

## CLASSISM DEPICTED IN IAN MCEWAN'S *ATONEMENT*

**Eka Sashia Purnamasanti**

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, State University of Surabaya  
[ekapurnamasanti@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:ekapurnamasanti@mhs.unesa.ac.id)

**Drs. Much Koiri, M.Si**

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, State University of Surabaya  
[muchkoiri@unesa.ac.id](mailto:muchkoiri@unesa.ac.id)

### Abstrak

Setiap orang yang hidup pasti memiliki motivasi dalam hidup, baik untuk bertahan hidup atau untuk mencapai impian tertentu. Sayangnya dalam prosesnya, motivasi manusia dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor, salah satunya adalah dari sisi ekonomi dan status. Dengan menggunakan novel Ian McEwan, *Atonement*, sebagai sumber data, penelitian ini menjelaskan bagaimana classism digambarkan dalam novel *Atonement* karya Ian McEwan dan bagaimana praktik-praktik klasisme yang dilakukan oleh karakter-karakter dalam novel memengaruhi mereka dalam menentukan motivasi dalam hidup mereka. Dipandu oleh konsep klasisme oleh William M. Liu dan teori kebutuhan oleh David C. McClelland untuk memandu penelitian, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik klasisme mempengaruhi psikologi para karakter dalam menentukan motivasi mereka untuk mengambil langkah atau melakukan tindakan.

*Kata kunci: kelas, klasisme, motivasi manusia*

### Abstract

Every living person must have motivation in life, whether it's to just survive or to achieve certain dreams. Unfortunately in the process, human motivation is influenced by factors, one of which is from the economy and status. Using Ian McEwan's novel, *Atonement*, as the data source, this study describes how classism is depicted in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and how the practices of classism done by the characters in the novel influence them in determining their motivations. Guided by the concept of classism by William M. Liu and the theory of needs by David C. McClelland to guide the research, the result of this study shows that the practice of classism influences the characters' psychology in determining their motivations to do actions.

*Keywords : class, classism, human motivation*

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the characters' practices of classism displayed in the novel *Atonement*. Ian McEwan, the author of *Atonement*, was born on June 21, 1948 in Aldershot, England. He has a detailed and descriptive literary style. Each page in his novels is colored by a description of the color and atmosphere of each object he tells. Three McEwan novels, *Atonement*, *On Chesil Beach*, and *Saturday*, are all featured with the characteristics of this unique literary style. With strong descriptions, clear images, and extensive character development, all supported by shadow and contrast elements, he cleverly captures the reader into interesting

literary works. This style allows the readers to feel as if they have a connection with each and every character, even though the characters do not speak directly to the readers. Due to his distinctive style and unique competence in the field of literature, some awards and achievements were accomplished such as the Shakespeare Prize by the Alfred Toepfer Foundation, Hamburg (1999) and the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award In 2010. The Times even named McEwan among their list of "The 50 greatest British writers since 1945".

Published in 2001 by Ian McEwan, *Atonement* sets in three time periods, 1935 England where the society is

strongly influenced by the social class system, World War II England and France, and present-day England. The novel tells about a rich family and its 10-year-old girl named Briony with literary passion who mistakenly accuses her 20-year-old family gardener named Robbie of raping her cousin, Lola and sexually attacking her sister, Cecilia who secretly is in love with the gardener. Robbie is then sent to prison and he devotes himself to fight in France in World War II. Years later, Cecilia comes to her decision of leaving her family behind and becomes a nurse. Briony grows up and realizes that Robbie was, in fact, innocent; it was her brother's hugely rich friend named Paul who raped her cousin, but by then it's too late because Paul marries Lola to his wealth and therefore he is immune to accusations. Sadly, both Robbie and Cecilia fails to reunite because they meet their death in the darkness of war. Briony ends up writing a novel about these tragic lovers as part of her atonement.

The reason for choosing *Atonement* by Ian McEwan to become the main data source of this study is that this novel serves a bunch of quite complex issues to be all wrapped up in one narrative work such as love, war, childhood, class, guilt, and forgiveness. The complexity makes it an interesting object for critical studies in the field of social, psychology, and even politics. The novel is even more complex by the technique of multiple viewpoints used by the author to provide different perspectives from each different character through deep explanations of what is going on in their minds and the contradictions of what they see compared to what happens in actual. The novel has also been adapted into a film in 2007 with the same title directed by Joe Wright and won an honor by winning BAFTA and Academy Award.

