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BACHELOR THESIS

Intertextuality in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

Intertextovost v románu *Atonement* Iana McEwana

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I hereby declare that I worked on this thesis, entitled “Intertextuality in Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*”, on my own and that I used only the cited sources. I also declare that this thesis was not used in order to gain any other academic degree than the one applied for.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to describe the use of intertextuality in Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* (2001). The thesis offers an overview of the main theorists of intertextuality and focuses on the concrete employment of intertextual practices in the above mentioned novel. It attempts to illustrate the various ways intertextuality can be used to enhance the narration, how it can be combined with other postmodern practices and how it influences the readers' understanding of the novel.

**KEY WORDS:** intertextuality, text, postmodernism, metafiction, allusion

## **ABSTRAKT**

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je popsat intertextovost v díle Iana McEwana *Pokání* (2001). Práce obsahuje stručný nástin hlavních teorií intertextovosti a soustředí se na konkrétní způsoby jejího užití v daném díle. Cílem práce je porovnat a názorně předvést jak je intertextovost použita k obohacení děje, jak ji lze kombinovat s dalšími postmoderními technikami a jak ovlivňuje čtenářovo porozumění danému románu.

**KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:** intertextovost, text, postmodernismus, metafikce, narážka

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# 1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explain the phenomenon of intertextuality and explore how it is employed in Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* (2001). As to the justification of the selection of the work, I believe that it contains enough evidence of the intertextual phenomena to be deemed an adequate example of intertextual practises, as it makes use of it frequently. Although intertextuality is not an exclusively postmodern device, it is often called a trademark of postmodernism, therefore, I chose to illustrate its usage on a postmodern novel. Intertextuality is a variable narrative strategy that enables the author to incorporate it in many ways and I would like to show how it is combined with other postmodern narrative techniques, namely metafiction and multiple perspective narration which are both used in *Atonement*. Moreover, *Atonement* is not the only novel in which McEwan employs intertextuality as some of his other works are also entwined with intertextual practices.

As for the structure of the thesis, the first part offers a theoretical framework and focuses on the explanation of the terms that are connected with intertextuality and postmodern writing and that will be used throughout the thesis. The concept of intertextuality is relatively fluid and has many definitions. I will introduce the main theorists who have engaged in the study of intertextuality and describe their specific approaches. Furthermore, the theoretical part also includes basic information about the author and his other works that also feature intertextuality. The main objective of this thesis is the analysis of the novel *Atonement* which I will present in the practical part and whose aim is to examine the actual employment of intertextuality. To provide necessary context, the practical part will also contain a brief introduction of the plot of the novel.

## **2 Theoretical Part**

### **2.1 Intertextuality**

As this thesis focuses on the employment of intertextuality, it is necessary to explain what the term entails. Intertextuality is the creating of a text with reference to another text, work of art or music. This is, however, a very simplistic definition. Since the 1960s, when Julia Kristeva created the term, many theorists have engaged in the defining and redefining of the phenomenon and they have offered a great diversity of explanations and also used their own terminology to describe it. As a result of this, as Allen Graham warns, intertextuality “is not a transparent term and so, despite its confident utilization by many theorists and critics, cannot be evoked in an uncomplicated manner” (Allen 2). Some of the points of dispute among the theorists are: the role of the author in the shaping of the text, the power of the reader, the (im)possibility of interpretation of literary works, the (in)stability of meaning, and the (in)dependence of the work on its “historical and social situatedness” (Allen 70).

Even though the term was created relatively recently and is often associated with postmodernism, it is important to realize that the technique it much older and “various intertextual practices of alluding and quoting, of paraphrasing and translating, of continuation and adaptation, of parody and travesty flourished in periods long before postmodernism, for instance in late classical Alexandria, in the Renaissance, in Neoclassicism and, of course, in ‘classical’ Modernism” (Plett 210). Moreover, the concept of intertextuality is by no means limited exclusively to literature. As Allen observes, architecture, music, art, film production, the products of all these are always confronted with previously created works. I will try to briefly outline the main theorists and their approaches to the subject.

The origins of the concept of intertextuality can be found in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist and structuralist, and M. M. Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist. They both study language but with a different focus. Kristeva combines the theories of the two and a result of it is the emergence of the term intertextuality. Saussure describes language as a complicated abstract system governed by general rules and his “emphasis on the systematic features of language establishes the relational nature of meaning and thus of texts” (Allen 3). To support his theories, he starts with the basic unit

of language – a linguistic sign - and tries to find the origins of its meaning. The crucial feature of the sign is its arbitrariness, the fact that its meaning is based solely on conventions and not on the factual connection with the real world. In other words, “language is a structure of signifying relations between words and concepts, rather than between words and things” (Hutcheon 148). Therefore, words refer to the system and not to the reality that surrounds the speakers. In addition, “signs exist within a system and produce meaning through their similarity to and difference from other signs” (Allen 10), when extracted from the system, they are meaningless. The possibilities of the speaker are limited by the available set of words existing in the system of language. Saussure claims that “all acts of communication stem from choices made within a system which pre-exists any speaker” (Allen 9). Even in this statement it is already possible to see the definition of intertextuality that only substitutes the speaker for a writer and communication for text.

Bakhtin also examines language but finds Saussure’s synchronic system that focuses on the language at any moment of time deficient. He claims that “there is no real moment in time when a synchronic system of language could be constructed” (Allen 18) as “language is always in a ‘ceaseless flow of becoming’” (Allen 18). According to Bakhtin, language is a flexible tool that reflects specific social situations between specific individuals and the synchronic approach is inadequate because it “loses sight of the social specificity of language and confines it to something as abstract as a lexicon or dictionary” (Allen 18). By using the synchronic approach “in order to find some generalizable rules” (Allen 18), Saussure deadens the language and separates it from its natural affiliation with social context. Bakhtin’s alternative theory adopts diachronic approach to the study of language and studies the language as a system that evolves through time but still stays faithful to Saussure’s notion of the already established system where “all language responds to previous utterances and to preexistent patterns of meaning and evaluation”, but adds that language “also promotes and seeks to promote further responses” (Allen 19). Our understanding of words, utterances or literary works is always dependent on the previously said or written. Moreover, the meaning of words and utterances is double, depending on the previously said - the system, and also on the reception of the addressees - the social context. The latter condition is, as stated above, absent in Saussure’s theory, yet for Bakhtin it is the primal focus of his study. He calls this double property of language

dialogism. As a result, he is aware of the intertextual dimension of language even though he does not use the term.

He extends his study of language and its dialogic nature to literature and especially to the genre of the novel because he states that “only the novel, indeed only certain kinds of novel, are” (Allen 26) truly dialogic. The novels that do fulfill the conditions of dialogic language he then calls polyphonic. In them he observes other concepts, heteroglossia, “language’s ability to contain within it many voices, one’s own and other voices” (Allen 29), and double-voiced discourse. As he puts it, the speech of characters in polyphonic novels is always double-voiced, there is a clash between “two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions” (Allen 29). Bakhtin does not dispose of the author, quite the opposite, he acknowledges his or her agency in the shaping of the meaning, thus we can separate him from the later poststructuralist view “which, if it has a notion of agency, of the origins of meaning, attributes it to language itself rather than to human authors” (Allen 28). It needs to be added that he excludes other genres from his study since he believes them to be monologic, expressing only one authoritative meaning. As Allen observes, such notion is contradictory because Bakhtin discusses language as a whole in dialogic terms, therefore, other genres should also be perceived as dialogic (26).

In the 1960s, during a period of transition from Structuralism that follows Saussure’s legacy and Post-structuralism that undermines his theories, Julie Kristeva fused the theories of Saussure and Bakhtin and created the term intertextuality. The structuralists believe in the stability of meaning and try to fix it and make it objective, and in order to be able to scientifically analyse language and literary texts, they avoid “any attention to the human subject who performs the utterance under consideration” (Allen 32). Furthermore, they separate the language from its cultural and historical context. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, view the notion of stable meaning as illusory and as a tool of dominant ideologies to maintain their power (Allen 32) because such notions are vital for the preservation of the monological discourse. Theorists who presented their ideas in the *Tel Quel* journal, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, Kristeva, and others, focus especially on literary language and its relation to politics and philosophy, and

describe how literary language “embodies the stratifications, unfinalized interpretations, ideological positions and class conflicts at work in society in any epoch” (Allen 30). As they put it, the meaning resists stabilization and they attack “the very foundations of meaning and communication” (Allen 33). What they also resent about the notion of the permanent meaning is the fact that it in extension makes both communication and knowledge subjects of exchangeable value. In accordance with the idea of stable meaning, “knowledge, if it exists, can be clearly communicated, and because of this it can be bought and sold in books, in educational courses and so on” (Allen 33). Against this poststructuralists pose the “vision of texts as always in a state of *production*, rather than being products to be quickly consumed” (Allen 34, emphasis in original). The texts are offered to the reader or an analyst or even the author as unfinished, waiting for him or her to enter the process of the creation of the meaning.

