

## **Rhizomatic Dissemination of Postmodern Ethical Decadence in Ian McEwan's Amsterdam**

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**Abstract:** As one of the recurrent themes in the literature of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, moral decadence is skilfully interwoven in the various levels of McEwan's *Amsterdam* (1998). Having an eye on Deleuze and Guattari's taxonomy of four major types of multiplications based on the actual root types in botany discussed in their book *One Thousand Plateaus*, this study attempts to show that the dissemination of the moral turpitude in *Amsterdam* follows a particular mode of multiplication. Instead of the patterns of pivotal taproot, dichotomous root or fascicular root, moral decadence in this novel spreads wildly in that of rhizomatic root and devastates various "plateaus" of British society on the verge of the third millennium. To substantiate this claim, the six principles of the rhizomatic expansion (i.e. connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, a signifying rupture, cartography and decalomania) are examined vis-à-vis *Amsterdam*: an investigation that lays bare an aspect of McEwan's postmodern psyche which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is rhizomatic.

**Keywords:** Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, moral deterioration, postmodern ethics, euthanasia

*Amsterdam*, a city entirely without roots, a rhizome-city with its stem-canals. (Deleuze and Guattari 15)

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

An image of a desert with a set of footprints of a man on sand is the all-embracing front cover of Bauman's book *Postmodern Ethics* that can serve as a pictorial prelude to the argument on the condition of ethics in the postmodern World of England on the verge of third millennium depicted in *Amsterdam* (1998). Desert is roughly associated with two clusters of symbols. It symbolises, on the one hand, purity, eternity or revelation ("Desert") and on the other emptiness, barrenness, desolation, death and loneliness. Emphasizing on the latter image of desert, the major concern in this argument is to go beneath the surface level of moral desert of England in 1990s portrayed in *Amsterdam* and to lay bare her rhizomatic pattern which has facilitated McEwan to render his moral tale. The conception of the rhizome is exclusively based on Deleuze and Guattari's definition of rhizome in their landmark work *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In other words, the primary aim of this section is to unearth the rhizome and make apparent how the decadence of the postmodern ethical is expanded and multiplied throughout the labyrinth of the British society.

The narrative of *Amsterdam* essentially cannot be considered as a self-conscious postmodern text in the sense that it is not, at any level of the text, aware of its own status as fiction or an aesthetic object. In fact, the novel, resembling the realistic novels, accentuates that its world is real and its narrative is natural; accordingly, there is no attempt to invite its readers to reconsider their relationship with the fictional world it depicts or the story it tells. In sum, *Amsterdam* is not a self-conscious writing that produces self-conscious reading. However, the contribution of this novel to the postmodern fiction can be traced at the reader's level.

As Nicol puts in his enlightening book *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*, "postmodernism in fiction is not simply a matter of how authors write, but how readers read. One way in which we can conceive of postmodern literary theory and practice is as a clarion call not to writers but to readers to do things differently". Adapting Ezra Pound's modernist command to

writers to “make it new,” Nicol remarks that postmodernism might be characterized as “insistent demand to ‘read in a new way’”(40).

One of those new ways of reading in the postmodern fiction is “rhizomatic reading” (the other one is “paranoid reading”) which, as Nicol writes, is a “playful and accepting of open-ended interpretation” which provides an “alternative to a straightforward linear ‘surface–depth’ model of interpretation”(47) which is a conventional reading in realistic fiction. Referring to Fowler’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* and its author’s observation about “the tyranny of the last chapter,” Nicol believes that Fowler in this novel “suggests that in a more rhizomatic structure, an alternative form to the page-bound novel, which is by definition linear, it might be possible for all four endings to be ‘active’ at the same time”(111). However, Deleuze and Guattari themselves sooner than any other literary critics have tested the applicability of rhizomatic approach to literary works and their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* which is an application of rhizomatic reading on Kafka’s *The Trial*.

Though the details of the “rhizomatic reading” are elaborated later in this study, there are some examples of this type of reading that Nicol refers in his study on the postmodern fiction. As Nicol points out, the narrative structure of Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* is “rhizomatic, not only because we can enter the text at any point and then proceed to any other from there, but because we have to think of the narrative possibilities as spatial and of equivalent value rather than linear and hierarchical. Each of our interpretations of *Pale Fire* are potentially as valid as the other” (86). As another example, Nicol writes that the narrative structures of John Barth’s “Lost in the Funhouse” and Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths” are “rhizomatic rather than arborescent, and continually invite the reader to conjecture rather than to interpret” (82).

The concept of rhizome works here as a “figuration” rather than a metaphor. Though, both of these terminologies are implemented to improve the understanding of a concept, as Hagood writes, “a figuration is an analytic tool used in work influenced by poststructural theory to move beyond coding and categorizing data in order to re-describe and to represent concept differently” (145). Metaphor by no stretch of imagination can be perceived as an analytical tool, but itself the object of analysis. As St. Pierre argues, the differences between the two is that a figuration is not a graceful metaphor that provides coherency and unity to contradiction and disjunction; rather, it is a “politically informed map” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 181), a cartographic weapon, that charts a line of flight” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977 1987, p. 125) into the turbulence masked by the simulacrum called coherence” (280-81). However, as Hagood observes, metaphor and figuration are different since “unlike metaphor, a figuration attempts to provide freeing (sic) ways to think about a concept by attending to the complexity inherent within it” (145).

## 2. DISSEMINATION OF MORAL DECADENCE IN AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam is a narrative at the “crossroads” of the rhizomatic figuration on the verge of celebrating the new millennium. In this postmodern feast, the moral concerns are sacrificed for the unquenchable desire of personal benefit and ambition. Through his well-crafted “social satire”, McEwan depicts the dystopia of contemporary England which is “dark and sour”(Malcolm 189). McEwan exposes unregretfully the egotistical and hypocritical nature of various figures of public life-- artists, politicians, journalists and publishers—during the reign of Conservative party where everyone is pursuing the “big one”-- to be a reputed newspaper editor, to compose the most original piece of music, or to become the Prime Minister-- at any cost.

In fact, moral issues have been one of McEwan’s major preoccupations throughout his authorial career, particularly when his characters’ moral decisions have a direct influence on their deeds. Briony in McEwan’s novel *Atonement* is the best example; however, McEwan avoids the social deterministic approach in terms of his character’s moral behaviour. In other words, the social interactions and constructs alone do not determine individual moral behaviour and McEwan lets the characters consciously make decisions and pay for those. As far as Amsterdam is concerned, all the characters are conscious of the consequence of their moral decisions, but the choice is one of personal benefit and not dependent on community needs. This egotistical, self-centred personality is portrayed in the major characters of the novel such as Vernon, Clive, George or Garmony.

