



## Covert to Overt: A Linear Behavioral Strands in Graham Swift's *Last Orders and Shuttlecock*

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### Abstract

The present research details the linear behavioral pattern exists between each set of characters in Graham Swift's *Last Orders and Shuttlecock*. An aspect of behavioral standards remains relatively unexplored in these two novels. The implication of behavioral analyzation reveals that, the characters in these novels follow different but linear behavioral pattern by means of reflecting upon their past memories in the present. Through observational research methodology, the study depicts that the characters' linear behavioral pattern transpires because of 'transgenerational impact'. The 'cultural' and 'collective' memory covertly becomes the 'transgenerational impact' which overtly outcomes as linear behavioral strands among the characters'.

**Keywords:** Behavioral pattern, cultural and collective memory, transgenerational impact, covert and overtly behavior.

Graham Swift is the most successful and highly regarded author in the contemporary British literature. He is both a novelist and a short story writer. Swift's major works are published by both British and American publishers. His works are translated into several languages. He is a recipient of several awards include Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize, Guardian Fiction Award, and the awardee and short- lister for Booker Prize. In Swift's novels, the characters commonly revolve around their past memories in the present. Recollecting the past memories in the present thus becomes the common behavioral activity to all of Swift's characters. The present research aims at examining the linear psychological

behavioral relationship between Swift's characters in *Last Orders and Shuttlecock*.

The research depicts that, in these select novels, the behavioral activity of one generation passes on to the next generation via 'transgenerational impact'. In detail, 'transgenerational impact' refers to the transmission or impact of experiences, behaviors or traits from one generation to the next. In these select novels, the present research details the characters behavioral pattern which occur out of 'transgenerational impact' by means of recollecting the past memories in the present across generations.

*Last Orders* is the booker-prize winning novel, written and published in the year 1996. The plot



of the novel constrains within the working-class Londoners, that include the protagonist Jack, his family, his friends, and their family. These characters throughout the novel reflect upon their past memories in the present in each different linear behavioral pattern which are detailed in the present research.

Jack's spouse Amy, and their adopted son Vince prefers to stick within the boundaries of their blood connections. Evidently, Vince, being an adopted son strives hard to forge his own identity despite Jack's identity as a butcher; he affirms his ambition via his school master that, "I think, He wants me to say 'butcher' but I aint going to say it. I aint going to say 'butcher'" (125). Vince does not view Jack's family as his own, he is clear within his limits; he says that, "Because she wasn't my sister. June aint my sister, I aint got no sister" (121). Thus, Vince disavows Jack's identity and does not internalize Jack's family as his.

As goal-oriented as Vince, Amy too gravitates towards her biological relations. When Jack prioritizes his adopted son Vince over his daughter June, Amy struggles to accept it; she laments with Ray about Jack that, "But he doesn't mention June. He mentions Vince, who isn't, who wasn't even ours. . . he doesn't say, 'And give June my love'" (346). Thus, both Amy and Vince possess linear behavioral notion of confining boundaries to their own territories.

Amy weighs upon the fact that, she performs same behavioral role of being a visitor to both Jack and June. She acts as a visitor to June's Home, "To be in that Home always, which I only visit. To be in that body all the time, which I only look at twice a week. . . . But if you look at it another way, it's one whole year of just visiting" (356). Amy is also a visitor to Jack who is admitted in hospitalized out of ill health, "That's what I am, that's what I've been: a visitor. And when I went in to see Jack, in that little room. . . to visit Jack's body, like you could say I was a visitor to it when it was alive. . . ." (356). Amy thus, both covertly and overtly follow the linear behavioral pattern by performing as a visitor to her family.

Jack and his daughter June follow linear behavioral status that is to remain 'unrecovered' until

their life due to ill health; which Amy bursts out that, "So what was true of you, girl, was true of him. And maybe that's why he never came to see you, because he'd already visited himself, looked in on himself somehow in that little room where his own body lay, knowing he wouldn't alter" (356). The research thus illustrates that, in Jack's family, they follow linear but divisional behavioral patterns; that include, Amy and Vince favoring their biological relations, Amy playing the role of visitor to Jack and June, and then Jack and June by being in the state of 'unrecovered' either consciously or unconsciously.