In her works *Word, Dialogue, Novel* (1966) and *The Bounded Text* (1967), Kristeva works with Bakhtin’s theories but she rewrites them in accordance with poststructuralist views. Whereas Bakhtin “insisted on the ‘contact of subjects’ behind the ‘dialogical contact between texts’” (Plett 212), she crucially departs from his view and redirects this power to intertextuality, to the contact with the pre-existent texts. Consequently, “the author of a text, once a creator and a genius, dwindles in importance and his role is reduced to providing the site or space for the interplay of texts. Creativity and productivity are transferred from the author to the text” (Plett 212). As she explains, the author is not the original creator, only a collector and arranger of the already written texts. Kristeva also relates to Bakhtin’s notions of the dependence of language on social context but the connecting element in this relationship, in her opinion, are not the specific human subjects existing in the social environment but the texts that are never original and cannot be separated from “all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture” (Allen 36). What is more, she follows Bakhtin’s notions of the double-voiced words and she extends it to texts which, constructed from double-voiced words, logically “embody society’s dialogic conflict over the meaning of words” (Allen 36). To retain the structuralist notion of unified meaning expressed in texts is therefore impossible.

She applies her theories of intertextuality to literary works and is, unlike Bakhtin who focuses solely on novels, interested in all literary genres. She positions the language

of not only literary but of all texts into a three-dimensional textual space consisting of the author, the reader and the past texts, which form a horizontal and a vertical dimension of the language. In the horizontal dimension “the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee”, in the vertical dimension “the text is oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus” (Allen 39). Kristeva and other theorists of *Tel Quel* seek to determine the moment of the emergence of “the self-consciously intertextual art” (Allen 50) and they agree that the appearance of such works occurred at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and then during the period of Modernism. Later in her works, Kristeva, just like Bakhtin, adds other concepts into her theories and she also drops the term intertextuality and starts using a new term, transposition, to highlight the fact that intertextuality cannot be mistaken for mere influence or context because “texts do not just utilize previous textual units but that they transform them and give them what [she] terms new thetic positions” (Allen 53).

Another theorist who is inherently connected with the concept of intertextuality and who is one of the most prolific theorists in this field is Roland Barthes. As his study is rather extensive, I will choose and describe only its pivotal parts. One of the most important features of his theories is his dismissal of the structuralist approach that is attempting to stabilize the meaning of the linguistic sign and of the text. For Barthes, “the text is experienced only in an activity, in a production” (Plett 6), and the production is a never-ending process. Moreover, he subverts the traditional notions of the text and the work. In traditional views, “the text partakes of the spiritual glory of the work, of which it is the prosaic but necessary servant” (Barthes qtd. in Allen 62) which gives the work its permanence and “legality of the letter, that incontrovertible and indelible trace, supposedly, of the meaning which the author has intentionally placed in his work; the text is a weapon against time, oblivion and the trickery of speech, which is so easily taken back, altered, denied” (Barthes qtd. in Allen 62). In other words, the text is a stabilizing secondary force behind the work that exists before it. However, in the context of Barthes’s and Kristeva’s theories, such distinction cannot be applied because they view the text as productive and most definitely unstable and hence unable to fulfill the securing function. As a result of this, Barthes reverses the positions of the work and the text and proclaims the work to be stable and material and the text to be the “unleashing of the disruptive and yet playful force of writing” (66). As he puts it, “the work is held in the hand, the text in language” (Barthes

qtd. in Allen 66). A text is an uninhibited flow of meanings that are gained from other texts which gain their meaning from other texts and so on ad infinitum. This flow is endless and untraceable. Out of these notions logically emerges his understanding of intertextuality as “both the text itself and the space between all texts, in which we move, and cannot but move, all the time” (Plett 213).

He also comments on the role of the reader and on the role of the author in the textual space. Barthes observes the possibilities of the reader in the shaping of the meaning and distinguishes two kinds of readers – consumers and readers/writers. The first category contains readers who look for a stable meaning in the work. In contrast, the second category contains readers who “are productive in their reading, or, to put it in [his] terms, are themselves ‘writers’ of the text” (Allen 69-70). He pronounces the latter type of reading a textual analysis. He separates it from the traditional criticism which tries to locate a stable meaning and in his textual analysis he “tries to say no longer *from where* the text comes (historical criticism), nor even *how* it is made (structural analysis), but how it is unmade, how it explodes, disseminates” (Allen 78, emphasis in original). Moreover, he stresses the fact that the intertextual nature of texts does not indicate the possibility to trace all its intertexts and therefore we can never find the finite meaning of the text.

Even though the author’s position was already undermined by Kristeva and other theorists, it is Barthes who explicitly announces ‘the death of the author’. He criticizes the commodification of the author whose name is sometimes used as a trademark to attract the readers to ‘consume’ a specific work. Attaching the author’s name to the work guides the reader, if he or she wishes to understand a particular work, to attempt to find the definite meaning of the work through the person of the author, relying on the notion that it is the author who puts the meaning in the work. As mentioned above, Barthes believes that the meaning is plural and, what is more, that it does not originate from the author but from the text itself and its position in the web of other texts. The author, in his words ‘a scriptor’, is just an arranger who compiles the text from the already written which is always full of cultural and historical codes.

Allen points out that even though Kristeva and Barthes engage deeply in the description of the concept of intertextuality, they do not provide an instruction how to use the phenomenon when analysing literary texts. The task was accomplished by two

structuralists, Gérard Genette and Michael Riffaterre. They both go against the notions of Kristeva and Barthes about the untraceability of meaning and their goal is to untangle the net of texts surrounding a literary work and decode its meaning. The work might be concealing its connection with other texts but a literary critic should be able to decipher it. The key concern for Genette and Riffaterre is the system; the individual works are of secondary importance to them. Genette makes a correlation between the role of the author and the role of the critic as he believes that “the author takes elements of the enclosed literary system or structure and arranges them into the work, obscuring the work’s relation to the system. The critic takes the work and returns it to the system, illuminating the relation between work and system obscured by the author” (Allen 96). In his works *The Architext* (1992), *Palimpsests* (1997) and *Paratexts* (1997), Genette offers a complex classification of intertextual practices and devices. However, he substitutes the principal term intertextuality for transtextuality. He then subdivides it into five categories – intertextuality, paratextuality, hypertextuality, metatextuality, and architextuality.

He reduces intertextuality to “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts’ and as ‘the actual presence of one text within another’” (Allen 101), therefore it consists of quotations, allusions and plagiarism. Such a limited concept thus provides the critic with specific text-linking devices that form a connection between two or more texts. Quotations (direct references) and allusions (indirect references) are for him on the same level in the textual space, which is not the case for some other theorists who view quotations as a subcategory of allusions. Paratextuality is the connection between the text and its paratext. Paratext “marks those elements which lie on the threshold of the text and which help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers” (Allen 103) and is further subdivided into epitext and peritext. Peritext is comprised of titles, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, and notes, the elements that are directly incorporated in the text. Epitext, on the other hand, lies outside the text and consists of reviews, interviews and other external texts connected to the text. Paratexts are supposed to guide the reader of the text and they should “ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author’s purpose” (Genette qtd. in Allen 107). It is obvious that here Genette reasserts the author’s power in the process of writing. Hypertextuality is a relationship between a text and a previous text on which it is self-consciously based. The hypertext always transforms or extends its hypotext and the reader’s comprehension of the hypertext relies on his or her knowledge of

the previously written text. Hypertextuality includes parody, pastiche, sequel or translation. Metatextuality is a commentary of one text on another text. Critical literary essays, for instance, are examples of metatextuality. Finally, the last type, architextuality, constitutes “the entire set of general or transcendent categories – types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres – from which emerges each singular text” (Genette qtd. in Allen 101). By emphasizing this, he touches upon a feature of intertextuality that has been neglected by Kristeva. She has met criticism for not acknowledging the literary genres in her definition of transposition, even though “in literature it is essentially the available literary genres and dominant formal practices, which new writers transpose and attempt to transform” (Allen 57). Genette points out that it is the architextual level of a literary work that influences the reader’s expectations about the work and that shapes his or her interpretation of the work. The author chooses and imitates specific formal categories and conventions, and thus determines the way in which is the work received. The five subcategories cannot be strictly separated as they tend to overlap.