The milieu of the nineties when McEwan writes *Amsterdam* is the atmosphere of Conservative decline and a time of public disillusion. In fact, the social as well as moral degradation is pervasive. In his analysis of 2011 England riots and the actions of the looters, arsonists and muggers, British journalist and political commentator, Peter Oborne writes:

Indeed, I believe that the criminality in our streets cannot be dissociated from the moral disintegration in the highest ranks of modern British society. The last two decades have seen a terrifying decline in standards among the British governing elite. It has become acceptable for our politicians to lie and to cheat. An almost universal culture of selfishness and greed has grown up.

Will Hutton in his *The State We're In* condemns the social inequality, centralization, and declining community sense in post-Thatcher Britain. In this period, many institutions were under fire. Even the monarchy does not remain intact and the separation and later divorce of Prince Charles and Princess Diana are examples of private family troubles. In 1992, the Queen spoke of the year as having been "an annus horribilis" (Morgan 100). McEwan a decade before, like Tiresias the "blind prophet" of Thebes, had foretold of the "sleaze" and of deterioration in his *The Man Booker Prize* novel, *Amsterdam*. However, McEwan's prophesy was a fiction, "a made-up story," as Scholes puts (1), which had not been taken seriously.

McEwan writes *Amsterdam* when British society seems spiritually impoverished and socially divided. Britain breaks the record for family disintegration: one marriage in three broke down which at that time was perhaps the highest divorce rate in Europe (Morgan 101). Besides, an endemic drug culture in urban areas along with long-term youth unemployment leads to the production of the film *Train spotting* that is based on a disturbing novel of Irvine Welsh.

The ethical deterioration devastates the political level more notoriously. As Morgan expresses, "an obscure word, 'sleaze', dominated public perceptions of political life, fanned remorselessly by a tabloid press that turned against Major and his government" (99). Indeed, McEwan's purpose of creating a character like Garmony, the Foreign Secretary of England, is to allude to a series of minor government ministers who were involved in a variety of sexual peccadilloes and finally they were compelled to resign. Morgan concludes that such behaviour "for a party which had unwisely proclaimed its attachment to 'family values' and its urge moralistically to 'go back to basics'" is held to be politically unacceptable (99).

Consulting with Clive about the moral dilemma of publishing the Foreign Secretary's transvestite photos, Vernon, the chief editor of *The Judge*, is sceptical of British society's future if Garmony from the conservative party won the election:

Another five years. There'll be even more people living below the poverty line, more people in prison, more homeless, more crime, more riots like last year. He's been speaking in favour of national service. The environment will suffer, because he'd rather please his business friends than sign the accords on global warming. He wants to take us out of Europe. Economic catastrophe! (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 73-4)

What distinguishes McEwan's *Amsterdam* from other contemporary British novels with a moral theme is its rhizomatic pattern. Borrowing the concept of rhizome from botany, Deleuze and Guattari introduce a model of immanent, nonexclusive connection in their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* in contrast to the transcendent, hierarchical structure of the tree. In fact, rhizome as a mode of knowledge and model for society is their contribution to the definition of postmodernism. These theorists point to crabgrass as a prototype that grows horizontally by sending out runners that finally form a deathless surface (7). This analogy connotes a colossal net that does not have any centre or a controlling subject. As a post-structuralist theory, rhizome is against the arborescent model of thought (treelike) which develops through binary opposition.

In terms of language, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Saussurian signifier– signified model of language is tree-like whereas language is a living phenomenon and always suggests numerous other meanings as well as other traces of usage that deepen the meaning (Nicol 48). In this regard, fiction also could come under scrutiny of rhizomatic tools. The rhizome enables an author to present the unique experience of a character as a person who is part of everyone else; likewise, it could navigate the reader through the endless labyrinth, or according to Eco, "net" of a text and

encourage him/her to understand a work from any number of ways rather than from one alone. As Culler writes:

The rhizome has the potential to grow infinitely in time and space, which provides the reader or viewer with infinite possibilities for escape from the straight forward single thread analysis of traditional narrative theory. The trick is to have the courage to find the hidden rhizome and not desire to escape back above ground with the blossoms.(3)

However, in terms of McEwan's *Amsterdam*, the dissemination of moral decadence during 1990s has the rhizomatic model rather than other three models that Deleuze and Guattari explicate in their discussion in *One Thousand Plateau: Dichotomous Root, Pivotal Taproot and Fascicular Root*. To substantiate the rhizomatic pattern of McEwan's underlying theme in *Amsterdam*, first in three preliminary stages, the incompatibility between these three models of multiplication and the presentation of ethical decadence in the novel is argued. Then the applicability of the six principles of rhizomatic model on the novel is elaborated.

## 2.1 Dichotomous Root

The best example for this model is Chomsky's model of sentence structure. The salient feature of dichotomous style is that it is through division of binaries: one to  $n$  and then " $n$ " to " $n$ ". The problem with this method is that it needs a strong principal which does not let a free flow of "territorialisation" and "deterritorialisation"(5). In other words, it has a *centre* which dominates and organizes the binary logic of dichotomies. Moreover, in this model of multiplication, there is room for heterogeneous elements or phenomenon. Deleuze and Guattari discuss that binary logic and biunivocal relationships still dominate psychoanalysis, linguistics, structuralism, and even information science(5).

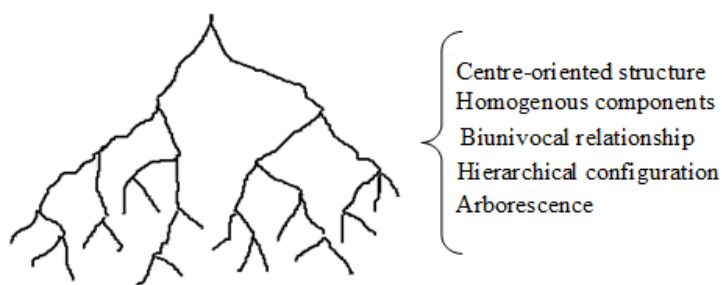


Fig.1. Dichotomous Root

As far as *Amsterdam* is concerned, McEwan does not assign an ethical centre to measure the moral deviation of his characters from that central point. In fact, the novel is a shapeless flow of multidimensional events which have been recurrent during 1990s. Further, the novel implies that the multiplication of moral deterioration within Britain society does not take place through dichotomous pattern since the reader could not assume any kinds of moral binary oppositions such as right/wrong; good/bad; or sin/virtue in the novel. As far as the characterisation is concerned, all the major characters suffer from a kind moral short coming and the reader cannot consider any one of the characters as the counterpart of another one.