Ray, his wife Carol, and their daughter Sussie comprises nuclear behavioral strands that include, fancying others, fast-tracking into love, and hankering for a new chapter in life. To commence with the deal of fancying, Sussie fancies her own father to captivate him and to meet her needs, which Ray exclaims that, "She's a flirt, she damn well knows how to flirt. She flirts with her own father, she knows when she's doing it, and it means she wants something" (66). Meanwhile, Ray by means of observation, he fancies his own daughter Sussie, "I'd fancy my own daughter" (65), and he often fancies for Carol's sister Daisy from before his marriage; he says that, ". . . I've never told Sue this, maybe now's the time, I fancied her mum's big sister. I always fancied your auntie Daisy" (72). In the line, Carol got fancied and developed an affair with another man besides Ray; which Ray asserts that, "I couldn't imagine her with another man, even when I knew she had one. Barry Stokes" (129). Thus, through observation, the research depicts that, Ray, Sussie, and Carol possess the same habitual behavior of fancying.

The research next portrays how Ray and his family is fast-tracking in love and right away decides to share their life with them. Sussie falls for the Australian man named Andy and moved to Sydney with him; which Ray exclaims that, "She says Andy's going back to Sydney in the winter and she wants to go with him too. . . ." (70). After Sussie's departure, angered Carol boycotts Ray and fallen in love quickly with Mr. Johnson and swiftly moved on with him; which she declares that, "I'm with him, Ray. I'm with him now and I'm not coming back. Goodbye, Ray" (129). Alienated Ray, rapidly falls for Amy



and decides to share life with her, “I thought, Amy chose June, she didn’t choose Jack, now I’ve chosen Amy” (227). The research’s observed portraits thus depict that, Ray and his family hold on to linear behavioral strategies of falling and moving instantly with their loved ones.

Driven by love, Ray and his family yearns for a new liberated life. Ray exclaims Carol’s yearning for new life after Sussie’s decision to embark on a new life with Andy that, “And that’s when I realized that it wasn’t that she didn’t want Sue setting off for a new life across the world. It was that she was jealous” (75-76). Ray concludes that, Sussie and Carol are heading to find a new life; that is, “I thought, First my daughter briggers off to Sydney and stops writing, now my wife goes and bunks it” (130). As a consequence of his family’s decision, Ray too decides to start on a new life; which he states that, “I can go as I please now, I’m my own man now, Free as a bird” (245). Thus, through observation the research depicts that, Ray and his family follows linear behavioral pattern of fancying, fast-tracking on love and unfettering themselves like a free bird.

Mandy is Vince’s wife. Mandy and her family follow linear behavioral strands that is by making impulsive decisions over night to start a new life when they feel that their current life is lagging. Mandy’s father abruptly boycotts Mandy and her mother and picks up an adventurous lifestyle; which Mandy states that, “But when I heard him leaving in the early mornings. . . I’d think, He’ll be at sea soon, my dad Bill, the voyage out, the voyage home. Except one day he never comes home” (201). Following her father’s decision, her mother too took hasty decision on one night and gets into a new relationship; which Mandy describes that, “When you saw what she got for herself by way of replacement, that creep Neville from the Town Hall” (201). Mandy, who felt disturbed by her parents’ distancing, decides on one night and leaves looking for a new life; she exclaims that, “To ran away from home and find another home in less than a day. . . Blackburn to Bermondsey, aiming high. But that’s where I stayed and that’s what I became. . . Vince’s wife. . . his whole family” (203-204). Mandy’s this behaviour of running away is inherited from her father, she states that, “I wasn’t the first to leave, was I? It was him who set me my

example” (200). Through observation on Mandy’s family, the research depicts that, Mandy’s choice of Vince, her mother’s choice of Mr. Johnson, and her father’s choice of adventurous life is a witness of them following the same behavioural pattern.

The research thus depicts how through ‘transgenerational impact’, the characters in Last Orders invariably group together in each individualistic ways and possess different linear behavioural pattern by means of reflecting upon their past in the present. As the characters’ transgenerational behaviour encompass within each of their nuclear families, it reflects upon the extension of ‘cultural’ memory. ‘Cultural’ memory refers to the shared memories, knowledge, and practices that are passed down through generation within a particular culture for shaping the identity and understanding the past. As Last Orders is set in the neo-Victorian era, the characters employ Victorian era’s characteristics. To elaborate on this note, neo-Victorian era is a cultural and literary movement that revisits, reinterprets, and often subverts the themes, aesthetics, and values of the Victorian era. Thus, the characters in Last Orders follow the linear behavioural pattern followed by the characters like Catherine and Heathcliff in Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights; by diverging from their roles of silence and obedient individuals to radiant, independent, and freedom seekers. Thus, the linear behaviour pattern of the characters in Last Orders are merely upon the reflection of their ‘cultural’ memory.