Meanwhile, the reason to choose social class, classism, and human motivation as topics here is since this combination is rarely used to discuss literary works because "Social class and classism in psychology are confusing and difficult concepts to understand and apply" (Liu, 2011). This idea emerges based on curiosity to find out whether someone's class, status, and the stereotypes in the society can have a major influence in determining their motivations in life. The use of social class concepts is based on the determination of this study on finding how the fundamental concept of social class psychologically relates to human motivation. The researcher is keen on doing a study which particularly discusses the existing conflicts or phenomenon associated with the issue of classism and human motivation for achieving success in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*.

The important point that the author would like to highlight about this analysis is that instead of evaluating

only from the point of view of David C. McClelland's theory of needs, the process of determining motivation in *Atonement* novel will also be analyzed through the practice of classism done by the characters based on social class concepts in sociology. Characters in the novel have a variety of personalities as a result of their role based on their position in society, especially based on their high and low classes. Like it or not, the views of others about the level of importance of one's position or class in society will affect a person's mindset and behavior about how high he can dream and how far he can determine motivation since he is treated based on the existing stereotypes on class differences that apply in a society like Indiana University sociologist Jessica McCrory Calarco, Ph.D. (2012) explains that differences in social class emerge because of the ideas and values which surround you, the types of social interactions that you have at home, college and work, and the types of cultural activities that are prevalent in your culture.

Some previous studies discussing the topic of classism are by Dominica F. Lizzi (2019), Rachel Shor (2019), and Bernice Lott (2012). Dominica F. Lizzi's (2019) is titled *Classless: Classism in Social Work Practice and the Example of White Rural Poverty*. It discusses the implicit force of classism impacting social work practice and discourse using the example of white rural poverty and demonstrating the creation of belonging or not-belonging based on class standing. The second one, by Rachel Shor (2019), is titled *Assessing Implicit and Explicit Attitudes about Classism*. The author developed a Classism Implicit Association Test (IAT-C) and compared implicit associations with explicit attitudes about attribution for poverty and discussed a significant difference between implicit and explicit attitudes based on people's objective and perceived social class. The third study on the topic of classism is by Bernice Lott (2012). Titled *The Social Psychology of Class and Classism*, the study discusses the relationships between social class membership and a wide array of personal and social daily life experiences. It concludes with a discussion of classism, which contributes to diminished opportunities for low-income families.

Previous studies discussing Ian McEwan's *Atonement* are done by Jie Han & Pei Wang (2015), Paul Crosthwaite (2007), and Pilar Hidalgo (2005). Jie Han and Pei Wang's journal (2015) on *Atonement* is titled *The Experimental Techniques in Ian McEwan's Atonement*. They discuss the presence of the experimental techniques in the novel such as the multiple viewpoints and the narrative montage and flashbacks which make the novel powerful in its narrative. They stated that McEwan does not limit himself to certain forms of narrative, but instead he uses different narrative perspectives and voices according to the development of the plot. Shifting the

viewpoint allows reader to see events from various aspects. The second study is an essay by Paul Croswaithe (2007) titled *Speed, War, and Traumatic Affect: Reading Ian McEwan's Atonement*. His essay discusses the possibilities and weaknesses of narrative and general representation as a way of capturing and transmitting the state of the characters in rapid and extremely traumatic warfare. He suggested that, in certain circumstances, the novel might not only evoke a traumatic encounter, but it might also produce symptoms related to this experience in their actuality. The third study on the novel *Atonement* is an essay by Pilar Hidalgo (2005) titled *Memory and Storytelling in Ian McEwan's Atonement*. It analyses the novel using literary approach to show that a piece of literary work done by the character of Briony exists within the novel itself which therefore Pilar Hidalgo calls this novel as having the Austenian irony that works to subtly expose the foolishness and faults of humanity.