Indeed, McEwan's characterisation in *Amsterdam* does not fall into the extremes of moral scale; on the country, his characters are life-like. In other words, McEwan would avoid tilting towards an Iagoesque figure, if he were going to create a wicked character. For instance, Vernon's declared intention of publishing the photographs, which show Garmony as a transvestite dressed up in women's clothes and make-up posing seductively has both a selfish and a community interest, that of bringing a turnaround of his newspaper and that of thwarting Garmony's bid for the Prime Minister's post, which Vernon considers a disaster for his country. Though there is bitter controversy over the morality of Vernon's action, Vernon is not portrayed as a typical malicious persona.

Moreover, in spite of the dichotomous multiplication of the source, divisions and subdivisions are typologically homogeneous. However, in *Amsterdam*, McEwan juxtaposes different characters from all walks of society: a chief editor of a national newspaper, a politician, a publisher, a musical composer, and a restaurant critic. Consequently, the only model of connection that enables

McEwan to present the ethical degradation in such a vast scale in the postmodern period of England is that of the rhizomatic pattern. The rhizomatic is the novelist's answer to the question of the 1990s moral turpitude of the various institutions of English society.

## 2.2 Pivotal Taproot

The pivotal taproot is another model of multiplicity that Deleuze and Guattari refer to in their *One Thousand Plateau*. The point or the centre of dichotomous root gets extended to a pivotal axis in taproot model. This pivot dominates controls and supports the secondary roots.

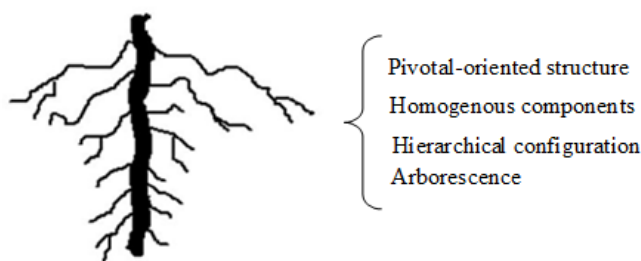


Fig.2. Pivotal Taproot

The dissemination of the moral deterioration portrayed in McEwan's *Amsterdam* is not, however, compatible with the taproot model. Indeed, McEwan does not attempt to introduce a pivotal moral criterion of substantial nature to evaluate the deviancy of the characters since the postmodern ethics is essentially bereft of those unifying principles that constitute an axis of morality. Highlighting the ramification of the undesirability or unattainability of reality in the postmodern era which leads to individual multiple discursive moral system, Sajjadi argues that "there is no fixed, unique and universal reality or truth so that one can analyse and evaluate good or bad deeds, right and wrong, the good and the evil, ugly and beautiful by recourse to it" (134). This is the matrix where Clive does not perceive the wickedness of his plagiarism, or Vernon does not comprehend the malevolence of his devastation of Garmony's privacy, for instance.

Symmetry as an identical feature between these two models (dichotomous and Pivotal) of multiplication is another reason for inapplicability of them in terms of the model of the dissemination of ethical decadence in *Amsterdam*. Indeed, there is a certain kind of asymmetrical amorphousness both at the thematic and the narrative levels of the novel. At the thematic level, Vernon's invasion of Garmony's privacy, Clive's self-delusion, Garmony's transvestite nature and the revengeful cuckold George are assembled together to present a pastiche or collage of postmodern incredulity towards the metanarrative of ethics of British society at all its complex levels. Even the design of the narrative is asymmetrical. The novel is divided into five unequal sections in which the first section has two subsections, the second section has five subsections, the third section has three, and each of the final two sections has five subsections. In other words, it is not possible to consider a centre or an axis for the novel: though broadly its form might be likened to a Five-Act play with several scenes.

## 2.3 Fascicular Root

This model of multiplication, according to Deleuze and Guattari, has a radicle-system and "modernity pays willing allegiance" to it. In this model as they argue in *One Thousand Plateau*, the tip of the principal root gets destroyed and it remains aborted, while its immediate secondary roots start their indefinite multiplicity and flourishing development. The significant point in this kind of multiplication is that the total unity of the structure sustains in any cycle or circular (5).

As an example for this model of multiplication in fiction, Deleuze and Guattari refer to William Burroughs's practice of "cu-up" method that is the folding of one text into another. They argue that although this technique adds a supplementary dimension to the text, the unity of the text preserves and "the most resolutely fragmented work can also be presented as the Total Work or Magnum Opus" (6). Likewise, Munday alludes to the structure of T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* as an example in which the poem appears to resemble the multiplicity of fascicular root since it "presents an image of a degraded, splintered, 'multiple' world' in which the root of classical fullness and beauty has been aborted" (46).

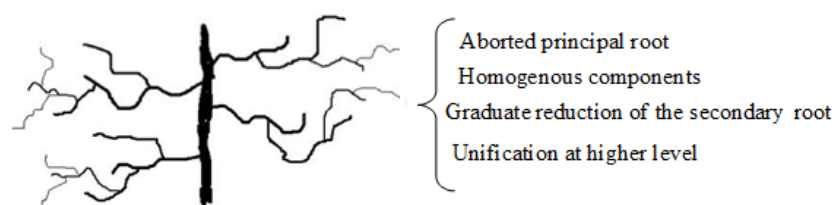


Fig.3. Fascicular Root

The dissemination of moral degradation in McEwan's *Amsterdam* does not follow the model of fascicular root because all four prototypes of ethical ignobility that McEwan depicts in Amsterdam are equally significant and McEwan does not prioritize any one over others (if otherwise, the significant one played the role of the principal root in this model). In other words, the author does not endeavour to introduce one of those moral degradations as the major one while the rest of them begets from it. Indeed, for McEwan a morally corrupt foreign minister, Garmony, is as weighty as a "blind" consequentialist journalist, Vernon, a greedy publisher, George, or a selfish, self-absorbed musical composer, Clive, in the devolution of the ethical deterioration of society. Besides, whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure with fascicular root model, there is a considerable reduction in the strength of its offshoots and its laws of combination. Formulating the process of dissemination of immorality, McEwan does not let these kinds of reduction happen and all his samples of immorality develop vigorously while they are tightly interwoven. In fact, he does not divide these social evils into primary, secondary or tertiary roots in *Amsterdam*.

Another reason that proves McEwan's non-confirmation of fascicular-root model of multiplication is that he does not propagate perfectionism or even idealism that is inferred from such a model. In this model, although the tip of the primary root gets destroyed and it sublets into a multitude of inferior secondary roots (which may acknowledge a breakdown of the universal or ideal narrative), the very existence of one primary root necessitates clinging to a root's unity (which could be the idea of idealism, for instance) that "exists as past, as yet to come, as possible". This connects fascicular thinking with both nostalgia and with a kind of perfectionism—longing for a good that is always still to come (Munday45). In terms of *Amsterdam*, McEwan does not play the role of a novelist as a perfectionist who suggests an ideal world where the mass media tell the truth without violating the privacy of the people; the politicians are moral and straight; the musicians are responsible and humanist.