Michael Riffaterre, similarly to Genette, leans towards structuralism and offers his own definition of intertextuality. He understands intertextuality as “a modality of perception, the deciphering of the text by the reader in such a way that he identifies the structures to which the text owes its quality of work of art” (Riffaterre qtd. in Plett 193). His theories are based on a conviction that it is possible to find a stable meaning and that texts are connected to other texts. Moreover, he shares the structuralist view on the non-referentiality of texts since he believes that their meaning resides in the semiotic structures that encompass them. In other words, “the text refers not to objects outside of itself, but to an inter-text” (Riffaterre qtd. in Allen 115). Quite paradoxically, he promotes the intertextual nature of the text and, at the same time, its uniqueness. His key concern is not the text but the process of reading that produces the meaning of the text and he distinguishes two stages of reading. The first one, referential, looks for external referents in order to decipher the meaning of the text. However, this level might not be able to uncover the meaning or might not make sense. Thus the reader proceeds to the second, semiotic level “in which apparently ambiguous images and phrases are connected on a deeper, non-referential level” (Allen 118). The first stage might be ambiguous but the second, through the uncovering of the underlying systems and codes, always leads to a final understanding

of the text as texts draw their meaning from the transformation of “socially shared codes, clichés, oppositions and descriptive systems” (Allen 124) which he calls a sociolect. To complete his theory, he uses two instruments that help the reader to find the meaning – a syllepsis which is “word which means something in one context and has an opposed or clashing meaning in another context” (Allen 118) and an interpretant which is “a sign which explains the relation between one sign and another sign” (Allen 118).

Above all, the meaning does not lie in the relationship between the text and its specific intertexts but in the whole structure in which they are woven. The reader does not need to locate the specific intertexts; all that is needed is the presupposition that they exist and are transformed in the analysed text. Riffaterre bases his theory “on the belief not only that texts give us clear clues to their decoding [...], but also that readers have the capacity, the knowledge of the sociolect and of literary traditions, which will allow them to perform such a successful decoding” (Allen 125). That is to say, the text guides the reader through the process of interpretation and the reader possesses a literary competence, by which Riffaterre understands the reader’s awareness of the sociolect but not necessarily the reader’s knowledge of the specific literary works. The critics of Riffaterre’s theories argue that his way of interpretation can be a source of confusion and that not all genres can be decoded in the same way. What is more, Riffaterre also does not take into consideration that different readers have various backgrounds and therefore they do not share the same sociolect, hence it is impossible for them to reach the same meaning.

Another theorist and literary critic who also works with the concept of intertextuality is Harold Bloom. He offers yet another outlook on the phenomenon. He develops his theory in connection with Romantic poetry which he views as intertextual. Bloom acknowledges both the originality of poetry/all texts and also its intertextual relations with other poems/texts. He notices the indebtedness of Romantic poets to John Milton whom they, despite their beliefs in the power of imagination, imitate. As he puts it, “poets write by misinterpreting and misreading the poems of specific precursor poets” (Allen 135). Bloom’s main contribution to the topic is his “combination of a rhetorical and a psychoanalytical approach to intertextuality” (Allen 136). In his work *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), he adopts Freud’s psychoanalysis and his theory of defence mechanisms and claims that poets are motivated by two desires. The first one is their desire to imitate

their predecessor and the second is their need to be original. The second desire clashes with the fact that they are bound to be only imitators of their precursor even though they might not have read him. Bloom resolves this problem in saying that “they must rewrite the precursor’s poems, and in that very act they must defend themselves against the knowledge that they are merely involved in the process of rewriting, or what [he] calls misreading” (Allen 135). Since they transform and modify their predecessor’s poems they are able to retain the illusion of their own originality and imagination. Intertextuality, as Bloom states, stems from the ‘anxiety of influence’ which “concerns the inability to avoid what Barthes styles the ‘already written and read’, but also concerns writers’ and readers’ refusal to accept this state of affairs” (Allen 137). He then tries to find out why people still write even though they are doomed to mere rewriting and imitating of the previously written texts. He decides that the writer’s motivation is in his or her wish “to persuade others to read [his or her] work, to become themselves an influence” (Allen 139). Bloom also describes how the reader uses the awareness of the intertextual nature of works to interpret them. He turns back to Riffaterre and agrees that all the reader needs is the presupposition of the pre-existing text and not the specific text itself. Furthermore, he, just like Riffaterre, denies the importance of social and cultural codes in the shaping of the meaning and argues that “literary texts can only have other specific literary texts as inter-texts” (Allen 141).

## **2.2 Postmodernism and Intertextuality**

As was mentioned at the beginning of the theoretical part, intertextuality as a practice existed before but the concept of intertextuality came to life in 1970s during the period of postmodernism. As Allen points out, postmodernism is, similarly to intertextuality, a dialogic word and covers a vast number of connotations, both negative and positive. Those who perceive it from a negative perspective talk about a loss of values and degradation of art, those who perceive it positively describe it in terms of democratization and pluralization. Postmodernism came after modernism and though it differs in certain aspects, it is not a rejection of modernism but rather a continuation of it. As Jencks suggests, postmodernism is “complicit with many of the forms and theories which characterized Modernism and allows itself to utilize Modernism’s major styles, genres and innovations” (Allen 188). Linda Hutcheon claims that what is typical for

postmodern literature is its double-codedness. Postmodernism questions all modes of representation and at the same time cannot avoid relying on them. As Hutcheon puts it, “postmodernism is contradictory and double coded, since it ‘works within the very systems it attempts to subvert’” (Hutcheon qtd. in Allen 189). Moreover, what is also characteristic for postmodernism is a mixture of higher and lower genres and a combination of all previous traditions. In other words, it is “a time of incessant choosing [...] an era when no orthodoxy can be adopted without self-consciousness and irony, because all traditions seem to have some validity” (Allen 186). Postmodernism is resentful towards modernist elitism, the notion that art/literature is only for the educated, the well-read and the intellectual, and instead proclaims that art should be accessible for everyone.

Intertextuality is popular in both modernism and postmodernism, however, the use of it differs in at least two aspects. The first one is the fact that modernism is trying to, through the use of intertextual practices, escape the established modes of representation and yearns for the liberation from the system of established codes, systems and modes of representation. Whereas postmodernism acknowledges its inability to escape them and deals with such limitations through parody and irony. Hutcheon argues that intertextual references in modernism are still surrounded by an air of nostalgia for past times, whilst in postmodernism they signal ironic distance. In Hutcheon’s words, postmodern intertextuality “is both deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation (Plett 228). As a result, Manfred Pfister defines postmodern intertextuality “as self-consciously foregrounded intertextuality, as intertextuality theoretically conceptualized within the works themselves” (Plett 217). The other difference between modern and postmodern employment of intertextuality is in the range of references which is much broader in postmodernism. Pfister observes that in modernism, even though the authors choose pretexts from a wide range of epochs and cultures, “it is always the canonized and ‘classical’ texts that are dearly privileged. If contemporary popular culture is referred to at all, it tends to be with a derogatory or denigrating tone” (Plett 218). Therefore the modernist elitism lies not only in the choice of the target audience, but also in the choice of the referenced texts. Such strategy is disposed of in postmodernism and Pfister even begrudgingly claims that it is reversed and that “the verbal garbage and the flood of images produced by an ever-growing industry, set up to entertain our consumer society [...]

become the privileged pretexts in postmodernism” (Plett 218). Whether theorists view postmodern intertextuality in this negative way or not, they do agree that the postmodern range of pretexts is much wider than the modernist one.