### **SOCIAL CLASS IN 1930'S ENGLAND**

1930s England is remembered for mass unemployment where society was pretty much influenced by the social class system. Yet on the other hand, during this period, living standards of people with jobs rose significantly (Lambert, 2019). According to history, 1930's England hold the classification of society into certain groups based on wealth and occupation in the community. Society at the time was holding class hierarchy that has changed a lot today. In 2013, a study conducted by BBC revealed that the people in the United Kingdom have fitted into seven social rather than three social classes like how it was in the past (BBC, 2013). The most orthodox and widely recognized people of the society in 19th century England is dividing people into 3 main classes and these classes were then subdivided according to the occupations in the society (Tomida, 2012). The classes are Aristocrats or Elite, Middle Class, and Lower Class. Aristocrats held the highest power, authority and social status. Their valuable time made them not involved in any manual work completed by normal people. The Aristocrats included the Royal family, spiritual lords, temporal lords, and great officers of the state such as baronets knights and country gentlemen. The middle class in 19th century England included people who were far more wealthy than the lower classes. This class was further divided into two parts depending on social status and economic strength. These two categories were upper middle class and lower middle class. The upper-middle class included factory owners, large scale businessmen, bankers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and clergymen. Meanwhile, the lower middle class included small scale businessmen, shopkeepers, merchants, and civil servants. The lower

class as the lowest social class in the 19th century England also was further subcategorized into two parts, namely the working class and the poor. The working class, or the upper lower class in the hierarchy, did the lowest level works for the country. Included in the working class were labor, factory workers, seamstresses, miners, and sweepers. The poor as the lowest of the low consisted of people with no occupation in any work who lived on the charity of others.

### **CLASSISM**

In Sociology, "classism", also refers to "class discrimination", is defined as a prejudice or differential treatment based on social class. Classism is developed by a system of beliefs and cultural attitudes in a society that ranks people according to their economic status, family lineage, work status, level of education, and other divisions. The forms of classism are upward classism, downward classism, lateral classism, and internalized classism (Liu, 2013). Upward classism deals with prejudice and discrimination towards individuals who are perceived to be of a higher social class (Liu, 2013). On the contrary, downward classism deals with such treatment towards people who are perceived to be below the perceiver by labeling someone as deserving of odd treatment (Liu, 2013).. Lateral classism deals with someone perceiving others to be in a similar social class to him (Liu, 2013). Another form of classism that is intrapsychic is internalized classism. This form of classism deals with the frustration feelings of someone for not being able to maintain his social class. This may lead to a shift in social class status when someone with this form of classism feels that it is impossible to continue the lifestyle and shift to a lower social class (Liu, 2013). In conjunction with psychology, classism plays a role in affecting an individual's psychology through classism-based trauma caused by social rejection (Liu, 2013). Social rejection usually leads to self-destructive and unhealthy behaviors (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002). Even for those with enough intelligence and education, social rejection results in decreased logical thinking and performance (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nus, 2002). In addition, social rejection leads to the decreased empathy for others and to the state of numbing both physically and emotionally (DeWall & Baumeister, 2006). The prejudice and discrimination towards someone suggesting he belongs to a particular group activate the neural networks in regulating pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003). These perspectives on how classism affects a person's psychology show that classism can result in mental health conflicts and problems.



## DAVID MCCLELLAND'S THEORY OF NEEDS

The psychological approach used in this study is the theory of needs by David C. McClelland. Also known as the theory of human motivation, this theory is built in his 1961 book, *The Achieving Society*. This theory says that individuals are motivated by three basic drivers: achievement, affiliation, and power. Winter (1992) even argues that these needs not only motivates individuals but also includes many of the most important human goals and concerns. By using this theory, this study seeks to show that each of these dimensions influences the mindset and behavior owned by the characters in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*. Each motivating driver has distinctive characteristics as below:

### 1) Achievement

According to McClelland (1961), the need for achievement includes someone's desire to excel beyond the standards set in society. A person with this need usually has a strong need to set and accomplish challenging goals, takes calculated risks to accomplish their goals, likes to receive regular feedback on their progress and achievements, and often likes to work alone (McClelland, 1961).

### 2) Affiliation

The need for affiliation includes someone having the desire to have close, friendly, relationships with other people (McClelland, 1961; Robbins, 2003). The people with this major need usually want to belong to a group, to be liked, favors collaboration over competition, doesn't like high risk or uncertainty, spend substantial time interacting with others, and will often go along with whatever the rest of the group wants to do (McClelland & Koestner, 1992).

### 3) Power

The need for power includes an individual's desire to gain the power to be dominant or influential in an attempt to make others behave as one would like (McClelland, 1961). The ones with this need usually want to control and influence others, like to win arguments, enjoy competitions and winning, and enjoy status and recognition (McClelland, 1961).