Moreover, McEwan's narrative in *Amsterdam* does not subsist in a unity at a higher dimension like the fascicular-root pattern. Indeed, one of the significant characteristics of postmodern art is that it does not gain control of multiplicities by occupying a higher realm. Everything happens at one level and there is not a "control tower" in the novel. Even the third-person narrator of the novel whose presence maybe considered as an example of superior unifying force tries to level down by entering to the pre-verbal level of the characters' consciousness and narrate at as much a proximate distance as possible. The best example is the two-word sentence in the opening page of the novel where all those who participate in Molly's funeral in a silent choral are thinking about it: "Poor Molly" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 1).

#### 2.4 Rhizomatic Root

To introduce their rhizomatic pattern of the postmodern multiplication, Deleuze and Guattari conclude the discussion of these three models of multiplication with this axiom: "The world has lost its pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or over determination, in an always supplementary dimension to that of its object. The world has become chaos"(6). And this is where McEwan commences to construct his narrative based on the substitution which the theories recommend: "always  $n-1$ (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted)". In other words, they believe that multiplicity is a must and it could be done in the simplest way which is the subtraction of the unique from the multiplicity. In fact, there is no need to add a higher dimension for the sake of multitudinous and instead multiplicity could be achieved by introducing new dimensions to the already existed rhizomatic pattern: "write at  $n-1$  dimension. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome" (6).



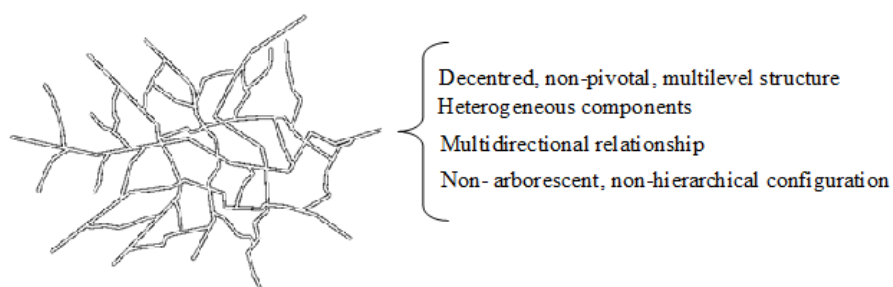


Fig. 4. Rhizomatic root

The nerve system that McEwan has under the skin of his morally decrepit society is totally compatible with this rhizomatic multiplication. Interestingly, all the six fundamental characteristics that Deleuze and Guattari ascribe to their postmodern pattern of multiplication are applicable to the deep structure of McEwan's narrative of dissemination of ethical decadence in the 1990s in England.

#### 2.4.1. The Principle of Connection

“Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be” (Deleuze and Guattari, *One Thousand Plateau*, 7). Unlike the other three previous models whose components are either connected hierarchically or based on certain order of connection (which arbitrarily limits the possibilities), in rhizomatic model of connection, there is no pivotal axis or centre to control or dominate the order of connection. As a result, any point can and must be connected to any other point: it is to some extent like Eco's third kind of labyrinth which is a “net,” though it is most baffling and powerful kind with “no center, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite” and “so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one” (Eco 57).

Nicol considers this principle of rhizome and expresses his observation on two novels of Pynchon. According to his reading, *Gravity's Rainbow* requires its reader to approach it in a “rhizomatic way” because the novel “is often compared to an encyclopaedia or a database, a vast network of potential symmetries and correspondences”(97); in terms of the narrative structure of Pynchon's novel *V.*, Nicol argues that “the narrative operates in the rhizomatic manner: history is envisioned not as an ‘arborescent’ or tree-like structure where the branches lead back down to the roots, but as a network where any one point in time can potentially lead to any other”(98).

As far as *Amsterdam* is concerned, McEwan weaves one of his best net to catch the big fish of immorality in the deteriorated society of England. In the foreshadowing stage of his narrative, he gets all the major characters together in the opening scene that is Molly's funeral and then he lets them spread in various directions. To be a well-interwoven net, the extradiegetic, heterogeneous narrator in the second subsection of Part One follows Clive to his house where his piano and his progressing composition of *Millennial Symphony* await him.

In the first subsection of Part Two, the rhizomatic connection lets the narrator follow Vernon who is sitting in his office at *The Judge*. Then in the next subsection, he is located in his residency. The narrator in the next subsection of Part Two even extends the area of the rhizomatic connection offstage providing the backdrop of the dead woman's relationship with the rest of the characters. The narrative proceeds logically and chronologically in all dimensions.

Molly's experience and memories flow throughout the novel as if they were the extension of rhizomatic net that penetrates the underworld and as though she is sending message from Hades. However, her presence and her compromising photos of the Foreign Secretary's transvestism do not play the role of a pivotal axis or a central point like dichotomous root or taproot. Moreover, Molly's death and her promising photos of Garmonyis neither the beginning nor the ending of *Amsterdam's* narrative: they are within the colossal structure of rhizomatic web that McEwan magnifies in his novel. Indeed, the story of *Amsterdam* like many postmodern novels begins in *medias res*.

The well-knit connection in the rhizomatic model of multiplication facilitates the wild dissemination of immoral infections. Rose Garmony, for instance, is another character who is contaminated by this rhizomatic net of immorality. At least she is a representative of these three institutions: family as a mother, politics as the wife of a politician, social welfare as a surgeon--Mrs. Garmony gives a live press conference in Channel One just before the publication of her husband's photos in a transvestite pose in *the Judge* and she expresses her profound love and absolute trust to her husband. Moreover, regarding Molly Lane, she explains that she was a friend of the family "once took some pictures, rather in a spirit of celebration" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 123).

Portraying the overall dimension of immorality in British society, McEwan criticises the policy that the manager of Garmony's party adopts for nullifying the moral scandal of the Foreign Secretary through Juliana Garmony's live press conference. Just before Mrs Garmony discloses her husband's photos, the camera enters:

into a well-known children's hospital that morning to film Mrs. Garmony emerging from the operating theatre, tired but happy, after performing open-heart surgery on a nine-year-old black girl called Candy. The surgeon was also filmed on her rounds, followed by respectful nurses and registrars and hugged by children who clearly adored her. Then, captured briefly in the hospital car park, was a tearful encounter between Mrs. Garmony and the little girl's grateful parents. (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 121)

The quoted passage within McEwan's rhizomatic matrix connotes the devastation of the valuable institutions of a society like family or charitable institutions in the "tsunami" of immorality in the British society. Even humane emotional sentiments or the racial issues become part of the rhizomatic pattern of moral decadence. Furthermore, Channel One shows Garmony's two children Annabel kissing her father on the cheek and Ned leaning across with his hand on his father's arm, advertising the ideal image of a faithful man of family (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 124). Such blatant advertisement by Garmony's political party not only attempts to manipulate their supporters but also to overcome the political stigma; consequently, even the innocent children become a skein in the net of multi-dimensional immorality.

