplinary power grab) share a common element in narrative. He gives us several paragraphs on Darwin's life, wherein he suggests "let us read his life as a novel" (Gottschall and Wilson, 7), forming his own narrative. But, of course, this is what Darwin has done, as well, in formulating his major ideas in the *Origin* and other works. Darwin also suggested that universal feelings and expressions are innate and can be viewed in the expressions of infants. McEwan follows this line of reasoning, as have modern evolutionary psychologists, to suggest that novelists understand this as well — that literature, as well as science, has vindicated Darwin — without admitting up front that, maybe, novelists are also good at lying with a smile. Thus, for McEwan, the humanities and the sciences have reinforced each other in the search of human universals in human culture and biology. But McEwan knows there is a problem: the very attempt to define ourselves as human beings is tied up with our own concepts of modernity. He provides examples of how major and minor transitions were viewed in very historical, often eruptive cultural moments from Virginia Woolf to Woodstock to T.S. Eliot to Burkhardt. In them he sees the humanist's "aim of locating the roots of our modernity .. to ask at which moment, in which set of circumstances, we became recognizable to ourselves" (Gottschall and Wilson 13). Of course in the sciences, they have a different way of defining modernity. Whereas in the humanities the most broad-seeking comparatists may go back as far as the Neolithic revolution in terms of sociology or the mythical "Garden of Eden" in terms of theology, one dominant narrative begins with the emergence of the Renaissance and the later Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment that followed. And the sciences go back even farther than 10,000 years to our Pleistocene past.

However, McEwan sees that what both the sciences and the humanities are after is similar to a secular creation myth in which we determine a view of ourselves. Thus, both domains tell stories validly. Conflict often occurs over the focus — often conceptualized as the particular versus the universal — as well as over the very real distinction that science is accretive and uses experimental methods while literature (only one aspect of the humanities) repeats past patterns through endless variations that tend to change the patterns over time. McEwan shows that what may be in conflict is the concept

of rupture versus gradual change. Locating our definitions of ourselves in specific historical moments may offer the literary mind an answer to what it means to be a human being with a historical past because it implies the possibility of change (hopefully, for the better). Furthermore, McEwan mentions the conflict in the twentieth century between those who saw behavior as primarily shaped by culture vs. those who wanted to reinsert "Darwin" into the picture and how this later conflict coalesced in the academy over various positions between positivism/realism and social constructivism. He ends his essay with work done by anthropologists, like Paul Ekman, who argued that the Indigenous people of New Guinea could recognize emotions in photographs of modern US-Americans. McEwan suggests that today (over fifty years after the original controversial research) it is becoming harder to find Indigenous people and, thus, our living records of the past are nearly diminished. But literature, for McEwan, can act as a surrogate. His example of literary anthropology comes from Homer. A problem surfaces with the sole use of such a strong classical figure as McEwan's example. It suggests that our traditional canons are the only places where one might find such anthropologies. Moreover, this move toward viewing literature as anthropology can itself be a form of passive murder. It intimates there is no reason to keep Indigenes around because the kernel of human experience can be found in Homer. Regardless of whether McEwan would acknowledge the oblique implication of his thesis, the elevation of literature to such heights still begs the question: which literature?

The question of McEwan's hope for the humanities, and literature, to act as a powerful agent in defining human nature does surface in the novel. However, *Enduring Loves's* critical reception covers "a wide range of responses, from the ecstatic to the dismissive" with criticism ranging from attacks on his [McEwan's] use of ideas from the sciences to those praising his prose style (Clark and Gordon 58-59). Some see it a psychological representation of its main character, popular science-writer and card-carrying rationalist Joe Rose, peppered with rudimentary aspects of crime and detective fiction (Malcolm 171). However, as Peter Childs notes, "McEwan's novel has yet to develop a considerable body of criticism" (1). Much of the commentary has come in the form of reviews, although a few books addressing the novel have surfaced (e.g., *Slay*; Ryan). The novel's most evident theme is the notion of love and how it surfaces in the interaction of its three main characters: 1) Joe, 2) his wife, the Keats's scholar Clarissa, and 3) the erotomaniac and religious zealot, Jed Parry. Moreover, the novel presents three main dramatic scenes to dramatize the tensions among the characters: 1) an incident with a hot air balloon in which a man falls to his death, 2) a failed attempt on Joe's life, and 3) Joe's shooting of Parry in defense of Clarissa. The novel begins with two fast-paced chapters detailing the incident with a hot air balloon, an emotive narrative lynch-pin informing the rest of the novel. In this incident, the narrator, Joe, is hurled into an event with a group of men who attempt to restrain a balloon with a young boy inside the basket. The group comprises six saviors, Joe, the eventual hero/victim John Logan, Jed Parry, and three other men. For a few moments they work together, hanging on before a gust of wind launches the balloon into the air: "With five of us on the lines, the balloon was secure" (10). But, eventually someone lets go, thus causing a cascading effect of likewise releasers, except one man, Logan, who remains steadfast even as the balloon climbs a hundred feet in the air. He eventually loses his grip and plummets to his death.