## METHOD

This study uses the research methodology of sociological and psychological criticism. Due to the wide variety of social class concepts of some famous sociologists, the study chooses the class hierarchy in 1930's England as the most suitable to describe the depiction of social classes in the novel in which the storyline is also set in 1930's England. Meanwhile, the concept of classism is taken from a journal titled *Introduction to Social Class and Classism in Counseling Psychology* by William M. Liu due to the need for this study to correlate the topic of

social class and classism with psychology. The psychological criticism will be using David C. McClelland's theory of needs for it provides quite complete and clear details on what drives humans in order to reach their goals.

### Data and Data Source

The main object of the study used is *Atonement*, published in 2001 by Anchor Books as the latest novel by Ian McEwan in the 21st century. The data taken from this novel are phrases and direct or indirect quotations.

### Data Collection

The data collected will be managed using a qualitative system due to the lack of numbering of sample data provided in this study. The data is presented in the form of sentences represented by statements, paraphrases or quotations.

### Procedure of Data Analysis

There are some steps to analyze the data collected from the novel *Atonement* arranged as follows:

First of all, close reading is done in a novel. The aim of this stage is to understand what is happening inside the novel and to find the necessary data on the representation of the social class, classism and human motivation in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*.

Second, to make a note-taking of some of the points or sequences in the novel as the following action of close reading. This step is intended to capture a number of points that need to be revealed. Guided by research questions, the data taken from the note-taking will uncover some of the cases needed to arrange the data.

Third, to arrange the data. In this step, the data collected from the note-taking will be organized and included in the analysis presented.

## ANALYSIS

### 1. Depiction of Classism in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* *Emily Tallis' Downward Classism*

The first form of the practice of classism is the downward classism shown by Emily Tallis who is a mother to Leon, Cecilia, and Briony. She disagrees with her husband's decision, Jack Tallis, to finance the education costs of Robbie Turner who is nobody but the son of their cleaning lady. Downward classism as in 2.2, is defined as prejudice and discrimination towards individuals who are perceived to be below the perceiver by labeling someone as deserving odd treatment (Liu, 2013). The practice of this type of classism makes Emily the middle-class tend to suggest that Robbie, in line with his social status as a lower-class, deserves treatment just as low and odd as his status is perceived to be. Although she never shows her classist attitude directly to Robbie, she frequently expresses that through

the way she disapproves her husband decision to help with Robbie's education and giving him such social mobility. Her conservative point of view sees Jack's action as violating the natural order of things and that it's just "*a hobby of Jack's*" (McEwan, 2001:142). She even thinks that it makes it "*unfair on Leon and the girls*" (McEwan, 2001:142) and that "Nothing good will come of this" (McEwan, 2001:142).

#### *Briony Tallis' Downward Classism*

Another evidence for downward classism is shown by Briony Tallis. Her childish imagination misinterprets the sexual tension between Robbie and her sister. The time Robbie raising his hand "*as though issuing a command Cecilia dared not disobey*" (McEwan, 2001:36) and her sister, Cecilia, taking off her clothes in front of him before she plunges into the fountain was taken by Briony as if "*The sequence was illogical*" (McEwan, 2001:36) and later she develops her presumption that Robbie was a "*maniac*" (McEwan, 2001:50) based on her understanding that lower class people are more vulnerable to this behavior. Her downward classism towards Robbie and her childish imagination that cannot think of any other possibilities on things she witnesses as a child lead her to bringing it further to the haphazard accusation of Robbie. Robbie is also accused of raping his cousin, Lola, based on her testimony which actually is not very clear. However, again, based on her understanding that lower class people are more vulnerable to the bad behavior she calls as "maniac", her accusation falls back against Robbie. Even when the police asked for her testimony of the incident, she suddenly became very confident and confessed that he had witnessed what had happened as "*plain as day*" (McEwan, 2001:56).

#### *Cecilia Tallis' Downward Classism*

Cecilia, who in fact is very close to Robbie and had a special relationship between them, is also identified as having a downward classism against Robbie. She keeps distance and always seems awkward with Robbie at the time they both study at the same university. "*That's our cleaning lady's son, she might have been whispering to her friends as she walked on.*" (McEwan, 2001:60). She is never ready of what her friends would think of her if they only know that she and Robbie knew each other since childhood and are very close. Therefore "*Occasionally, they passed in the street and smiled*" (McEwan, 2001:60) and "*She always seemed to find it awkward*" (McEwan, 2001:60).