Intertextuality in postmodernism is often combined with metafiction and historiographic metafiction. Metafiction is a type of writing that is self-consciously aware of its fictitious nature and constantly reminds the reader of it. Patricia Waugh in her book *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) claims that metafictional writings “not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text” (Waugh 2) and through this they provide a critique of their own methods of construction. She also states that metafiction can be a useful tool “for understanding the construction of subjectivity in the world outside novel” (Waugh 3). We describe the world around us through the language that is also used in literary works, therefore, if we understand how language is used to construct the fictitious worlds, we should be able to grasp the way how it influences our perception of the ‘real’ world that is also “a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems” (Waugh 9).

Waugh argues that metafiction, though prominent in postmodernism, is “a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels” (Waugh 5, emphasis in original). However, in postmodernism, metafiction is a reaction to the changed beliefs about reality, truth and history. She clarifies that postmodernism is “no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures” (Waugh 7). In such atmosphere it is only logical that writers question the traditional modes of narration and use metafictional practices to do so. She accentuates the positive aspects of this behaviour and opposes to the critics of metafiction who see it as “a form of self-indulgence and decadence characteristic of the exhaustion of any artistic form or genre” (Waugh 10).

Linda Hutcheon coined the term historiographic metafiction and uses it for such novels “which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon 5). In other words, the distinction between the fictional and the factual is blurred in such novels and they are aware not only of their fictitious nature but also about their dependence on historical events. Writing about history can never be separated from intertextual practices because the only way we can access

history is through other texts. Postmodernism views history as discursive and textual and denies the existence of one objective totalizing history. Our understanding of history is always based on and filtered through texts that were written by specific authors who had their specific intentions and opinions, to claim objectivity of history is therefore impossible. Moreover, “no historical narrative of events ever directly and transparently records or represents those events” (Allen 191).

An author who wishes to write historical fiction cannot hide the fact that he inevitably enters the process of repeating and rewriting of the already written. As Umberto Eco poetically writes “books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told” (Eco qtd. in Allen 194), therefore if the author wants to be taken seriously he or she must distance or ironize his or her writing. In Eco’s words, “irony may be the only way we *can* be serious today” (Eco qtd. in Hutcheon 39). The best solution, according to Hutcheon, is the use of parody. However, for Hutcheon, parody is not necessarily connected with an intention to ridicule. She understands parody “as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (Hutcheon 26). In her work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) she writes about “parodically doubled discourse of postmodern intertextuality” (Hutcheon 128) to emphasize the fact that in historiographic metafiction “intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the ‘world’ and literature” (Hutcheon 124). What is more, “historiographic metafiction does not pretend to reproduce events, but to direct us, instead, to facts, or to new directions in which to think about events” (Hutcheon 154). That is to say, such novels do not want to promote one unchangeable point of view but look for new perspectives and new ways to interpret historical events. Perfect examples of novels that meet the criteria of historiographic metafiction and intertextuality are Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1980) and John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969).

### **2.3 Ian McEwan and Intertextuality**

Ian McEwan is one of the most recognized contemporary British writers. He is also one of the most prolific authors and his works are diverse in both style and content. Although he is best known for his novels, his writing is not limited to this genre and he is also the author of novellas, short stories, screenplays, plays, children’s books and lectures.

Despite the variety of his writing, it is possible to spot some recurring themes, for example, the theme of childhood or the theme of memories and a keen interest in science and in the secrets of the human mind.

McEwan is a representative of postmodernism and the postmodern strategies and tendencies are easily recognizable in his writing. The use of intertextuality in *Atonement* is not a novelty in McEwan's work as his previous novels exhibit different degrees of the phenomenon. However, *Atonement* does stand out in the context of his work because it is his "first truly intertextual novel" (Chalupský, 2015, 108). Among his other heavily intertextual novels are, for example, *Saturday* (2005), *Sweet Tooth* (2012) or, his to date last novel, *Nutshell* (2016). When adopting intertextual references, McEwan alludes not only to the works of other authors but also to his own. *Sweet Tooth* is a brilliant example of this because it is a spy novel which links it to his novel *The Innocent* (1990) and it also contains echoes of *Atonement*. However, its connection with *Atonement* is much more complex for *Sweet Tooth* is replete with intertextual references and it shares numerous similarities in the plot. Furthermore, both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* use metafiction not only as a theme but also as a narrative strategy. In *Sweet Tooth* McEwan repeats the final metafictional twist from *Atonement*.

Both novels are predominantly narrated from the female perspectives and the main heroines, Briony Tallis and Serena Frome, are partly characterized by their affinity with books, Briony as a writer and Serena as a reader. The main character of *Sweet Tooth* is the twenty-one-year old Serena Frome. Serena is an avid reader who reads almost everything and devours the books at the rate of about three novels per week. She wanted to study literature but her mother pushed her towards mathematical studies at Cambridge. This is reminiscent of Robbie Turner who was also maneuvered into Cambridge by his "ambitious headmaster" and towards literature by "a charismatic teacher" (McEwan 91). They are both used as pawns in the hands of other people who wish to prove that being a woman is not an obstacle to a university education (in Serena's case) and that a lower social standing is not in correlation with lower intelligence (in Robbie's case). Serena's situation is contrasted with Cecilia's because while Serena's mother wanted her daughter to study, Cecilia's mother was not in favour of her daughter's choice and Cecilia went to Cambridge "in order to break free from the constraints of her home where she [was] permanently reminded that a university education for women is just a redundant if not even harmful

distraction” (Chalupský, 2015, 107). Robbie finishes his studies with a first and Serena, like Cecilia, with a third. Nevertheless, Serena can later exploit her passion for reading when she is assigned to a secret operation of MI5 called Sweet Tooth.

That is how she meets Tom Haley a beginning author who has been chosen by the organization as a writer that promotes ideas that are in accordance with the organization’s political opinions. Serena’s task is to persuade him to accept a financial support from an international foundation that is indirectly funded by MI5 so he can leave his job and can focus on his writing. She succeeds in her mission, and moreover, she becomes Haley’s lover. A lot of attention is paid to Tom’s stories and later to his novel. The stories are remarkably reminiscent of McEwan’s stories in *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), especially the story of a man who succumbs to a sudden passion for a department store mannequin. The stories evoke the same grim unsettling atmosphere of “stylish morbidity” (Ryan qtd. in Malcolm 4) and are replete with similarly shocking plots.

Another significant feature that connects *Sweet Tooth* with *Atonement* is the metafictional nature of both novels. In *Atonement* McEwan monitors Briony’s authorial development and at the end reveals that she is the author of the novel. In *Sweet Tooth*, Serena follows Tom’s writing and serves as his consultant and at the same time spies on him for MI5. However, at the end of the novel, it is exposed that she was not the only spy in the story. From a certain point, Tom has been aware of her job and decided to use this for his own benefit. While she has been spying on him, he has been, as a part of his research, spying on her. In a letter that closes the novel, Tom “informs her that it was their own lives which were the subject of his new novel, and also gives her a thorough description of how he was writing it” (Chalupský, 2015, 111). In other words, the novel is written by Tom who used Serena as a main character of his novel. It turns out that the letter in fact a long marriage proposal so Tom in the end fulfills one of Serena’s main requirements on fiction.

*Sweet Tooth* is littered with numerous references to books of various authors, genres and also of contrasting quality. On the one hand, some of the works are incorporated to the novel to evoke, through the presentation of the then literary scene, the tense political atmosphere of the United Kingdom (and of the whole world) in the 1970s. McEwan also uses real writers as characters, for example, when he describes the public

reading with Martin Amis or William Golding's speech at the reception of the fictional Jane Austen Prize for Fiction.

On the other hand, some of the works are only mentioned to illustrate the scope of Serena's reading and the fact that she makes no distinction between higher and lower genres which she demonstrates when she reads Aleksandr Solzenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* right after Ian Fleming's *Octopussy*. As she says, "pulp fiction, great literature and everything in between – I gave them all the same rough treatment" (McEwan, 2012, chapter 1). Her partners, Tony who is a history professor and a former agent and through whom she gets to MI5, and Tom, are trying to refine her literary taste and guide her towards more serious works. However, even though she obliges to their wishes and reads the books they present her with, she is rather adamant about her preferred type of fiction. She favours works which contain female characters that she can identify with. She insists on a presence of a love story and views a marriage proposal as an almost obligatory part of the novel. Several times throughout the story she voices her dislike with metafictional practices. "I wasn't impressed by those authors [...] who infiltrated their own pages as part of the cast, determined to remind the poor reader that all the characters and even they themselves were pure inventions and that there was a difference between fiction and life" (McEwan, 2012, chapter 5), she admits. Due to this fact, it is even more humorous that she becomes a victim of such a scheme.