Thus, the novel provides us with a perfect dramatic sequence to encapsulate an "entanglement" theme and "the aftermath" (McEwan 2), the idea that these characters' lives have become drastically entangled because of a simple tragedy and that what comes later (the aftermath) is tightly regulated by the initial event. Moreover, concepts like entanglement and aftermath reflect a social dynamic that one would expect to see explored in such a novel. The major prevalent social theme (taken from the title) is "enduring love," and this theme surfaces in the text just before the balloon incident. Jed and Clarissa are picnicking in the English countryside when the disturbance happens. McEwan tells us of their moments together, reminding Joe "of our very first meetings and the months we spent falling in love" (5). Such an explication could easily be extended through the entire novel in which the concept of enduring love is explored via the three main characters: 1) Joe and his fight to maintain his relationship with Clarissa, 2) Clarissa and her study of Keats's enduring love of Fanny Brawne, and 3) Jed Parry, the evangelical erotomaniac and his absurd insistence that Joe has fallen in love with him during the balloon incident and that god has ordained their amorous union. Yet McEwan's novel does much more when viewed as a consilient reflection of the relationship between the sciences and the humanities. In particular, it provides a few pieces of expository text situated in various places in the

novel that act as direct avenues into debates within the life sciences and clue us in to its internal structure. At one point, near the end of Chapter One, McEwan introduces the first of his controlling Third Culture themes: the problem of altruism and human nature (Dawkins). This introduction comes at the most dramatic moment during the balloon incident: when Joe narrates "It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all do the same" (14). The following paragraph describes the split-second dilemma the rescuers faced. Hold on together as a group, possibly recovering the balloon to the ground, or let go and risk being whisked into the air. Someone does let go, the text providing a key way in which to read the novel: "I didn't know, nor have I ever discovered, who let go first" (14). With this line, the narrator jumps out of the dramatic events, so tightly delivered, and inserts a paragraph and a half of pure exposition that might seem jarring if not for its narrative function. As Joe looks back at the incident and explains that no one will take the blame for letting go first, he claims there is no comfort in the idea it was prudent to save one's self because "there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Cooperation ... but letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict: what to give to others and what to keep for yourself" (15).

The narrator tells us that from this dilemma springs our morality and the basis of society: "Mostly, we are good when it makes sense" (15). And the little society congregated on the ends of ropes attached to a skyward balloon suddenly no longer made sense and, thus, disintegrated, claiming a victim in the one man who held on a bit too long. What we see here is that "altruism had no place" (15). However, as the philosopher and historian of biology Michael Ruse notes, we learn that all is not as it seems with the lone man, John Logan, who held on. Ruse writes that at first, it seems he does so for purely selfless reasons: to save the boy. Then, we learn his wife believes he was with his mistress and, thus, he must have held on to show appear heroic (not so selfless after all). Later, we learn he was simply giving a ride to a man and the man's mistress (thus, answering the doubts his wife had about two car doors left open) and that his actions, again, can be viewed as purely altruistic. Furthermore, Ruse provides a literary reading to comment on how a novel like McEwan's does just what Greenberg claims is often difficult: a poet (novelist) reads science in a helpful way. For Ruse, the central issue in the novel is a sociobiological one, but one that has interested the humanities for centuries: the explication of the concept of enduring love via concepts like altruism: "I have to confess that my reading of *Enduring Love* has quite won me over to the view that the creative artist can tell us things about science that the rest of us simply would not grasp ... science and the like, we can start to discover how life truly and really is, rather than how it appears to us" (Ruse <<http://www.searchmagazine.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/Science%20and%20Spirit%20archives/2000/March-April/full-bioart.html>>). I think Ruse is surprised that a creative artist can use his methods and medium to come to such a conclusion that is taken for granted by scientists. Yet, this is what McEwan does as he uses his novel to reinforce ideas common in the Third Culture. Yet Ruse sees a highly important literary element. That the novel is about the problem of altruism guides him to the use of an indirect reference to the Pauline epistle of 1st Corinthians in which enduring love is the message. Ruse reads McEwan as not only examining altruism via sociobiology but suggests that these ideas point to a human nature fully compatible with Paul's message of enduring love.