To elucidate the reality of dissemination of decadence in British society and its infected nature, McEwan concretizes the essential rhizomatic connection between Molly's unspecified degenerative and debilitating disease and the symptoms of her disease in Vernon, Clive and Garmony. As the novel proceeds, some symptoms of Molly's terminal disease are gradually identifiable in these three major characters. As Malcolm recounts those symptoms, "both Clive and Vernon feel themselves dying slowly. Clive's left hand starts to go dead on him (26-27); Vernon thinks the right side of his brain has already died (33-34, 41). A certain absence and vagueness in character might be appropriate" (192).

Though Molly's three lovers shows some minor symptoms of mental paralysis, Molly's husband—George—does not have any of these symptoms. The narrator describes Vernon's condition as "there was now a physical symptom. It involved the whole of the right side of his head, both skull and brain somehow, a sensation for which there was simply no word" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 31). In terms of Clive, the narrator adds:

Illness and death, abstractions that soon found their focus in the sensation he still felt in his left hand. It was cold and inflexible and prickly, as though he had been sitting on it for half an hour. He massaged it with his right hand and nursed it against the warmth of his stomach. Wasn't this the kind of sensation Molly had had when she went to hail that cab by the Dorchester? (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 25)

The "HIV" of immorality endemic in 1990s British society also infects Garmony, the Foreign Secretary. As Chetrescu infers, "Julian Garmony, the Foreign Secretary, is contaminated with a diffuse need to remain confined to his bed, as if suffering from a chronic disease" (163). Moreover, to trace the symptoms of Molly's fatal disease, Chetrescu adds "Garmony lingers in his bed, in the cold sweat of the sleep the night before and looks around him with the feeling that the place has shrunk unbearably and he will never be able to stand up again and touch the things in the room which, all of a sudden, seem horribly distant" (163-4).



To sum up the principal of connection in rhizomatic model of multiplication in *Amsterdam*, it is quite obvious that McEwan has chosen the episodes, the characters, the scenes and any other elements of his narrative so meticulously to connote a giant web of moral deterioration at all levels of British society. Clive's assertion in the opening scene of the novel can approve the affinity of this principle with the ethical master plan embedded in *Amsterdam*: "no one could escape the centripetal power of a social event" (9), particularly when these events have been contaminated by immorality. In fact, *Amsterdam*'s "integral unity"— a term propagated by New Criticism— and multidimensional connection of events, characters and scenes makes for the impossibility of removing any scene or episode from the matrix of the novel. The plot thickens!

#### **2.4.2. The Principle of Heterogeneity**

Heterogeneity is the second principle of rhizomatic model of multiplication that is compatible with McEwan's theme of the dissemination of decadence in *Amsterdam*. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status" (7). In other words, unlike the three previous models of multiplication whose offshoots or secondary roots were homogeneous and identical with the principal root, the rhizomatic model "ceaselessly establishes connections" between heterogeneous issues, phenomena, objects, events and subjects. To put in a nutshell, there is a vast disjunction which can be understood in the words of Remy Chauvin whom Deleuze and Guattari quote from, "the aparallelel evolution of two beings that have absolutely nothing to do with each other" (10).

McEwan paraphrases the principle of heterogeneity in the process of dissemination of ethical deterioration into a condition where one multiplicity (part of the rhizome) connects with another, undergoing a metamorphosis that distinguishes it from all the other parts. Consequently, the configuration of moral deterioration within a given society leads to various incarnations. *Amsterdam* is a transmuted structure of immorality, from the domestic level to the National, from the mass media to the world of art.

As the curtain raises, the reader enters the rhizome with "February chill", the objective correlative of the decadence of contemporary ethics, leading to a dank and dark scene of "the crematorium chapel" in the first line of the novel. This technique recreates James Joyce's Dublin in *Dubliners* where a gloomy cold atmosphere implies the "winter" of morality. *Amsterdam* rarely has a shiny sky with picturesque clouds. Apart from the setting of the opening paragraph that contributes to the assumed theme of the novel, the first blow of moral degradation is the introduction of Molly Lane's "three ex-lovers", Vernon, Clive, Garmony, who gather around her cuckold widower George Lane even after Molly's death.

By introducing the three lovers of Molly Lane as well as her husband, the rhizomatic pattern of the theme gets prepared to maximize the first instance of heterogeneity which is the relation between charismatic Molly and one of his lovers, Garmony, who is the Foreign Secretary of England: "Molly, restaurant critic, gorgeous wit, and photographer, the daring gardener, who had been loved by the Foreign Secretary" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 1). After this preliminary remark, the narrator prepares the reader for "the great deed" which here refers to the publication of Molly's photos of Julian Garmony, the Foreign Secretary, by the national daily newspaper *The Judge* while Garmony posing:

cat-walk style, with arms pushing away a little from his body and one foot set in front of the other, knees slightly crooked. The false breasts under the dress were small, and the edge of one bra strap was visible. The face was made up, but not overly so, for his natural pallor served him well, and lipstick had bestowed a bow of sensuality on the unkind, narrow lips. The hair was distinctively Garmony's, short, wavy, and side-parted, so that his appearance was both manicured and dissolute, and faintly bovine. (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 69-70)

Dealing with Garmony's issue, McEwan lets the dissemination of moral deterioration get simultaneously expanded into two different channels: the conservative party and the secretary of the state as well as the mass media. Garmony is on the verge of resigning in order to introduce himself as one of the leading candidates for the premiership election. The circle of degradation expands.

It is George Lane, Molly's widower, who is the source of the promiscuous photos. When Molly dies, he recommends and encourages Vernon, the chief editor of *The Judge* to publish Garmony's photos. George is a rich publisher and also a share holder (one and a half percent) in *The Judge*. McEwan creates in the pompous George another incarnation of moral degradation in British society. In the denouement of the novel, the concatenation of events turns eventually to George's advantage: taking revenge on his wife's three lovers and making more profit out of his publishing business.

McEwan navigates the rhizomatic model of contemporary moral decadence to cover the real nature of the mass media in the postmodern era. As a matter of fact, the contagious immorality of England manifests as a double-fold: disguised as the consequentialist Vernon who violates people's privacy in order to simultaneously save his old broad sheet newspaper from declining circulation and as an idealistic Vernon who would do everything possible to pay his due to his nation. He begins with a simple and basic rule: the mass media has to tell "the truth" and reveal the scandalous nature of politicians even at the cost of marketing the private life of people. For a consequentialist like Vernon doing a minor wickedness to achieve a greater good is not significant.