## **3 Practical Part**

### **3.1 Summary of Atonement**

The novel is divided into three parts that are followed by the fourth concluding section that works as a postscript. The first part takes place during one hot summer day and night in 1935 at the Tallis country house. The plot circulates around the Tallis family, especially the thirteen-year old Briony, her older sister Cecilia and a young man called Robbie Turner. Cecilia and Robbie are both fresh graduates and are unexpectedly faced with peculiar feelings towards each other. Briony is a girl with a keen artistic mind and wild imagination who is balancing on the border between childhood and adulthood. The narration is fragmented into several points of view that keep changing, creating a mosaic structure of events of which some are presented from several angles and some are described only partially. Part I is characterized by an omnipresent tension that culminates in the central conflict of this section, and consequently of the whole novel, when Briony gravely misinterprets several incidents that she is a witness to and falsely accuses Robbie of raping her cousin Lola. The narration ends when Robbie is arrested by the police and the young lovers are thus separated.

Part II is moved five years forward, into the year 1940, and is narrated solely from Robbie's point of view and depicts his odyssey through France to Dunkirk, where he is supposed to join the retreating British troops. It describes the war, sheds light on the five-year gap between the incident and his current situation and fills in some fragments that were missing in Part I. The second part finishes when the wounded Robbie reaches Dunkirk and is falling asleep at the coast, awaiting the arrival of the rescue boats.

The third part is narrated from Briony's point of view only. She is undergoing her training to be a nurse and is trying to reconcile with her sister and Robbie. This section is dominated by the descriptions of the hospital environment, the strict discipline and Briony's quest towards responsibility and adulthood. The moment when the war definitely reaches England is symbolized by the arrival of injured soldiers to the hospital. Later on, Briony finally decides to visit Cecilia and Robbie, reveals the truth about the fatal night and promises to attempt to correct the mistake that she has done.

The fourth section, entitled "London 1999", uses a first person narration and brings a shocking revelation – Briony is in fact the author of the whole novel and she has written

the work in an attempt to atone for her crime. It is revealed that both Robbie and Cecilia died during the war and have never been reunited.

### 3.2 Intertextuality in *Atonement*

*Atonement* is a postmodern novel and as such exhibits numerous narrative techniques and devices employed in postmodern writing. Apart from the fragmentation of the storyline, multiple perspective narration and metafiction, one of the most apparent techniques used in the novel is intertextuality. As Anna Grmelová observes: “intertextual references are deployed almost as consistently in *Atonement* as imagery is in Shakespeare’s plays” (Grmelová 154). Many critics agree that the novel as a whole is McEwan’s “most extended deliberation on the form of the novel, and the inherited tradition of modern (especially English) fiction and criticism” (Head 8). The narration maps the English tradition of writing through the frequent references to significant English writers or as Julie Ellam humorously calls the process - “literary signposting” (Ellam 80). Even though “great many literary echoes of other works indeed reverberate through the novel, *Atonement* is an original entity of its own giving rise to a multiplicity of meanings in the reader’s mind” (Grmelová 154). McEwan infuses his novel with allusions to a great number of works, ranging from medieval to modern literature, and elaborately transforms them into a new intricate and independent work. However, in correspondence with the postmodern anti-elitist sensibility, the unawareness of the referenced works does not result in the incomprehension of the novel, simply in slightly limited reading experience.

McEwan works with intertextuality from the first and till the very last page. At the very beginning of the novel, McEwan uses a quotation from Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*, which, like *Atonement*, deals with the importance of the difference between the real world and the fictional one, to foreshadow Briony’s crime. With respect to Genette’s terminology the epigraph can be classified as a peritext. However, it consists of the quotation from another text and therefore it is also an example of Genette’s reduced form of intertextuality. The passage is a part of the dialogue between the two main characters of the novel and is concerned with the exposure of Catherine Morland’s preposterous assumptions about Henry Tilney’s father. Though four years older, Catherine Morland is as

innocent as the thirteen-year-old Briony, guided solely by the wisdom of the Gothic novels she so enthusiastically reads. Therefore, when she leaves her home for the first time and visits Bath and later Northanger Abby she spends most of her time devising silly stories and misjudging people she meets. Her life is dull and uneventful and cannot measure up to the adventurous lives of her favourite characters. She wants to experience the romances and perils the heroines usually encounter and hence she interprets the things around her in order to fit into her fantastic ideas. On the basis of Mr. Tilney's hostile behaviour, the existence of a forbidden room and her own wild imagination, she becomes dead certain that Mr. Tilney killed his late wife. However, before she can unearth Mr. Tilney as a coldblooded murderer, her hypothesis is discovered by Henry Tilney, who is an avid reader himself and guesses her ridiculous thoughts. "What have you been judging from? [ ... ] Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you" (Austen qtd. in McEwan), he urges Catherine and because no greater damage is done, the whole incident is quite humorous and serves as a valuable, though slightly embarrassing, lesson for Catherine. Catherine at last realizes the difference between the real world and the fictional one, learns from her mistake, and the error is never mentioned again.

Similarly to Catherine, Briony lives in a fairly isolated world and she spends most of her time alone, accompanied by books and her "strange mind" (McEwan 6). She longs for mystery and secrets, but has none, because her controlling and orderly nature clashes with behaviour that might lead to them. "Nothing in her life was sufficiently interesting or shameful to merit hiding" (McEwan 5). Even though she is not completely unaware of "the life beyond the nursery" (McEwan 160), she is still partly blinded by the innocence of childhood and "lacks the vital knowingness about the ways of the world" (McEwan 6). Furthermore, her fantasy operates in simple terms of good and evil, so when she is confronted with the distant and incomprehensible world of the adults, she applies the deficient knowledge obtained in fairytales and reaches false conclusions.

McEwan uses Briony to skillfully present the difference between reality and imagination, the meaning and its variable interpretations. She perpetually mistakes her own imagination for reality, which leads to her accusing Robbie of the rape of Lola. Briony, just like Catherine, is not lying, she truly believes that her version of the events is right. Her actions are misguided by ignorance and not malice. Her testimony is publicly stated and

therefore has, in contrast with Catherine's laughable ideas, dire consequences, namely the imprisonment of the innocent Robbie, the ruining of Cecilia's and Robbie's newly discovered love and also the separation of the Tallis family. Briony herself spends the rest of her life trying to atone for the terrible thing that she has done through the writing and rewriting of her novel. Austen's literary legacy frames the whole narration, which opens with the epigraph and closes with yet another reference to *Northanger Abbey*, namely the naming of the hotel that emerges on the ground of the former Tallis house as Hotel Tilney.

When analysing the intertextual layer of *Atonement*, one simply cannot omit the two most important intertexts (or hypotexts, in Genette's terms) that keep reverberating throughout the story and that belong to the web of texts *Atonement* is weaved into - D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* – which both share one of the main themes of *Atonement*, the theme of social class. With *The Go-Between*, which takes place in 1900, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* taking place several years after the World War I, and *Atonement* which revolves around the years 1935 – 1940, the novels stretch over several decades, conveniently separated by more or less similar time gaps, as if to tempt the reader to try to compare how the acceptance of the interclass relationships and the reality of social classes as a whole evolved during the time. Earl G. Ingersoll also notes that “once *Atonement* appeared it becomes impossible to read *The Go-Between* as the same text, and perhaps a reading of even *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has been ever so subtly changed by these two novels in the web” (Ingersoll).

D. H. Lawrence originally published *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928 in Italy. Upon its publication the novel shocked the readers with its daring and open approach to sexuality, which promptly led to a ban on the book on grounds of obscenity and pornography. However, more worrisome than the graphic content was the fact that the affair depicted in the novel is happening between members of different classes – Connie, an aristocratic lady, and Oliver, a working-class man. Such relations were very unusual at the time and were condemned by the public. This is verbalized several times throughout the novel especially when the romance is revealed.