I follow Ruse by reading such a line as "altruism had no place" (and the balloon incident it reflects) as a way into the novel. McEwan's narrator tells us "so much followed from this incident ... such pathways of love and hatred" (19), then depicts a scene where Joe converses with Jed. Joe watches the man fall and eventually decides to trek across the field to see if he might still live. On his heels follows Jed. Joe arrives first and approaches the dead body. All goes as expected — the horror of finding Logan in a sitting position, his shoulders caved in, his facial bones distorted — until Jed inserts himself and does the unexpected. He implores Joe to pray with him. The rest of the novel is comprised of Joe dealing with the unexpected results, the "aftermath," of the balloon incident's affect on Jed. Not only does Joe suffer his own anxiety about letting go, he must confront a man who is insistent that Joe has fallen in love with him and that god has sent him to save Joe's atheist soul. While this occurs, Clarissa grows exceedingly concerned with Joe's new "obsession" proving he has a stalker. The rationality she loves in him seems to be disappearing. But, no one believes he is being stalked even after an attempt is made on his life. His own (ir)rationality/obsession is vindicated as something more substantial than delusion when he finds Jed in his home, holding a knife to Clarissa's throat. However, this brief sum-

mary does not do justice to the level of complexity given to social elements and relationships in the novel. Where Greenberg sees these social elements as pointing to the importance of neo-Darwinian themes in McEwan's novel, I argue that the Darwinian themes are best viewed as illuminating a deeper substructure: the engagement of the sciences and the humanities. Greenberg does not go deep enough. And it is at these depths that McEwan's novel provides us with a picture of the human that denies the rigid classification of antipodal binaries, as well as a view of the sciences and the humanities that is less about their distinctions and more about their similarities. This is done by representing the sciences and the humanities as sharing a very real and prevalent human predilection for narrative creation. The rationalist Joe becomes obsessed with revealing the truth of Jed. The imaginary/fabricated love of the erotomaniac Jed endures in a way that challenges the notion of "normal" love, demonstrating how such an internal narrative proves to be, while "inaccurate," long lasting. Clarissa's way of viewing (i.e., narrating) the world through "poetic" eyes reveals a deeper knowledge of what is happening to their relationship, one that Joe comes to understand later: the real problem was about the lack of children in their lives (75) and the face Joe wishes he can return to serious scientific work.

Such social themes can easily be explored as salient elements in the novel. However, what underlies them is the complex relationship between traditional, often conflicting worldviews (usually conceptualized as the humanities) vs. those that descend from the new approaches of science minded thinkers in the seventeenth century (for broad overviews see Gould; Toulmin; Cartwright and Baker). This novel is a depiction of a beleaguered rationality (Joe's) in opposition to the poetic sensibilities of the humanities: the literary on one hand (Clarissa's) and the religious sensibilities on the other (Jed's). This can be illustrated along a variety of avenues. One, in particular, appears when Joe visits the London library to research Darwin's contemporaries and the use of narrative and anecdote in science writing: "My idea being that Darwin's generation was the last to permit itself the luxury of storytelling in published articles" (44). As a popular science writer, Joe is interested in how science writing has removed the human as a central controlling element in its elucidation of scientific ideas. What he sees is that the anthropomorphic tendency in humans to create narratives clouds their judgment in the description of natural phenomenon, or so it apparently (according to Joe) did much more in Darwin's day. As an example, he tells the story of how a science writer explains the motivation of a dog sneaking into its master's chair after acting as if it wanted to be let out. This, Joe thinks, is nothing more than the insertion of human narrative onto animal behavior. But he finds it charming: "What I liked here was how the power and attractions of narrative had clouded judgment. By any standards of scientific inquiry, the story, however charming, was nonsense" (44). Furthermore, Joe follows this with a bit of information about why the London Library is an inadequate place to research: "The science collection here was laughable. The assumption appeared to be the world could be efficiently understood through fictions, histories, and biographies. Did the scientific illiterates who ran this place, and who dared called themselves educated people, really believe that literature was the greatest intellectual achievement of our civilization" (45-46).