Furthermore, Mrs. Garmony's message addressing Vernon in her live press conference could be an appropriate epilogue for the discourse on the deterioration of ethics in postmodern mass media: she says "Mr. Halliday, you have the mentality of a blackmailer, and the moral stature of a flea" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 124-5). Besides, there is a key moment in George's house just before he discloses the photos to Vernon for the first time: their discussion on the copyright of the photos. They are not concerned to ponder about ethical aspects of their deeds as George warns Vernon "the copyright was hers [Molly's], and as the sole trustee of her estate, I effectively own it. It goes without saying, I shall expect *the Judge* to protect its sources". On the contrary, Vernon envisages the power that these photos grant him: "he experienced ponderous responsibility-or was it power? A man's life, or at least his career, was in his hands" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 56). These are all various heterogeneous images of moral decadence which McEwan points to.

Even the fundamental concepts such as hospitality or hostility, which have been dominated the interpersonal relationship does not remain intact in a morally degraded society: a significant aspect highlighted by Tsai in his analysis of friendships between the four males in *Amsterdam*. Applying a Derridean *aporia* which is idea of "hostipitality" -- "a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it" and "allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, 'hostility,' the undesirable guest" (Derrida 3) -- Tsai argues that it is in this [immoral] stalemate where "hospitality" and "hostility" encroach upon each other and, in a subtle twist, one usurps the other" (5-6). According to Tsai, McEwan in *Amsterdam* calls for "moral inquiries" and searches for "accountable, ethical stances in an era of flux and disintegration" (1). However, Tsai's observation can be interpreted in this way that the widespread devastation of fundamental concepts in a morally dilapidating society paves the way for the problematization of the pragmatics of those concepts.

The rhizomatic heterogeneity disguised as tornado devastates the world of art too. Tellingly, as a part of McEwan's pet doctrine, art and the artist cannot stay immune in a corrupt society. Molly's musician lover, Clive, whose prime focus in life is composing music and becoming a maestro, is a representative of such society. The self-conceited artist, who composes music to serve human's soul, ironically does not answer the call for help by the woman being raped and he leaves a heinous crime unreported. In other words, keeping the virginity of his artistic potentiality, Clive lets the Lakeland rapist assault the women, while he is hiking in the Lake District. As Ingersoll rightly puts, Clive's absolute lack of compunctions about his moral dereliction in the Lake District reduces his 'moral stature' to that of a 'flea'."

Clive's endeavour is doomed to failure even at his professional level. Considering himself as a "genius" and a true artist, Clive finds himself at the peak of his career, widely recognized as an extraordinarily talented composer, but plagiarizes the finale of his Millennial Symphony that is supposed to be his paramount piece. Completing his masterpiece for the celebration of the new millennium in European Union countries, Clive is experiencing a certain kind of artistic impotency which is proleptically perceptible through Garmony's words addressed to the reader in the first part of the novel: "The very last time I saw Molly she told me you [Clive] were impotent and always had been" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 16). Later Clive himself confirms his artistic

impotency: "He told no one he was stalled in his work. Instead, he said he was off on a short walking holiday" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 62). This predicament is tragic for any artists, particularly for Clive who considers himself the Beethoven of England.

Clive's declining creativity, which counterfeiting of art is its result, is fully disclosed when George asks about the performance of Clive's composition for the new millennium and Garmony reveals it is "Cancelled, actually. Giulio Bo[ the Italian conductor who is going to conduct the symposium] says it's a dud. Half the BSO [Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra] refuse to play it. Apparently there's a tune at the end, shameless copy of Beethoven's Ode to Joy, give or take a note or two" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 176). As an allusion to the status of art and artist in a corrupted society, Clive could not produce an original piece of art even if he would desperately long to since he could not free himself from the shackles of his "falling" society. Indeed, in such a morally dilapidating society, the impotency of an artist may not be partial but the entire spirit might be dried up: a case with Clive, particularly when the narrative asserts Clive "found that not only this passage[ the finale of his Millennial Symphony] but the whole movement had died on him" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 151),

McEwan's rhizomatic waves sweep over the continental Europe, which is on the eve of celebrating the third millennium, by both choosing "Amsterdam" as the title of the novel as well as alluding to Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy"<sup>1</sup>, which was rendered into a symphony (No. 9 in D minor) by Ludwig van Beethoven, particularly its second stanza which has been adapted for the European anthem in 1972. The very section of this symphony with its two paradoxical modes, which is highlighted by Zizak, is wholly compatible with the assumed rhizomatic pattern of this argument. Giving a brief history of this symphony of Beethoven which has been invariably associated with the celebration of the brotherhood and the unity of all mankind, Zizak points to the critics' view in which for the last 180 years, at Bar 331 of this symphony, "the tone changes totally, and, instead of the solemn hymnic progression, the same "joy" theme is repeated in the marciaturca (or Turkish march) style, a conceit borrowed from military music for wind and percussion instruments that 18th-century European armies adopted from the Turkish janissaries." According to Zizak, "After this point, such critics feel, everything goes wrong, the simple solemn dignity of the first part of the movement is never recovered." These two contradictory senses are traceable not only in Clive who is the keen of Beethoven but in European Union's policy whose chorus invites "millions" to be embraced but it keeps Turks outside their embrace.

Alluding to "Ode to Joy" is not limited to Clive's posthumous period in the denouement of the novel. Just before commencing his rejuvenating hiking, Clive announces the similarities between the finale that he has considered for Millennial Symphony and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy": "Finding the notes would be an act of inspired synthesis. It was as if he knew them but could not yet hear them. He knew their enticing sweetness and melancholy. He knew their simplicity, and the model, surely, was Beethoven's Ode to Joy" (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 76). In fact, the art of McEwan is the juxtaposition of Clive's artistic impotency, humanistic irresponsibility and his burning ambition in the Lake District scene where Clive is hiking for his artistic rejuvenation: "Then whatever was

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<sup>1</sup>The first section of the poem begins thus:

To Joy  
Joy, thou beauteous godly lighting,  
Daughter of Elysium,  
Fire drunken we are not ring  
Heavenly, thy holy home!  
Thy enchantments bind together,  
What did custom's sword divide,  
Beggars are a prince's brother,  
Where thy gentle wings abide.  
Chorus  
Be embraced, ye millions yonder!  
Take this kiss throughout the world!  
Brothers—o'er the stars unfurl'd  
Must reside a loving father.

happening here was bound to take its course. Their fate, his fate. The jewel, the melody. Its momentousness pressed upon him. So much depended on it—the symphony, the celebration, his reputation, the lamented century's ode to joy.” (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 87)

Another avatar of the heterogeneous principle of the rhizomatic model of multiplication which is at the service of dissemination of moral decadence permeates throughout Europe like its national anthem. There is no specific territory which can confine the rhizomatic pattern of immoral amplification. Besides, McEwan through the principle of heterogeneity constitutes various semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and mass media. To sum it up, the rhizomatic chains are not necessarily linguistic but they could be also drawn from perceptual, political, gestural or other registers.