#### *Robbie Turner's Upward Classism*

Like Cecilia, Robbie also holds a form classism towards Cecilia, but it is the one in which he places Cecilia as being the upper class person than he is so that he distinguishes his behavior from most people with Cecilia, also called as upward classism. As defined in 2.2, upward classism deals with prejudice and discrimination towards individuals who are perceived to be of higher social class (Liu, 2013). In front of Cecilia's presence when he is invited to dinner at the Tallis family's house, Robbie seems to be hinting that he is distancing Cecilia away from him because they come from two different classes. However, this could also occur outside of his awareness of the awkwardness he usually feels to see Cecilia. Likewise when Cecilia takes off her clothes in front of her to plunge into the fountain, he immediately thought that what Cecilia does is "*to humiliate him*" (McEwan, 2001:61) and to suggest that he is the weak lower class that Cecilia has to throw herself in and take the piece of broken vase Robbie has broken at the bottom of the fountain instead of letting Robbie do it. For Robbie, "*There it stood, the undeniable fact.*" (McEwan, 2001:61).

## **2. Needs that Motivate**

### *Cecilia's Need for Affiliation*

Initially, it is quite complicated for Cecilia Tallis as a privileged daughter of an upper-class family to determine what she really needs in life. As introduced before, she actually knows "*she could not go on wasting her days in the stews of her untidied room, lying on her bed in a haze of smoke, chin propped on her hand, [.....]*" and that "*she should make plans, but she did nothing.*" (McEwan, 2001:20). Life is already at a very comfortable and lazy state for Cecilia to even plan for her own future. Yet things are drastically changed when she realizes the feelings she develops for her family gardener and also her childhood friend, Robbie Turner. She is erotically and secretly head over heels in love with him that she refuses her brother who "*repeatedly invited her to spend time with him in London.*" (McEwan, 2001:20) and that she "*unbuttoned her blouse and removed it, unfastened her skirt[ ...] and climbed into the water in her underwear*" in front of Robbie when she attempts to go outside and fill a vase at the fountain, not knowing that they are witnessed by the little Briony. The love between the two have quite fast progress and make them losing their minds. Robbie accidentally give a letter concerning his fantasies about Cecilia to Briony. Briony also then accidentally witnesses the two making out in the library. This is what brings Briony to accuse Robbie of being a sex maniac after she vaguely finds her cousin being attacked by a man. Robbie is then thrown in jail and Cecilia's love that is just recently burning hot towards Robbie meets misfortune.



*"She told him she had cut herself off from her family. She would never speak to her parents, brother or sister again. He followed closely all her steps along the way toward her nurse's qualification." (McEwan, 2001:148)*

Her decision to leave her family and her status as an upper class is the first step where she realizes what she really needs in life. Her definition of success is no longer about money and status, but about being together with love of her life, Robbie Turner. Here it can be seen that basically, based on the needs theory, Cecilia has the need for affiliation dominating her. As provided in 2.2, the people high in this need have the desire of having close and friendly relationships towards others. Her refusal to her brother's invitation to London proves that she does not like high risk or uncertainty, which is one of the characteristics of people in need of affiliation. This need is proved to motivating Cecilia in determining her greatest aspiration after all the things and tragedies that have taken place. She just wants to be with Robbie Turner, her dream companion, whom she thinks is the only friend she wants in his life. Although all her life he did not like to take high risks, Cecilia does not hesitate to leave her family to pursue her love. This situation does not break Cecilia's main need for affiliation, because compared to the expectations of most of the characters in this novel who want great success for themselves in certain fields, such as Briony as a writer, Leon as a successful entrepreneur, or Paul Marshall as a chocolate billionaire, Cecilia's wish was the simplest. Without the desire to rule or achieve certain goals, she wants nothing but to live with her lover despite the class she was assigned into.