Here we have, in condensed form, the primary tension in the novel: the tendentious feud between the humanities and the sciences as knowledge legitimizers. McEwan is working from the cyclical tension that has arisen at various times since the new philosophy of Descartes and Bacon challenged the traditional orthodoxy of Aristotelian thought and Renaissance humanism in the sixteenth century. It has been called the Battle of the Books and the Ancients versus Moderns. It has resurfaced in the varying challenges to the Enlightenment Project, first as a Romantic challenge of the reason-based worldview of the *philosophes* and their descendants via the elevation of the aesthetic and the intuitive. It surfaced again in the supposed "warfare" between science and religion of the late eighteenth century, as well as in the Two Cultures debates in the mid-twentieth century. Most recently, the broad-scale rebellions across the academy usually labeled the science wars saw historicist, constructivist, relativist, etc., moves away from more traditionally positivistic oriented thought in the sciences and realist approaches in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, literary studies, etc. (for a look at how these broad historical sequences relate, see Cartwright and Baker). At the heart of these conflicts, interactions, engagements, etc., is the fundamental question of the relationship of the sciences to the humanities and the importance of the role of the human. What Joe represents in his critique of the London library is the current posture by some thinkers that diminishes the importance of the human-

ties, regarding knowledge building. Such a stance places him squarely within a specific camp in the "science wars," one that is highly distrustful of the literary and interpretive methods that are the descendants of Renaissance humanism. However, he tells us that what is agitating him is his very human "emotional condition, the mental-visceral state I had yet to understand" (46).

Joe is a science-minded rationalist obsessed with understanding the role his actions caused in the death of John Logan, as well as obsessed with countering the madness of Jed Parry. In Joe's challenge to understand himself and those around him the novel reveals the importance of narrative for both the sciences and the humanities (something that goes a long way in diminishing the previously mentioned tension). Not long after the segment in which Joe muses in the London library about Darwin and narrative in science writing, he is at home thinking about the piece he needs to write when we are given another chunk of expository information introduced with Darwin. Here Joe tells us that in the nineteenth century the novel was the dominant artistic form. But something happened. According to him, both science and literature became professionalized and dominated by small elites. Physics in the sciences and modernism in the humanities. And with the professionalization, both were formalized and abstracted: "So the meanderings of narrative had given way to an aesthetics of form; as in art, so in science" (52-53). But, we realize this is a narrative he himself is telling about western thought, one of which he is unsure. He gives counter examples from Thackeray to Freud to Balzac. He accuses himself of abandoning truth for a great evil: magazine journalism. This segment reveals that Joe is torn between these two worlds. On one hand there is the professional world of academic science of which he once was a part but he left for the middle ground of popular science writing. On the other hand is mere journalism, story-telling, the stuff of the humanities. Yet, this critique of himself and of the humanities is ironic because the main action of the novel is one in which narrative is central. Joe must reconstruct the balloon incident in order to assess his guilt, as well as must enact a sort of penance by visiting to Logan's widow to confess what happened (58-59).