Swift’s Shuttlecock is the next work left for the discussion about linear behavioural strands. Shuttlecock is the second novel written and published by Swift in the year 1981. The plot of the novel spins around within the protagonist Prentis’s personal and professional life. Similar to the characters in Last Orders, the characters in Shuttlecock too follows the same behavioural pattern by recollecting the past memories in the present. The characters include the protagonist Prentis, his father (Dad), his son Martin, his head officer Quinn and the members in the case C9 follows the same behavioural pattern that of holding secrets and acting covertly. These characters’ and their linear behavioural pattern are further detailed in the current study.



Dad, Prentis's father performs same behavioural pattern both in his personal and professional life. During the war, Dad works in Caen as a spy for Germans and ended up his service as a traitor to his nation. To elaborate on this note, Dad works in Caen (France) as a spy to collect information about enemy's (German's) troop movements; which Dad exclaims that, "Every opportunity we failed to take through too much caution might take its toll on the effectiveness of that future invasion. . . The night we chose that of May 2nd. . . as if I feared discovery by the police rather than the enemy. . . the feeling of less a spy than the criminal" (62). As being a spy, Dad got captured and tormented by the Germans. Through undergoing a brutal treatment, Dad becomes a traitor and unleashes all his country secrets to liberate himself. Prentis's head officer Quinn reveals Dad's true colour of being a traitor that, "The gist of the blackmail was this: that your father did not escape from the Germans. . . the German 'allowed him to escape'. . . They say your father was a coward and a traitor. . . ." (208-209). Lastly, in personal life Dad becomes a betrayer by covertly possessing an extra marital affair with the wife his dear friend Z; which is also disclosed by Quinn via the blackmail letter that, "The substance of the allegation was that your father had been having an affair with Z's wife" (220). Dad's current status of sudden silence symbolises his attempt of permanently concealing his hidden identities as being a spy, traitor, and a betrayer; which Quinn exclaims that, "The perfect defence: impenetrable silence" (210). Thus, both personally and professionally Dad follows the same linear behavioural pattern of operating underground and keeping secrets from others.

Similar to his father, the protagonist Prentis also works in underground and maintains a secret both in his personal and professional life. Prentis is determined to do underground work to find details in the file C9/E in his office; which Quinn deliberately hides from him, "All I have to do is to pick out the forms. . . Details of the personal histories of X and Z . . . The only risk is if Quinn or any of my colleagues catches me at it. I will have to choose some time when the office is quiet" (106-107). When Prentis comes out with what is in file C9/E, similar to Quinn, Prentis too follows the same behavioural pattern of hiding the secret in the file away from the public's eye, ". . . if I never looked in the file, I would never

know. I read the code letters over and over again. C9/E [ . . . ] And then suddenly I knew I wanted to be uncertain, I wanted to be in the dark" (225). In personal life, Prentis does underground attempt to find the reason for his father's muteness; which he states that, ". . . I have a theory. . . Perhaps, with the right words, the right question, I could shock him out of his silence" (49). Once after finding the reason for his Dad's silence, Prentis withholds the secret by silencing himself same like his father; which he states that, "But then I sometimes think, with the knowledge I have but don't show Dad, and the knowledge Dad perhaps has and believes I don't, our relations could not be more finely tuned than they are" (240). Thus, Prentis follows the same behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding the secret both in his personal and professional life similar to his Dad.

Martin is Prentis's elder son, by working underground and withholding a secret, he follows the same behavioural pattern same like his father and grandfather (Dad). When Prentis takes away Martin's happiness of watching television, Martin takes revenge through performing underground work by hiding Dad's book away from Prentis to make him realise how important certain things are to each of them. When Prentis questions Martin about the book that, "Why did you take it?" (90), Martin replies that, "Because you take away the television" (90). Martin's behaviour of covertly action similar to his father and grandfather, makes Prentis to admire his own son; which he exclaims that, "He was his grandfather's grandson" (91).