#### *Briony's Need for Achievement, Power, and Affiliation*

Nothing else wanted by Briony since her childhood more than being a successful writer and the ruler of her own world. Her passion for storytelling and pouring fantasy out of her brain into writing always radiates in her days as a child in the Tallis family. Even from the earliest paragraph from the earliest chapter of this novel, the personality and the dreams of Briony Tallis are already very well narrated through descriptions that can be said to be quite substantial. In the days when the family is about to welcome her brother back from town, Briony has made her brother a home entertainment in the form of a stage drama entitled "Trials of Arabella". Although she will need the help of her cousins namely Lola, Jakson, and Pierrot to become the actors, she *"had designed the posters, programs and tickets, constructed the sales booth out of a folding screen tipped on its side, and lined the collection box in red crêpe paper"* (McEwan, 2001:5) all by herself. In her ambition, the

drama was *"written by her in a two day tempest of composition, causing her to miss a breakfast and a lunch"* (McEwan, 2001:5). She also does not forget to ask for his mother's opinion, Emily Tallis about the drama script that she creates. Her mother *"read(s) the seven pages of The Trials of Arabella in her bedroom[...and said that the play was" stupendous, "and agreed instantly"* (McEwan, 2001:6). These facts about her show that the need that dominates her is the need for achievement as in the theory described in 2.2. Briony knew very well what she wanted to achieve so she poured all the best of herself for the success of her passion. People with this need usually like to receive regular feedback just as the ones Briony received from her closest ones, especially from Emily Tallis, her mother. In addition, the characteristic of the need for achievement shown by Briony is that she likes to work alone. Briony is obviously the one who knows best what she want for herself, therefore working alone makes her able to ensure that everything goes according to what she arranges in her head.

However, she experiences a shift in matters of needs that motivate her. The first shift occurs after she witnesses several scenes involving her sister, Cecilia with his family gardener, Robbie Turner. The first scene Briony saw was where Cecilia and Robbie stand near a fountain in the Tallis family's yard. Based on the facts, what happens is that Cecilia wants to fill the vase she is holding with water from the fountain and then Robbie offers her a help. Cecilia refuses but Robbie insists then both of them scramble and drop the vase which causes it to break and scatter (McEwan, 2001:30). Unfortunately, the vase holds a very sentimental value for the Tallis family and so what happens really upsets Cecilia. Cecilia takes off her clothes and remains only in her underwear in front of Robbie to dive into the fountain to pick up the scattered parts (McEwan 2001:30). Whereas through the perspective of Briony who saw the scene through the window of her room, she could only interpret the situation with what she sees through her eyes without facts to hear. Briony is a 13-year-old girl who tries to understand the scene between Robbie and Cecilia in an adult's perspective based on her limited knowledge as a child. With her lack of knowledge, she mistakenly thinks that Robbie proposes to Cecilia and takes full control of her, forcing her to take off her clothes (McEwan, 2001:39). Another adult thing haunting her mind is when she impudently opens and reads the letter Robbie entrusts her to give to Cecilia. Robbie feels too guilty about what happened near the fountain and at the same time is too shy to ask for Cecilia's apology directly so he wrote a letter and sends Briony to present it to her sister since he is also too shy to give it to Cecilia by himself.

Unfortunately, the letter he gave to Briony was the wrong one which he wrote with a sexual fantasy of him about Cecilia instead of the one he wrote with an apology. The moment he realizes, Briony is already away and he can not stop her. With the fountain scene still haunting her mind, Briony hurriedly takes the letter home and reads what it says to satisfy her curiosity. Briony was stunned by what she reads in Robbie's letter to Cecilia (Robbie writes: *"In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long."*) (McEwan, 2001:84). It is of such obscene language that should not be read by children the same age as Briony. The incident at the fountain, then the letter, corroborates her findings about the adult world that she has never imagined before. She also has time to tell about the letter to Lola, her cousin. Lola, who is several years older than Briony, decides to refer to Robbie as *"maniac"* and Briony couldn't agree more (McEwan, 2001:90). Lola also suggests Briony to immediately report to the police before something dangerous happens to Cecilia. As if that wasn't enough, incident by incident between Robbie and Cecilia is witnessed by Briony. The third incident that she accidentally witnesses is where Robbie and Cecilia make out in the library before dinner.

*"Briony stared past Robbie's shoulder into the terrified eyes of her sister. He had turned to look back at the intruder, but he didn't let Cecilia go. He had pushed his body against hers, pushing her dress right up above her knee and had trapped her where the shelves met at right angles. His left hand was behind her neck, gripping her hair, and with his right he held her forearm which was raised in protest, or self-defense. "* (McEwan, 2001:91)

After the letter from Robbie, Briony *"had cast herself as her sister's protector"* (McEwan, 2001:91). Therefore witnessing the incident in the library raising her belief that Robbie is inevitably a sex maniac.