The novel revolves around the relationships of its three main characters. Joe, Clarissa, and Jed represent the three conflicting worldviews, Greenberg's "the scientific, literary, and religious" (94). Joe, of course, is the "rationalist." Moreover, Joe can also be viewed in opposition to Clarissa and Jed, these two characters together representing the meta-category of the humanities. McEwan provides a helpful way to view Joe's two foils with another of his expository interpolations. This time, Joe is musing about the work he must do during the day. The topic is the smile. He uses this phenomenon to enter the fray of academic debate concerning the role of culture vs. genetics in the formation of human behavior. As if taking his cue first from E.O. Wilson and the later second wave Evolutionary Psychologists, McEwan has Joe comment that "we do not arrive in this world as blank sheets, or as all purpose learning devices. Nor are we the 'products' of our environment" (74). McEwan's clever substitution (and indirect allusion) of sheets for slates should alert us to the fact he is echoing ideas directly related to the arguments of Evolutionary Psychologists like Jerome Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby, later echoed by linguist Steven Pinker, against that the Standard Social Science Model (SSSM), which supposedly argues for culture as the primary factor influencing human behavior. Moreover, Joe actually mentions "Edward O. Wilson" in the same paragraph, the doyen of sociobiology and the inspiration for much of McEwan's ideas in the novel, McEwan's "own particular intellectual hero" (Garner <http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/03/31/cov_si_31int/index.html>). At this point in the novel, Joe's rationalism is stable, but McEwan is setting us up to see how he problematizes it by representing Joe as obsessed with revealing the truth about Jed. Here, though, the first steps reveal Clarissa's take on Evolutionary Psychology as a new sort of fundamentalism. Regarding the latest fad of focusing on genetics in popular science writing, Joe tells us that "Clarissa had generally taken against the whole project. It was rationalism gone berserk. 'It's the new fundamentalism,' she said one evening. 'Twenty years ago you and your friends were all socialists and you blamed the environment for everyone's hard luck. Now you've got us trapped in our genes, and there's a reason for everything!' She was perturbed when I read Wilson's passage to her. Everything was being stripped down, she said, and in the process some larger meaning was lost" (74-75).

Although McEwan fails to mention the late paleontologist and historian and philosopher of science Stephen Jay Gould in his novel, one should note that the use of "fundamentalism" as used by Clarissa is an allusion to ideas in two important articles in the *New York Review of Books*, "Darwinian Fundamentalism" and "Evolution: The Pleasure of Pluralism." Moreover, with Clarissa's views, McEwan is

reflecting the standard argument that the sciences and the humanities are fundamentally different: the sciences are about reduction, while the humanities provide a chance at holism (see Wilson). However, after three paragraphs of exposition about the genetic turn in psychology and sociology, Joe tells us "What we were really talking about at this time was the absence of babies from our lives" (75). We are led to believe that the novel functions as Greenberg says it does: that these neo-Darwinian themes simply reflect the deeper, more fundamental themes of human social relationships. While I certainly do not contest this, if one wishes to take that perspective, I would argue that such domestic concerns like having a family, while important, are not the most fundamental formalistic elements in the novel (nor are they the most developed). For example, we learn that Joe and Clarissa eventually adopt a child, but we learn this as a quick line in the appendix ("R and M were reconciled and later successfully adopted a child" [259]). Furthermore, when Joe later states emphatically, "As I went out into the hallway, back toward the answering machine, I thought, I'm in a relationship [with Jed]" (77), I see this as reflecting inter-personal themes that operate shallowly on the surface but that reflect a more fundamental philosophical conflict over the Two Cultures. Such a potentially important dramatic element as having a baby is muted in the text while the implications of obsessing over a relationship with a stalker are foregrounded. The importance is the conflict between the characters' positions and how they represent three worldviews. Thus, my reading differs from Greenberg's because I view the social elements pointing toward a deeper structure of Third Culture ideas from within evolutionary biology.