The novel can be seen as a mixture of criticism aimed at consumerism and greed, war, behaviour of men and women, and the classes, which Lawrence systematically analyses. He pays great attention to the animosity between people of different social

standing. Clifford's remarks about the Tevershall miners are rather harsh. "In your sense of the word, they are not men. They are animals you don't understand and never could" (Lawrence 194). For him, they are simply tools, parts of one great mechanical, and according to him functional, whole. When Connie protests against his opinion, he remarks: "An individual may emerge from the masses. But the emergence doesn't alter the mass" (Lawrence 194). He is particularly revolted by the fact that they "poised [their] masses with a little education" (Lawrence 194). Even though Mellors shares the vitality of the Tevershall people, he (just like Clifford) despises them. According to him, the biggest vice controlling all classes, but the lower ones especially, is the obsession with and dependence on money. He resents the never-ending hunt after wealth and the endless spending that comes with it, because he is sure that it spoils the relationship between the sexes.

The novel is incorporated into *Atonement* via Robbie who, "seeking to excuse his sexually explicit note sent by mistake to Cecilia, thinks of appealing to 'a passing impatience with convention' that he associates with 'a memory of reading the Orioli edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*'" (Finney 73). It is legitimate to claim that due to his knowledge of the work, he is aware of the resemblance between him and Cecilia and Connie and Mellors. Cecilia and Robbie are, like Connie and Oliver, members of different social classes; however, the line between them is partially blurred by Robbie's university education and his close relationship with the Tallis family. Robbie and his mother, a cleaning lady, live on the Tallis' property and Robbie grew up "moving freely between the bungalow and the main house" (McEwan 86) and Cecilia and Leon were his best friends.

Connie comes from an artistic upper class family. She has quite unconventional upbringing and she spent time abroad, in Germany, France and Italy. When she marries Clifford, she becomes a Lady, but she dislikes her title because she does not feel suitable for it. Lawrence describes her as "ruddy, country-looking girl with soft brown hair and sturdy body, and slow movements, full of unused energy" (Lawrence 4). As such, she is not compatible with her husband because her spirit is much more open and adventurous than Clifford's, and therefore her tedious stay at Wragby Hall is taking a toll on her physical and mental health. Her life with Clifford is void of physical love and she suffers greatly because of it. The first steps in her healing are her walks in the woods where she meets Mellors, the gamekeeper of the estate.

Similarly to Connie, Cecilia also stands out in terms of education – she studied at Cambridge, at Girton College, which though not unheard of is still perceived as uncommon at that time, and her mother worries whether “three years at Girton had not made her an impossible prospect” (McEwan 64). She sees the education of women as a mere childish performance. “They [aren’t] even awarding girls proper degrees” (McEwan 65), she adds. “Cecilia despite her university education and free spirit is expected to take up her mother’s role in a conventional marriage” (Chalupský, 2006, 31), but such prospects make her feel restless and irritable. She is trapped in the house, unwilling to stay, but unable to leave, and annoyed by the continuous strange behaviour of Robbie.

Oliver Mellors is depicted as a man that is standing somewhere between the working and middle classes. He has a working-class origin but his education and his service in the army, where he became an officer, moved him closer to the middle classes. He can easily switch between Standard English and Derby dialect. Furthermore, he does not act as Connie’s inferior but as her equal. Later, upon meeting Oliver, her sister Hilda begrudgingly admits that “he [is] instinctively much more delicate and well-bred than herself” (Lawrence 262), but Oliver starts speaking Derby and stubbornly plays a simple working man, a role that he uses as a protection against her obviously elitist attitude. In a corresponding manner, Robbie sometimes proudly displays his low social status. He recalls how he once announced at the table that “his father had walked out long ago and his mother was a charlady who supplemented her income as an occasional clairvoyant” (McEwan 86), daring anyone to ridicule him.

Turner and Mellors resemble each other in several aspects. Oliver is described as a man full of vital force, yet showing signs of high intelligence, characteristics that Cecilia intently observes in Robbie. “She liked the fact that he was so tall. It was an interesting combination in a man intelligence and sheer bulk” (McEwan 25-26). Mellors spent several years in the army and even became a lieutenant and through this rank “quite a gentleman” (Lawrence 154), as the working class Mrs Bolton believes. However, for Lord Chatterley (and probably all non-working class people) his promotion in army does not elevate him from his lowly status. “They gave him a commission,” exclaims Clifford with distaste and adds, “I’m not having any of the Lieutenant Mellors touch” (Lawrence 97). Robbie also enlists in the army, when he is offered a possibility to exchange prison for a uniform. Even though his low social status and presumably criminal past denies him the position of an

officer, his companions instinctively identify him as their superior and call him Guv'nor. "He acted like an officer, but he didn't even have a single stripe" (McEwan 209).

As far as the discovery of the affair is concerned, the reactions of the members of Connie's family differ. While her sister, faithful to her motto "one can't mix up with working people" (Lawrence 258), is appalled by the whole ordeal, Connie's father gets drunk, basically congratulates Mellors for sleeping with his daughter and ends up having a cheerful discussion with him. Nobody is as shocked as Clifford who is beside himself with rage and goes so far as to tell Connie that "[she] should be wiped off the face of the earth" (Lawrence 318). In accordance with the time, his rage and disgust are not primarily focused on his wife's unfaithfulness, but on the social background of her lover, who is not only a working class man but also his former servant. He finds such liaison so unnatural and deviant that it equals perversion and depravity, or as he calls it "the *nostalgie de la boue*" (Lawrence 318).

Cecilia's mother is similarly revolted by Robbie's involvement with her daughter. Emily appears to be in denial about the nature of their relationship and takes the letter, so clinically detailed in its content, as another proof of Robbie's deviance. "If you had done the right thing, young lady, with all your education, and come to me with this, then something could have been done in time and your cousin would have been spared her nightmare" (McEwan 179). Such reaction logically follows her discomfort with Robbie's connection with the family. She probably sees the whole ordeal as a confirmation of her previous statement: "Robbie's elevation. 'Nothing good will come of it'" (McEwan 150). In part II Robbie recalls how "[Cecilia's father] turned away, vanished into his Ministry the moment he was needed" (McEwan 227). And as Cecilia writes, her brother "went along with everyone else" (McEwan 209). Cecilia's relatives seem to be more comfortable accepting Robbie as a rapist of Lola than as a lover of Cecilia. Possibly due to his social status, they receive Briony's accusations towards him with unquestioning acceptance, which most definitely would not happen if the person in question was Paul Marshall.

The theme of interclass relationships connects *Atonement* to the other novel that most noticeably flashes through the narration, L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*. Though it is never alluded to, *The Go-Between* is inseparably entangled into the intertextual net in which *Atonement* exists. It is almost impossible to enumerate all the qualities it shares with

*Atonement* in both form and content. In *The Go-Between*, a sixty-year-old Leo Colston recalls the events of the year 1900 when he was visiting his schoolmate at Brandham Hall. There he becomes a go-between between Marian Maudsley, a young aristocratic lady, and Ted Burgess, a local farmer. Marian is supposed to marry Lord Trimingham, which makes the secret affair even more scandalous. Eventually, due to Leo's intervention, the liaison is exposed, Ted commits suicide, Lord Trimingham marries Marian and Leo suffers a nervous breakdown. The adult Leo, with the help of his diary, attempts to recollect all the details of the summer and tries to come to terms with his own role in the scheme.