The last incident that becomes the culmination of Briony's vile accusations to Robbie is when her two cousins, Jackson and Pierrot, disappear at night and so the whole family goes searching for them. Briony with a flashlight in her hand searching for them near the lake. In the dark she is shocked by two figures in the bush. Before she could even realize who they were, one of them ran away and Briony immediately realizes that the one staying is her cousin, Lola. Lola looks scared and Briony soon realizes that her cousin had just been raped. In fear, Lola claims she does not know who the man raped her was. Quickly, Briony opens up the possibility that it was *"the maniac"* who had raped her cousin. Despite knowing of this accusation, Lola did not show rejection or

disapproval of this accusation of Briony on Robbie. The authority came immediately and they trusted the testimony of a 13-year-old child who was actually too often daydreaming. Robbie ends up being arrested for a crime he does not commit (McEwan, 2001:135). This is where the shifting of Briony's need occurs. She who was initially dominated by the need for achievement, with her passion in literature and willingness to receive feedback from people around her, shifts to being dominated by the need for power. Like the characteristics shown in 2.2, Briony is proved to be dominated by the desire to arrange everything and everyone according to her and to be known as a *"hero"* who had protected her sister and her cousin from *"The Maniac"* (McEwan, 2001:50). She seems to feel proud of what she does without the knowing to the fact that she misunderstood the love between Cecilia and Robbie that indeed is going awkward from the very start. Years later, Briony grows older and starts realizing that she was unsure about whether it was Robbie who raped Lola. She soon realizes that it was Paul Marshall the chocolate billionaire who raped her cousin. However, Briony can not accuse him so because he is immune to law since he ends up marrying Lola. Briony ends up feeling extremely guilty for accusing Robbie with false accusation and killing the hopes of him and Cecilia to be together. She finally decides to leave all her status and fortune behind by joining nurse training. Still, she continues doing her passion to write novel (McEwan, 2001:222). It is just that she no longer writes with her selfishness to control the worlds as she wills. Instead, she writes a novel full of her apology of destroying hopes of two people in love with her know-it-all behavior. She wants to make it up to both Robbie and Cecilia although it is kind of impossible for them to forgive her since they die too early, before even have the chance to reunite. Briony meets her success in her old age (McEwan, 2001:222). She becomes a successful author like she always dreamed of since she was a kid. Her needs shift throughout a long period of time.

#### *Robbie Turner's Need for Affiliation*

Unlike the others, Robbie remains consistent about the needs that dominate and motivate him from the start. He is dominated by the need for affiliation, as evidenced by his behavior from the beginning of being friendly and eager to build relationships with others. Although he came from the lower class, he is very well educated and well-mannered, completely *"without social unease"* (McEwan:2001,64). He spends everyday working as a gardener for the Tallis family as a source of income. He never seems ambitious about certain things. Although he plans to continue his education, which is financially

dependent on Jack Tallis (father of Leon, Cecilia, and Briony), he is not in hurry and more focused on what he already has and what he can achieve everyday. This is consistent with the characteristics mentioned in 2.2 that people who are dominated by the need for affiliation tend to prefer to spend time interacting with those around them and do not like to take big risks or uncertainties. For him, he just wants to be liked and feels loved by those around him rather than competing for his own ambitions. The only thing that makes him taking a big risk is when he tremendously falls in love with Cecilia. And that in the end makes him regret it for life because if only he and Cecilia could explain to Briony, his love would not be misinterpreted as the character of a "maniac". Even after he is imprisoned and then joins the British troops, he is liked and respected by other soldiers and that makes him quite comfortable (McEwan, 2001:139). Somehow, his status as a lower class and how the surrounding people treat him, especially The Tallis, cannot be taken away even though he is smart and without social anxiety.

It can be seen here that the needs which dominate and motivate them are also sufficiently influenced by the classes the characters belong to and their behavior of classism as explained in 3.2. Downward classism of some members of the Tallis family makes Robbie easily accused of a crime that he does not commit. Their classism tends to influence their views of people from the lower class. When thinking about evil and bad behavior, the lower class is what first appears in their minds. For Briony, her pride as an upper class together with her ambition to be seen and considered a family hero is strongly supported by his downward classism towards Robbie. Whereas for Cecilia and her relationship with Robbie, the classism behavior that they both have where Cecilia has downward classism towards Robbie, and vice versa, Robbie has upper classism towards Cecilia, making awkwardness and doubt always arise between them, leading them to uncertainty and wrong steps.