This construction is complex because McEwan complicates Joe as a representative of rational science. Joe's new worry about Jed's very real madness becomes a sort of obsession itself, thus, clouding his rationality. Clarissa notices. McEwan uses her to challenge the reliability of our narrator. In Chapter Nine, Joe relinquishes his role as narrator, but only partially. The chapter begins with Joe telling the story from Clarissa's point of view: "It would make more sense of Clarissa's return to tell it from her point of view. Or at least from that point as I later construed it" (85). Speaking in third-person-present, Joe narrates his version of how Clarissa is experiencing the events. Joe has grown increasingly agitated because of Jed's attention. At one point, Jed leaves thirty-three messages on the answering machine, which Joe erases. This causes Clarissa to doubt the veracity of Joe's claims he has a stalker and she tells him that Jed is "not the cause of your agitation, he's a symptom" (90), although she shivers as she sets herself into a bath, imagining that Joe has become unhinged and that Jed is a figment of Joe's imagination. The reader, then, also begins to doubt Joe's reliability as a narrator. But McEwan's text points to an important distinction. The irrational functions on two levels: the emotional and the truly mad. Clarissa claims that the symptom that has been agitating Joe is the fact he is not doing serious scientific work, what she calls his "old obsession" (110). Furthermore, McEwan allows Jed time as a narrator in the form of letters to Joe. Like Clarissa, Jed represents the humanities. Whereas Clarissa is a literature scholar, Jed taught English as a foreign language. However, he is more closely associated with religion, a humanistic domain in which he views himself on a mission from god to convert Joe, "to set him free from his little cage of reason" (144). Jed is portrayed as sincere in his love and his religious zealotry, while also represented as insane. In the letter he writes, "Joe, Joe, Joe ... I'll confess it, I covered five sheets of paper with your name" (106). His type of obsession, while a form of irrationality, reveals itself as a different kind altogether than Joe's. Again, McEwan plays with the image of a blank sheet, this time being filled with the mad stuff of Jed's obsession. Clarissa, it appears, is the rational one, a nod by McEwan (a novelist) to the power of literature.

What we see in the second of the three most dramatic scenes (the murder attempt, preceded by the balloon incident and followed by the shooting of Jed) is a carefully crafted scene that not only dramatizes the factuality that Joe does, indeed, have a pathological stalker, but also represents the basic thrust of the novel in which McEwan uses his characters to explore the differences and the similarities between the sciences and the humanities. A birthday lunch for Clarissa with Joe and her mentor and godfather, the scholar Jocelyn Gale, turns into a botched attempt on Joe's life. It begins with Joe arriving late and ends with hired killers shooting the wrong man. Both Jocelyn and Joe have gifts for Clarissa, the former offering a brooch in the shape of the DNA double helix, the latter a first edition of Keats's collected poems. What we see are two objects, both beautiful, and both representing their collective enterprises. Clarissa even exclaims, "Oh god it's beautiful!" when she sees the brooch, whereas Joe's present elicits an actual hug and whispered promises of later sexual activity. Inter-

dispersed between these gift giving elements are two expositions, one about chemists who helped discover DNA (and those who followed erroneous paths) and another about Keats visiting Wordsworth. Jocelyn tells the story of Johann Miescher and how he identified DNA in the nineteenth century but how a teacher blocked his paper for two years. Miescher continued and eventually found the nucleic acid that comprises DNA (which meant nothing prior to the importance of Mendel's work being known). Jocelyn explains that the chemists at the time just "knew" the find was insignificant. And they were wrong; thus, the accepted story of DNA was wrong until the time of Franklin, Crick, and Watson. Clarissa then tells the story of Keats visiting Wordsworth and presenting "Endymion," wherein Wordsworth is supposed to have dismissed it as mere pretty Paganism. Clarissa admits that we are not to trust the myth of this famous put down because it cannot be truly verified. Both expositions deal with the importance of narrative, an element that binds the sciences and humanities as two very human endeavors (the important distinction, of course, being that the former provides some sort of validation, while the latter does not). The lesson here (unstated by McEwan) is that science was adamant and wrong, whereas the humanities admit up front the difficulties inherent in story telling (175-83).