To complete the heterogeneity of the components of rhizome, McEwan creates a musical *mise en abyme* out of Clive's contemplation on the finale of his Millennial Symphony for the entire narrative. In fact, the rise and the fall of those three major characters, the chief editor, the Foreign Secretary and prominent maestro are presented in the language of music:

the final and colossal restatement of the melody[...], which gathered pace and erupted into a wave, a racing tsunami of sound reaching an impossible velocity, then rearing up, higher, and when it seemed beyond human capability, higher yet, and at last toppling, breaking and crashing vertiginously down to shatter on the hard safe ground of the home key of C minor. (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 135)

### 2.4.3. The Principle of Multiplicity

Transforming ceaselessly and manifesting heterogeneously in various configurations, rhizomatic model of multiplication keeps multiplying too. Deleuze and Guattari argue that multiplication of rhizomatic construction does not lead to “a collection of stable units of measure or unified subject but a set of dimension and lines of connection that changes in nature when it increases in number” (“Rhizome,” *Ency. of Postmodernism*). In other words, rhizomatic multiplicity should be effectively treated as “substantive” which ceases “to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world” (Deleuze and Guattari 8).

Owing to the principle of rhizomatic multiplicity, there is no “oneness” among the heterogeneous manifestation of moral degradation in British society during 1990s. In other words, those emerged moral deteriorations are not overcoded or immobilized by a master signifier to unify their heterogeneous patterns. The components of their patterns are dynamic in a state of flux. As a result, McEwan neither is able to recommend a didactic solution for such a dire predicament. In fact, for McEwan, ethical deterioration in *Amsterdam* not only extirpates roots and foundations but also thwarts unities and even dichotomies to disseminate infected offshoots: an apparatus performed by producing differences and multiplicities through making new connections.

The scandal of Garmony, the Foreign Secretary, could be juxtaposed with the falsification of the mass media as represented by Vernon and George and the plagiarism of the prominent musician. Nevertheless, these heterogeneous prototypes of a corrupt society do not imply the unified structure that may have a centre or pivotal axis. Borrowing Deleuze and Guattari's words, these manifestations of a corrupt society are “only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows)” (8). Interestingly enough, the terminology and jargons employed for the infected diseases and their epidemic process in medical discourses are quite applicable to moral discourses as well.

Indeed, the collapse of modern metanarratives, according to Lyotard, in the postmodern period leads to the creation of rhizomatic heterogeneous multiplicity that celebrates the many and plurality in contradistinction to unitary, binary, and totalizing models of Western thought. In *Amsterdam*, McEwan strives to depict the contamination of the said plurality—in a rhizomatic pattern—with the plague of immorality and massive corruption that finally influences all the crucial institutions of a society. This is McEwan's “salad bowl” for the feast of the countries of the European Union for the celebration of the new millennium.

### 2.4.4. Principle of Assignifying Rupture

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is “becoming”, the process of change, flight, or movement within an assemblage. Ethics and its discourses are “becoming” too. It never stops to be analysed, categorized and stabilized. Tellingly, there is a ceaseless flux in the essence of morality and its territories. As far as the rhizome is concerned, its dynamic nature implies two forces that unendingly “reterritorialize” and “deterritorialize” rhizome. A rhizome maybe broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines (9).

In other words, Deleuze and Guattari write that every rhizome contains lines of reterritorialisation that are able to stratify, territorialize, organize, signify, attribute, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialisation down which it constantly flees. Whenever segmentary lines of rhizome explode, the rhizome is ruptured and line of flight escapes: the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad (10).

In terms of fiction, Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is only in Kafka's novel that the rhizomatic line of flight truly succeeds especially in *The Trial*. Unlike the title of the novel, Deleuze and Guattari find that justice in the novel is not legal but erotic. They point to the obscene drawings in the courthouse; a series of suggestive encounters with sexy antifamilial women; K.'s directing the eroticized women in the rhizomatic rat tunnel of the courthouse. In fact, justice, like the courthouse and desire, is rhizomatic, never reaching conclusion. The theorists conclude that Kafka's writing too, is rhizomatic, mapping and toying with the structure of institutions and social relations (Powell 113).

McEwan in *Amsterdam* makes a rupture in the rhizomatic model of ethical degradation of British society and draws a line of flight by manoeuvring on euthanasia. Shortly after Molly's horrible dementia and helpless death, Clive and Vernon agree that if either of them ever faces Molly's situation and lose his sanity, the other would not allow such an awful decline: mercy killing or euthanasia is their vow.

Though euthanasia has been entangled in various discourses of ethics, law, politics, medical science, politics or bio-ethics, it has always shown its infinite number of dimensions with its own pros and cons. However, McEwan does not inject a certain dose of this highly controversial issue in the body of the novel to introduce himself as either pro-euthanasia or anti-euthanasia. In fact, infusing *Amsterdam* with euthanasia as a subplot, McEwan shows the way people deal with and respond to issues of ethics, corruption, family, life, ritual, death, etc. which serve to shape the nature of their society. This shaped nature of society reterritorializes the ethical climate of British society that has been nothing but a “rotten piece of immoral society” in a rhizomatic figuration during 1990s.

In terms of *Amsterdam*, euthanasia acts as a line of flight to deterritorialize the rhizome of British ethical climate and gives currency to its original meaning that is the dominant ethical condition of England. Originating from the Greek term *eu* “happy or good” and *thanatos* “death”, euthanasia means literally “happy death” or “good death.” (“Euthanasia”) And McEwan associates its original meaning “happy death” to the life of people in a corrupt society which is a paraphrase of what Malcolm writes about *Amsterdam*: “dark and sour.” Furthermore, unlike its “euthanasic” atmosphere, the practice of mercy killing in England is illegal while it is legal in Amsterdam city in Holland.

Besides, diluting Vernon's and Clive's death with different hypotheses such as voluntary or non-voluntary euthanasia, suicide or murder, McEwan does not let the reader assume that euthanasia is a remedy and solution for such a corrupted society, but it is the dystopian state of the society. Following the death of Vernon and Clive in a hotel in Amsterdam city, in the penultimate page of the novel, Garmony discloses, “it wasn't a double suicide at all. They poisoned each other. They had each other destroyed with God knows what. It was mutual murder” (McEwan, *Amsterdam* 177).

#### **2.4. 5 & 6. Principles of Cartography (map) and Decalomania (tracing)**

To distinguish genetic axes and deep structures which are “reproductive” from a rhizome which is “productive,” Deleuze and Guattari make use of the figuration of “map” and “tracing,” particularly the differences between them (12). They argue that a tracing (or decalomania) is a copy and

operates according to “genetic” principles, evolving and reproducing from earlier forms. It is a reproduction of the world based on an *a priori* deep structure and a faith in the discovery and representation of that structure. A tracing is arborescent: “All tree logic is a logic of tracing and reproduction”(12). The tracing replicates existing striated structures.