## CONCLUSION

Based on research questions mentioned in the first chapter, this study can be concluded into two major points. They are the depiction of classism and the way social class influences the characters' motivations towards success in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*.

The gap between the wealthy Tallis family and billionaire Paul Marshall and Robbie the gardener make the practice of classism extremely vulnerable. The behavior of those who are influenced by classism affects their daily interactions and even influences their motivation to achieve success in their respective versions. Robbie, who is raised by a lower-class family, got the generosity of the head of the Tallis family who provides

him with tuition fees to the university. Although he is educated and easily mingles with anyone, even with the Tallis and Paul Marshall families who came from the upper class background, his status as a lower class could not be separated from him. This is what makes it easy for him to be accused with vicious accusations directed at him by Briony Tallis. He ends up in prison and in the midst of war spending the rest of his life harboring hopes of being able to live with his love, Cecilia Tallis. While the one actually guilty of the rape, Paul Marshall the billionaire, achieves his success and is immune to law. As if wealth can be the solution for everything. Likewise with Briony, even though she has been careless and guilty all his life, she still achieves her goal as a successful novel writer in the end.

As an impact, the needs that dominate and motivate characters are influenced by their behavior towards others in class and status. Discriminating behavior and feeling discriminated bring them clarity on how far they can and must be motivated in taking steps. Cecilia, who was initially unsure of her life's purpose, was convinced to make the big decision of leaving the family and chasing after her love. This is the result of his awareness of how he loved Robbie and he did not agree with the discrimination that his family had done to the man he loved. Likewise, Briony, although initially discriminating against Robbie, who he considered poor and misbehaving, he eventually had empathy and switched from being dominated by power to being dominated by affiliation needs. Robbie is consistent from the start until the end of the story, holding on to his need for affiliation, which is to love and be loved, to be just well received by those around him even though he understands his class and status.

## Suggestion

This Study has contribution in classism and human needs study. *Atonement* by Ian McEwan gives a portrait of the distinction between the rich and the poor in terms of their ability in achieving their needs and goals in life. Robbie's life story becomes the center point of the issue. He is mistreated and misunderstood by the rich and their classism behavior. Each of the character holds certain needs that motivate them and their actions, but classism as the result of status and economic inequality affects them in their way. In the future, this novel is worth to discuss in other issues and viewpoints.



## REFERENCES

- Abdoel-Moety, Doha. (2018). *The Ideologies of War and Social Class in Atonement: A Critical Stylistic Analysis*. Prague Journal of English Studies.
- Carlbom, Carolina. (2009). *The complexity of Class: A Study of Ideology and the Power of Literature on Ian McEwan's Narrative*. Department of English Centre for language and literature. Lund University.
- Crosthwaite, Paul. (2007). *Speed, War, and Traumatic Effect: Reading Ian McEwan's Atonement*. Cultural Politics: an International Journal.  
<https://www.enotes.com/topics/atonement/in-depth>
- Han, Jie & Wang, Pei. (2015). *The Experimental Techniques in Ian McEwan's Atonement*. Open journal of Social Sciences.
- Hidalgo, Pilar. (2005). *Memory and Storytelling in Ian McEwan's Atonement*. Critique-studies in Contemporary Fiction.
- Jun, Heesoon. (2018). *Classism*.
- Law, Michael. (2015). *Charabancs and Social Class in 1930's Britain*. The Journal of Transport History.  
<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/atonement/themes/class>
- Liza, Dominica. (2019). *Classless: Classism in Social Work Practice and the Example of White Rural Poverty*. Smith College Studies in Social Work. 1-18.
- Lott, Bernice. (2012). *The Social Psychology of Class and Classism*. The American psychologist. 67.
- McClelland, David. (1985). *Human Motivation*. 10.  
<https://prezi.com/f8lljjydio7j/atonement-by-ian-mcewan-analysis/>
- Shor, Rachel. (2019). *Assessing Implicit and Explicit Attitudes about Classism*. Journal of Poverty. 1-18.
- Smith, David. (2017). *Theory and Class Consciousness*.
- Stoyanov, S. (2017). *A Theory of Human Motivation*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/mar/29/ian-mcewan>