McEwan recognizes the problems of having such difficult elements of "the human" at the center of these endeavors. When Joe is being questioned by the police after the attempt on his life, he muses about the fact no one could get their stories straight, that "we lived in a mist of half-shared, unreliable perception," that "pitiless objectivity, especially about ourselves, was always a doomed social strategy" (196). Then Joe ties this very common, human element to our natural past "We're descended from the indignant, passionate tellers of half-truths, who, in order to convince others, simultaneously convinced themselves" (196). As a rationalist Joe thinks this is a "defect" and that science and metaphysics [questions about ultimate reality] are such grand human endeavors. But "disinterested truth" and "objectivity" are still very much beholden to the limits of our own evolutionary past (196). McEwan privileges science and its attempt at objectivity, while admitting that even our Kantian perceptions of it are colored by human lenses, without overtly admitting that science does the same thing as fiction: provides a human narrative agent. Furthermore, we see McEwan's ambivalence in the way that Joe mishandles the final encounter with Jed. At the end of the novel, Joe is driving home after making an illegal handgun purchase when Jed calls him. Jed explains he is at Joe's home with Clarissa and that Joe should hurry along. Joe arrives and finds Jed with a knife to her throat. Joe shoots him in the shoulder and is frustrated to see Clarissa's horrified reaction. He realizes he does not live in a world of cold logic where Clarissa runs into his arms in overjoyed thanks. Joe recognizes the problem with his hope: "Such logic would have been inhuman" (231). Instead, Clarissa stares at him with such horror he thinks their relationship is over: "I was getting things right in the worst possible way" (232). Joe's rationality does not work emotionally for Clarissa in such situations where knives are brandished and guns fired. The emotional strain on Clarissa prevents her from rationally focusing on Joe's vindication. She was held at knife-point. Emotion is in abundance, and Joe had not foreseen this. Furthermore, the next chapter is a letter from Clarissa to Joe wherein she castigates him about the event: "Your being right is not a simple matter" (233). And, "You were right; you acted decisively and you're right to take pride in that. But what about the rest?" (235). Clarissa functions as the voice of human "wisdom" that comes to us from the humanities. Such a function should not be a surprise because McEwan, himself, is a representative of the literary, even as he supports many ideas directly funneled from the Third Culture. What Clarissa and the humanities represent is the importance of the social world for humans that cannot be reduced to its atomistic parts. The logic and rationality of the sciences, then, is seen as superior in its ability to generate knowledge of the natural world but inferior in navigating through the complexities of the human social world (where people are sometimes held at knife-point). However, one aspect of the humanities, the religious, does not fair so well in McEwan's novel. Jed Parry's representation as both sincere in his love for Joe and his love for god, coupled with his insanity, is indictment enough. The novel actually ends with a letter from Jed to Joe during his incarceration in a mental health facility. After reasserting his enduring love, the letter ends by telling Joe to remember that "faith is joy" (262). It is on this ironic Joycean note that McEwan ends his novel.

Ultimately, of the three characters Jed is represented the worst. While Clarissa represents the humanities acceptably, McEwan uses Jed to reflect problems within the humanities that go beyond the mere literary. For example, go beyond the instinct for telling narratives to declaiming them. Jed is certain, from the very beginning, that the entanglement of Jed and Joe is a product of god's will. He is

also certain that all else that follows is true. For Jed, Joe loves him even though Joe protests. There is a deluded certitude about Jed that does not reflect the humanities' understanding of narrative's problems. Jed represents problems inherent in "religion," but religion of a specific kind: he is a zealot, reminiscent of a fundamentalist instinct for certainty and dogma. Jed is convinced of many things, primarily that God has sent him on a mission to convince Joe of their mutual love and, likewise, that Joe does, in fact, love him. The erotomania is certainly a type of pathology we can easily recognize, but McEwan is also telling us something about his conception of the Third Culture. Jed's type of religious thought is unacceptable because it goes beyond mere story telling into an arena of certainty. Certitude is the primary offense that some religious thought offers, which McEwan is vilifying. This opprobrium is consistent with his representation of a complex Third Culture. Modern science is predicated on doubt. Jed has none of this, and so comes off less well than Clarissa, who can be accused of "telling stories" but doing so, often, with wisdom about how humans operate in the narrative-rich social world.