Map (cartography) on the other hand is an open system with multiple entryways like the rhizome. It is “connectable in all of its dimensions. It is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted, to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.” Moreover, map is contingent, unpredictable, and productive. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari invoke the original sense of cartographic work which produces effective spatial articulations rather than simply(re) presenting space. From this perspective, a map produces an organization of reality rather than reproducing some prior representation of reality (12). In drawing maps, the theorist (like an original cartographer) works on the surface, creating possible realities of producing new articulations of disparate phenomena and connecting the exteriority of objects to whatever forces or directions seem potentially related to them.

To enter McEwan’s *Amsterdam*, a reader “should” follow map than trace. W.H. Auden’s poem “The Crossroads” which McEwan brings as an epigraph for *Amsterdam* is one of the entries to the cartographic aspect of rhizomatic pattern of moral decadence in British society in 1990s. In other words, the very act of selecting four major characters, a journalist, a musician, a politician, and a publisher and posing them in a terrible moral dilemma implies the image of crossroad both at the narrative level as well as the thematic one. Their immoralities are essentially productive and unpredictable like “map” and they keep extending in to various routes. The *sidewalk* of a self-delusive musical composer is linked to the street of the Foreign Secretary’s moral scandal that is connected to the “highway” of mass media’s falsification.

The social occupation of the four major characters has its own map (rhizome) of multiplication. Indeed, Vernon’s daily national newspaper is connected to the musical notes which national prominent composer, Clive, writes. These two rhizomes are connected to decisions that the Foreign Secretary, Julia Garmony, makes at the national level and finally linked to the books that George publishes. Their cartographic connection is facilitated because of the principle of heterogeneity within rhizomatic multiplication. The map of their connections ceaselessly is expanded and there is no stop or blockage in their routes. Consequently, when corruption affects one of these channels, the entire connections—and as a result the nations— get contaminated.

McEwan does not unearth the deep structure of these prototypes of a corrupt society. Nor does the author play the role of a genetics expert who struggles to draw the gene mapping of the corrupt society of England on the verge of the third millennium. Besides, *Amsterdam* is neither a historical nor a pathological study of the events of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novelist, more or less, attempts to portray intentionally a flat and depthless image of his contemporary period. Even at the character level, the narrator does not try to shed more light on the background of characters and display a complete image of them. For instance, Vernon’s job promotion (e.g, how he occupies the chair of chief editor in *The Judge*) is the only biographical tip that is disclosed by the narrator.

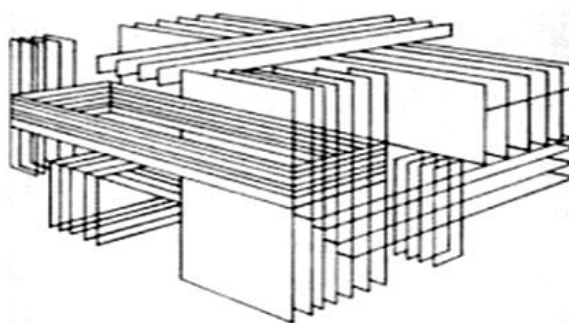


Fig.5. The cover image of *One Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari whose heterogeneous plateaus can be analogously assumed as the various institutions of a society which are connected and ruptured in

*innumerable multiplications.*

The map of ethical decadence which McEwan, “the cartographer of ethics,” draws in *Amsterdam* has multiple entryways too. Consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, the British people have entered the already expanded rhizome either by reading Vernon’s newspaper, *The Judge*, listening to Clive’s musical compositions, or even reading the books published by George’s publishing house for “St. Martin’s” church. The relation among these various forms of rhizomatic can be compared with the example of the wasp-orchid rhizome that Deleuze and Guattari provide for their discussion on rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, at racing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome.(10)

The narrator and the reader of *Amsterdam* hand in hand cross the rhizome of immorality that McEwan has constructed even like Daedalus’ labyrinth. The novel ends where Georgeisen route to Vernon’s house and informing his widow about her husband’s death and “asking her out for dinner.” George’s juvenile mood and her description of Vernon’s wife as a “great girl” who “used to be rather wild,” insinuate the ceaseless flux of rhizomatic corruption in British society. George’s quick survey of the lives of Vernon, Clive and Garmony in the closing passage of the novel underpins the theme of retaliation another road in the cartography of *Amsterdam*:

[George] found his thoughts turning pleasantly in other directions: Garmony beaten down, and trussed up nicely by his lying wife’s denials of his affair at her press conference, and now Vernon out of the way, and Clive. All in all, things hadn’t turned out so badly on the former-lovers front.(McEwan, *Amsterdam* 178)

In a rhizomatic movement, the flows of events can be re-routed around disruptions and the severed section can regenerate and continue to grow, forming new lines and pathways. That is why McEwan highlights the theme of retaliation in the closing section of the novel in order to enclose another dimension to the already expanded rhizome. The novel ends but does not close, since there is no end or termination for rhizomatic ethical deterioration. This kind of rhizomatic openness for the ending of the novel is in accord with Umberto Eco’s notion of “*opera aperta*” translated in English as “open work” in which a text requires or encourages multiplicity of readings in an internally dynamic and psychologically engaged fields.

According to Eco “every work of art, even if it is explicitly or implicitly the result of a poetics of necessity, remains liable to be interpreted according to a virtually infinite series of readings: each of these readings brings the work to life according to some personal perspective, taste or execution” (qtd. in Mallac 32). In sum, this rhizomatic field of meanings (instead of a sting of meanings) facilitates the various readers, with different states of consciousness, to infer a fresh meaning out of the text: a process which is the result of modifying its connection with other meanings of the text. This is how the rhizomatic pattern of moral decadence, as one of those states of consciousness, gets eventually emerged from McEwan’s *Amsterdam*.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Considering Deleuze and Guattari’s categorization of four major types of multiplications postulated according to various types of root growth in botany, and contemplating on moral decadence as one of the dominant themes in the fiction of the latter part of the twentieth century including McEwan’s *Amsterdam* (1998), this study has substantiated how the dissemination of the moral turpitude in this novel follows the rhizomatic pattern. In other words, among various modes of multiplication such as pivotal taproot, dichotomous root or fascicular root, moral decadence in *Amsterdam* spreads wildly in that of rhizomatic root and devastates various “plateaus” of British society on the verge of the third millennium. Such a conclusion has been drawn since the novel has incorporated the six principles of the rhizomatic expansion—including connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, a signifying rupture, cartography and decalomania—that Deleuze and Guattari expounded in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*. In sum, this investigation lays bare the existence of one of the tenets of postmodernism in *Amsterdam*, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is the rhizomatic mode of knowledge and model for society.



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