The relationship between Marion and Ted bears more resemblance to the one in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, as she is a member of aristocracy and he is a farmer working on the land that belongs to her intended, Lord Trimingham. Moreover, it seems that what Marion and Ted have in common is only their attraction, whereas Robbie and Cecilia are also connected on an intellectual level. However, the ending of the affair is, in its tragedy, more similar to *Atonement*. "Standing there, the color of the corn, between red and gold, I had the fancy that he was a sheaf the reaper had forgotten and that it would come back for him" (Hartley 93), Leo thinks about Ted and foreshadows his suicide. In comparison with Robbie, Ted lacks Robbie's superior intelligence, or at least he lacks his privileged education, but is, similarly to Robbie, depicted as physically impressive. Leo is equally enchanted and frightened by the "furious energy" (Hartley 52) Ted exudes. To accentuate his animalistic side, he adds: "The more clothes he put on, the less he looked himself" (Hartley 131). Though he is aware of his lowly status, Leo looks up to Ted and is as much infatuated with him as he is with Marion. Marion is for him an embodiment of virtue and beauty and Ted represents "what a man ought to be, what [Leo] should like to be when [he] grew up" (Hartley 143). After the discovery of the affair, he is conflicted in his emotions towards Ted, inconsistently calling him "a rival, an ally, an enemy, a friend" (Hartley 143). On the basis of Trimingham's advice that "nothing is ever a lady's fault" (Hartley 149), his opinion about Marion stays untarnished. When he is confronted with the sight of Marion and Ted making love, he is "more mystified than horrified" (Hartley 244) and his breakdown is caused by Mrs Maudsley's hysterical screams rather than by the scene itself. In *Atonement*, Briony admits a crush on Robbie, but claims that it was short-lived and completely unconnected with her later attitude. What is more, her mind interprets the

‘primal scene’ of Robbie and Cecilia as an attack, a violent action that automatically turn her sister into a victim and Robbie into a maniac.

Briony and Leo, though of opposite gender, are remarkably alike. Of approximately the same age, they love secrets, dream about being writers, long for order, and, above all, crave attention, especially from the adults. Leo is basking in Marion’s kind, though ulteriorly motivated, concern for his person and derives deep satisfaction from his job as a go-between. Attention is also one of the motivations of Briony’s writing, as she intends to inspire awe and adoration with her work. Due to their age, they are “on the threshold of adult sexuality, attracted to, yet frightened by it” (Ingersoll 245). This is particularly visible in Leo and his adamant search for the meaning of ‘spooning’.

The theme of childhood, one of the recurring themes in McEwan’s work, is central to both novels, as they concentrate on “the sensibility of a child on the brink of puberty in a culture that has insulated children from the ‘facts of life’” (Ingersoll 241). Even though he is still a child who believes in magic curses, Leo is, just like Briony, eager “to exchange the immunities of childhood for the responsibilities of the grown-up world” (Hartley 134). During his stay at Brandham Hall, he makes his first big excursions into the unknown territory of the adulthood and delighted thinks about them as “a death, but with a resurrection in prospect” (Hartley 134).

Briony and Leo enter the forbidden romances in similar ways, however, their responses to it differ substantially, especially their reactions to the ‘primal scenes’ they are witnesses to, his marked with shock and sadness and hers with misunderstanding. When he is entrusted with the letter delivery, Leo gets a feeling of indispensability and power. He is naïve enough to think that the letters are somehow connected with business and is shocked and gravely disappointed when he discovers that he is carrying love messages. Leo feels completely justified in opening one of them and logically reasons his right to do so. In hand with his newly acquired sense of power comes his decision to break the relationship. Not unlike Briony, he feels that order has to be restored, so he intentionally misinforms Marion about the time of her next rendezvous with Ted, which also leads to the disclosure of the affair. On the other hand, when Briony opens the letter, she is led by “a savage and thoughtless curiosity” (McEwan 113) and feels guilty afterwards. However, it later does not prevent her from triumphantly exposing the letter to the police, as if she was presenting “a surprise that could only earn her praise” (McEwan 177). Leo valiantly tries to protect

the lover's secret and refuses to hand the letter to Mrs Maudsley. Under the pressure he gives up and unwillingly betrays the couple. "I could not answer, but an answer came" (Hartley 239).

As the novels are narrated by older Briony and older Leo, they unavoidably deal with the theme of memories, the recollection of the past and evoke the question of the (un)reliability of such narratives. Leo opens the novel with the assertion that "the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (Hartley 5), alerting the reader to the fact that what follows is based on memories and thus should not be perceived as fully credible. As Chalupský puts it, "alongside the process of remembering, there is always the unavoidable and natural process of forgetting, which makes our memory even more inconsistent and unstable" (Chalupský, 2009, 66). Moreover, our memories are always subjective and, what is more, they are always selective, which Leo acknowledges when he states that he "remembered the catastrophe well enough, but not the stages that led up to it" (Hartley 9). Correspondingly, Briony faces the same limitations of her mind, when she realizes that "it was not the long-ago morning she was recalling so much as her subsequent accounts of it" (McEwan 41). She can only attempt to get close to the reality. The truthfulness of their storytelling is also tainted by their "vested interest in certifying [their] 'innocence'" (Ingersoll 241). The tragedy Leo was part of is heavily hinted at from the beginning and so is Briony's imminent crime, as if to slowly prepare the reader for the impact of it. Simultaneously, they feed the reader with memories that might help to retain the illusion of their pure intentions and serve as extenuating circumstances for their crimes. The tension created by the anticipation is in both novels heightened by the pervasive heat that Leo perceives as one of the causes of the troubles. "In the heat the senses, the mind, the heart, the body, all told a different tale. One felt another person, one was another person" (Hartley 70), Leo speculates. Similarly, the heat wave in *Atonement* gets a lot of attention, and is even discussed during the dinner, the attendants voicing their belief that the heat encourages loose morals and changes all the rules. Robbie initially tries to blame his feelings on it, but later writes to Cecilia: "The truth is, I feel rather lightheaded and foolish in your presence, Cee, and I don't think I can blame the heat!" (McEwan 85). As the theme of childhood or the theme of memories, the presence of the heat can be traced in McEwan's previous works, for instance in *The Cement Garden* and his stories in the collection *First Love, Last Rites*.

The last but not least feature that links *Atonement* to Hartley's novel is the setting of the story. McEwan's "indebtedness in the opening section of his novel to the country-house tradition" (Behrman) connects his work not only to Hartley but also to the vast number of authors ranging "from Pope, Fielding and Austen to Forster, Wodehouse and Waugh" (Morrison). Traditionally, the great houses as Pemberley, Wragby Hall, Northanger Abbey, Brandham Hall or Darlington Hall, serve as symbols of the class division and tradition. When the small Leo Colston arrives at Brandham Hall, he is fascinated and completely taken aback by the greatness of the Georgian mansion and "for the first time [he is] acutely aware of social inferiority" (Harley 39), because, being a son of a mere clerk, he feels "out of place" (Hartley 39). His astonishment grows when he sees the Trimmingham's long family line depicted in a church. Leo, in 1900, carries "hierarchical principles into [his] notions of morality" (Hartley 73) and automatically respects those who are higher in the hierarchy. Because of this, he also senses that Ted occupies a lower position than himself. However, as far as the Tallis family is concerned, their social status is not based on blood but on money that Cecilia's grandfather made "with a series of patents on padlocks, bolts, latches and hasps" (McEwan 19). When she tries to create a family tree, she observes that "at least until her great-grandfather opened his humble hardware shop, the ancestors were irretrievably sunk in a bog of farm laboring, with suspicious and confusing changes of surnames among the men, and common-law marriages unrecorded in the parish registers" (McEwan 21). What is more, the Tallis House is about forty years old and is described as "solid, secure and functional" (McEwan 19). Even though the house "aspires to be thought of as embodying centuries of tradition" (Ellam 47), it fails to do so. Whereas Leo emphasizes and admires the beauty of the Brandham Hall, the Tallis House is described as "charmless to a fault" (McEwan 19).

Briony's writing ambitions and the authors she chooses as her models are another interesting source of intertextuality and are a brilliant illustration of the flexibility of intertextuality and of the boundless opportunities it comprises as it doubles the playful effect by referring not only to real authors but also to Briony's fictional texts at the same time. Through this technique, McEwan monitors Briony's development as a writer, "beginning with stories derived from the European folk tradition of folk tales, through drama with simple moral intent, to arrive to an impartial psychological realism" (McEwan

41). The variability of her writing is also a fitting example of Genette's architextuality because Briony's style changes according to her model genres or authors. She always adheres to the pre-existent rules of the genres or literary movements she imitates, be it fairytale with the clash between good and evil or modernist fiction with the stream of consciousness. The first piece of writing that marks Briony's authorial growth is her short drama *The Trials of Arabella*. Her play also introduces another writer that is re-read in *Atonement* - Samuel Richardson and his novel *Clarissa*. As far as Lola is concerned, it is equally impossible to not see the "sly allusion" (Finney 74) McEwan makes to Nabokov, even if only through the naming of his young rape victim after Nabokov's nymphet Lolita.