What we see in McEwan's novel is an example of the tensions between Snow's Two Cultures and, with such an obvious lacuna, a need for a Third. No single character occupies this latter role, although Joe himself might be considered one as a popular science writer. He thinks of himself as a journalist and has admitted to using the fluffy stuff of human narrative in his articles. However, it might be argued that McEwan (in the role of the author) is the Third Culture representative, an example that challenges the idea that literary studies thinkers do not speak to scientists. If we take this to mean that, more often than not, professionals in the humanities are not interested in ideas from the sciences, I hope to show that McEwan is a counter example: What McEwan does with *Enduring Love* is use the simplistic dichotomy of the sciences and the humanities to depict three particular characters as representatives of three very specific modes of thought. Of course, in their most simplistic forms they represent science, literature, and religion, respectively, yet McEwan does not caricature them or cast them in such tight molds: We see Joe as occupying a middle ground in which the rationalist becomes the obsessed, while the literary scholar demonstrates a very human ability at navigating through a complex social world. Is there any irony that the religious figure maintains a degree of joy throughout the narrative, yet still remains in the worst light, the truly insane? Possibly so. McEwan represents Joe and Clarissa as attempting to narrate reality but recognizes they have difficulties in doing so. Both the sciences and the humanities (i.e., the humanities as the literary, not the religious) narrate the world but are mediated by limiting factors that they recognize. But McEwan represents the religious aspect of the humanities as happy in its disconnect from reality, without the necessary understanding of the limitation. If we are to search for any sort of consilience, it should be in the fact that Joe is proven right and wrong. Jed certainly is a stalker. Yet, Clarissa's point of view that Joe has not managed their relationship during the crisis is also correct. Ultimately, *Enduring Love* can be read as a love story of passion and madness. However, situated within the context of the emerging Third Culture, it proves to be an optimistic yet complex look at the relationship between the sciences and the humanities and what it takes for true collaboration between the great branches of learning: a recognition that narrative, with all its problems, is inherent in both endeavors.

Works Cited

- Barkow, Jerome H., Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby. *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Brockman, John. *The New Humanists: Science at the Edge*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003.
- Brockman, John. *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
- Cartwright, John H., and Brian Baker. *Literature and Science: Social Impact and Interaction*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005.
- Childs, Peter. *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Clark, Roger, and Andy Gordon. *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love*. New York: Continuum, 2003.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene*. New York: Oxford UP, 1978.
- Garner, Dwight. "The Salon Interview: Ian McEwan." *Salon* (31 March 1998): <http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/03/31/cov_si_31int/index.html>.
- Gottschall, Jonathan, and David Sloan Wilson, eds. *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2005.

- Gould, Stephen Jay. "Darwinian Fundamentalism." *New York Review of Books* 44.10 (1997): <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1997/jun/12/darwinian-fundamentalism/>>.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. "Evolution: The Pleasure of Pluralism." *New York Review of Books* 44.11 (1997): <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1997/jun/26/evolution-the-pleasures-of-pluralism/>>.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox: Mending the Gap between Science and the Humanities*. New York: Harmony Books, 2003.
- Greenberg, Jonathan. "Why Can't Biologists Read Poetry? Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 53.2 (2007): 2.
- Leavis, F.R., and Michael Yudkin. *Two Cultures? The Significance of C.P. Snow*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1963.
- Malcolm, David. *Understanding Ian McEwan*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2002.
- McEwan, Ian. *Enduring Love: A Novel*. New York: Nan A. Talese, 1998.
- Pinker, Steven. *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. New York: Viking, 2002.
- Ruse, Michael. "Biology and Beyond: The Art and Science of Love." *Science and Spirit* 11.1 (2000): <<http://www.searchmagazine.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/Science%20and%20Spirit%20archives/2000/March-April/full-bioart.html>>.
- Ruse, Michael. *Darwinism and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Ryan, Kiernan. *Ian McEwan*. Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1994.
- Slay, Jack. *Ian McEwan*. New York: Twayne, 1996.
- Parker, Trey, dir. "Make Love Not War." *South Park* (2006): Season 10, Episode 8.
- Snow, Charles Percy. *The Two Cultures: And a Second Look: An Expanded Version of The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964.
- Toulmin, Stephen Edelston. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. New York: Free P, 1990.
- Wilson, Edward O. *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*. New York: Random House, 1998.

Author's profile: Curtis D. Carbonell teaches English literature at the New York Institute of Technology. His areas of research include Third Culture, video games studies, and science fiction as a literary genre. Carbonell's recent publications include "The Third Culture and the Problem of the Human," *Essays in the Philosophy of Humanism* (2008), "Taking off the Gloves: Dawkins and the Root of All Evil?" *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* (2008), and "Spandrels and the Institution of Evolutionary Biology," *The Journal of Contemporary Thought* (2009). E-mail: <ccarbo04@nyit.edu>