Similar to Prentis and his family, the rest of the characters left to be discussed for linear behavioural pattern in the novel is the members related to the case C9. In C9, the characters who follow the linear behavioural strands of working underground and withholding are, Prentis's head Quinn, Home Officers X and Z and Z's family.

Quinn, similar to protagonist Prentis and his father, follows the same behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding a secret. In his office, Quinn takes up the case C9 personally, does some underground work by hiding and destroying the file C9/E to preserve secrets include Dad's true colour, a blackmail letter from X, and Z's familial reputation away from the public's eye; Quinn states



that, “But I can tell you now that I’ve had File E all along, and I nearly destroyed it” (201).

The Home Officer X feels unsuccessful and inferior when compared to his colleagues Dad and Z. Thus, to take revenge on them, X works in underground and collects personal information of both Dad and Z by means to blackmail them. As a result of the underground work, X finds that Dad is a traitor to a nation and a betrayer to his dear friend Z. Thus, he threatens Dad and Z by addressing a blackmail letter; which Quinn exclaims that, “‘So X would have known’. . . ‘He would have been in a position to know. But he would also have been in a position, several years later, to make a spiteful, unfounded attack which had apparent historical bias’” (210-211). By performing underground work and withholding a secret via blackmail letter, X fulfils his desire of revenge against Dad and Z by making Dad fall in impenetrable silence and Z to commit suicide; which Quinn states that, “Z committed suicide at a time soon after he may have come into possession of this letter” (220).

The Home Officer Z, his wife, and son follows the linear behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding a secret. Z and his family are shattered by the allegation letter passed by the Home Officer X. Through the letter, X reveals the dark secret that Z’s wife is in extra marital affair with Dad during the war period. Z, upon hearing that his dearest friend (Dad) is a betrayer, he is shattered and works underground to commits suicide; which Quinn states that, “. . . that’s if my theory about Z’s son is correct – that his father committed suicide because he had found out his best friend was carrying on with his wife” (224). Z’s wife to safeguard her image and Z’s son to safeguard his father’s reputation, both works in underground and withhold a secret by zipping up their mouth about the reason for Z’s death; Quinn exclaims that, “But Z’s wife is hardly likely to want to publicize matters further, and Z’s son – well, Z’s son’s primary concern was his father’s reputation” (224). To conceal the dark secret away from the public’s eye, and to keep up Z’s reputation as a respectful Home Officer, Z’s family follows the linear behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding a secret about Dad’s betrayal and Z’s wife’s infidelity.

Last in the line of Shuttlecock, Prentis and Z’s son follow the linear behavioural pattern. Both

Prentis and Z’s son’s fathers are successful Home Officers. Thus, in the name of maintaining their father’s reputation Prentis destroys the file C9/E and Z’s son on the other hand, conceals his mouth about the true statement of his father Z’s death away from the public. Thus, both Prentis and Z’s son follows the linear behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding a secret to keep up their father’s image; which Quinn exclaims that, “As a matter of fact, your position and Z’s son’s are peculiarly alike. You both want to protect your fathers” (224).

The present research portrays how the above-mentioned set of characters in Shuttlecock alternatively follow the linear behavioural pattern by working in underground, and withholding a secret invariably related to the case C9. The research exclaims that, the linear behavioural strands of the characters’ related to C9 comes from within the ‘transgenerational impact’ of ‘collective’ memory. ‘Collective’ memory refers to the shared pool of memories, knowledge, and information held by a social group. In Shuttlecock, the above-mentioned characters withhold the contents in the case C9 as their ‘collective’ memory. Through the characters’ linear behavioural pattern of working in underground and withholding a secret towards C9, the research depicts that, ‘collective’ memory can influence linear social behavioural pattern.

The findings of the research portray that, how both in Last Orders and Shuttlecock, each set of characters follow different yet linear behavioural strands that is my means of reflecting upon the past memories in the present. The research exclaims that, via ‘transgenerational impact’ of cultural and collective memory, the characters in these novels possess linear behavioural patterns. Thus, in this Swift’s select novels, the covertly transgenerational impact of ‘cultural’ and ‘collective’ memory explicit as overtly behavioural pattern towards the characters by means of reflecting upon their past in the present.

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