*Clarissa* affects Briony's artistic beginnings and also the plot of the whole novel, each with a certain set of modifications. Briony's heroine "shares Clarissa's sister's name and thereby places 'The Trials of Arabella' within a literary tradition of sentimentality and sensationalism" (Finney 73). Furthermore, the title of the play quotes Richardson: "Is this not the hour of her trial – And in *her*, of the trial of the virtue of her whole Sex, so long premeditated, so long threatened?" (Richardson qtd. in Carter and McRae 176). The novel also borrows from *Clarissa* in incorporating a rape scene into the plot, but adds an unexpected ending to the gruesome crime. In addition, Cecilia reads *Clarissa* and is irritated by it; she even finds it boring and the main character loathsome. It is almost painfully ironic that before long a similar scenario as the one described in the work irrevocably affects her life. Finally, the whole novel is littered with letters that are the main building unit of *Clarissa* that is written in the epistolary form.

At her age Briony is unable to create a work of deeper meaning, because her main focus is "the cumbrous struggle between good and bad, heroes and villains" (McEwan 39), therefore her play lacks "the psychological complexity of the original" (Finney 73). She believes that beauty "[occupies] a narrow band. Ugliness, on the other hand, [has] infinite variations" (McEwan 7), and she wants to inspire "terror, relief and instruction" (McEwan 8). Her imagination and her juvenile play operate with a notion of justice, with happiness for the good and damnation for the evil. In contrast, the principle of justice, so assuring in fairytales, does not work in *Clarissa* or *Atonement* at all. Whereas Briony's Arabella is, despite her original "reckless passion for a wicked foreign count" (McEwan 3), granted a life from hands of a poor doctor who turns out to be a prince in disguise, and the play ends in a "formal neatness of virtue rewarded" (McEwan 9), Richardson punishes Clarissa for a

similar offense by rape and death. In *Clarissa*, both the rapist and his victim, Mr Lovelace and Clarissa, die in the end, in *Atonement*, however, not only Lola and Paul live, but they are even joined in marriage.

The “medical prince” (McEwan 3) from *The Trials of Arabella* is quite certainly modelled on Robbie, Briony’s secret crush. However, due to terrible misunderstanding he is later unjustly accused of being a maniac and changes from a hero into a villain, he thus unwillingly becomes Robert Lovelace from *Clarissa*. He then endures prison and war only to die during the latter. The true rapist escapes all suspicion and instead of being punished is rewarded with marriage, which Briony’s thirteen-year-old self views as special prize for the moral and the good. The one-dimensional nature of Briony’s characters also does not apply to the characters of the novel. Even though Lola is a victim of a horrible crime and therefore deserves the pity of the readers, she is not without sin, for she also commits one by letting Robbie to be falsely imprisoned. The reader can but does not have to believe that she is not aware of the identity of the attacker. However, what she cannot deny is that she must have known for sure that it was Paul who attacked her in the nursery, but she blamed her injuries on her brothers. The elderly Briony feels rather antagonistic towards her cousin and is sure that Lola knew who hurt her and “could not believe her luck when Briony insisted on doing the talking and blaming” (McEwan 324).

While Briony spends her life atoning for her crime, the other participants live the life full of riches and public acclaim. In the postscript the elderly Briony describes seeing the Marshalls in London and sourly remarks that her cousin is “still lean and fit as a racing dog, and still faithful” (McEwan 358) and that Paul looks “reasonably well for a man of eighty-eight” (McEwan 357). Their vitality foretells that Briony will most probably not live to see the crime uncovered and the Marshalls punished because the editor will not publish her confessional novel as long as they are living, and it is fairly obvious that at least her energetic cousin will outlive her.

Apart from D. H. Lawrence, another modernist who is indisputably present in the novel is Virginia Woolf. The author is directly referred to in Part Three, but the echoes of her work are most notable in Part One. As is mentioned in the third part, in the encouraging rejection letter from the editor of *Horizon*, Cyril Connolly, Briony’s style in her first draft of *Two Figures by the Fountain* is heavily influenced by the Woolf’s writing.

“We wondered whether it owed a little too much to the techniques of Mrs. Woolf” (McEwan 312), Connolly writes. Though he praises the “crystalline present moment” (McEwan 312), he persists that “development is required” (McEwan 312). It is interesting, with the knowledge of the authorship of the whole piece, to see that Briony followed Connolly’s advice and changed several details he points out and also the style of her narration. She substituted several streams of consciousness with solid plot and dialogue. Nevertheless, she partly kept faithful to Woolf’s example and, according to many critics, it is inevitable to see touches of Woolf’s other works, especially *Between the Acts* and *To the Lighthouse*, in the narration (Finney 72). Moreover, the vigorous preparations of the dinner, Cecilia’s arranging of the flowers, or even the setting of the argument between Robbie and Cecilia can be seen as subtle hints to Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and her own two figures at the fountain, Clarissa and Peter specifically.

However, Connolly’s letter, together with the postscript, weakens the plausibility of the whole novel. Is it merely a coincidence that Connolly’s suggestion, “might she come between them in some disastrous fashion” (McEwan 313), meets ‘reality’? The whole passage leads the reader to speculate whether the novel is a reliable account of events or pure fiction. Moreover, Connolly’s response might be considered an example of what Genette calls metatextuality because the letter is a critical commentary to Briony’s story. Originally, Briony is pleased with her draft. “The age of clear answers was over. So was the age of characters and plots” (McEwan 281), she muses to herself after she delivers her first attempt to Bloomsbury. She as an author focuses on sensations and on “the conscious mind as a river through time” (McEwan 281) and wishes to “reproduce the clear light of a summer’s morning, the sensations of a child standing at a window” (McEwan 282). Her focus shifts towards beauty of a single ordinary moment, away from the ugliness that fascinated her as a child, hence she omits the unpleasant events that followed after the fountain incident. Such notions about writing are in accordance with the sensibility of Modernism. She even openly admits her obsession with Woolf’s *The Waves* to the reader, as if to confess that the author is her source of inspiration. When she receives the letter, she decides to go against her previous opinions and she admits to herself: “Did she really think she could hide behind some borrowed notions of modern writing, and drown her guilt in a stream – three streams! – of consciousness?” (McEwan 320). Her self-scrutiny prompts her to embrace her responsibility. As a result, she exchanges her vanity and cowardice for

harsh truth and decides to uncover her role in the ordeal, thus creating a backbone of her story. “There was our crime – Lola’s, Marshall’s, mine – and from the second version onwards, I set to describe it” (McEwan 368). The whole episode is yet another instance of double intertextuality, because McEwan refers not only to Virginia Woolf and the Modernist movement but also to Briony’s own short story.

As mentioned in the theoretical part, writing about history cannot be separated from intertextuality. In the last part, London 1999, Briony recalls the process of writing and the time spent in the Imperial War Museum library. She can describe the medical environment from her own experience but her description of the retreat to Dunkirk is based on materials she finds in the library and on her correspondence with Mr Nettle and with “an obliging old colonel of the Buffs” (McEwan 359) who proofread her drafts and corrected several little details that might undermine the credibility of her novel, for example, the type of guns used in the war and the proper wording of military orders. All these external texts be it private letters, military reports or newspaper articles are, according to Genette, paratexts of the novel. McEwan, as the author of the whole novel, also must have relied on other texts describing the war, the discipline in hospitals, or even the weather records about the heat wave in 1935. To give a semblance of historical authenticity, McEwan also incorporates real people into the novel, for instance, Cyril Connolly.

As was stated in the part concerned with Richardson’s contribution to the novel, letters play a considerable role in the novel. Besides the one that so crucially alters the lives of main characters, other later follow to enable the communication between the lovers, who are firstly separated by injustice and prison and later by war, and thus are forced to confine their love into the written words. Creating Cecilia and Robbie as literature graduates allows McEwan to further expand the scope of reference in *Atonement* and he can easily enrich the plot with a greater number of literary allusions. During his stay in prison, Cecilia and Robbie communicate with the help of their shared acquaintance with the English literary tradition. Robbie is “diagnosed, with clinical precision, as morbidly over-sexed” (McEwan 204), therefore he is not allowed to have female visitors, the exception being his mother. Even his correspondence is controlled by his psychiatrist, making its subject matter rather limited. To escape the restrictions, Cecilia and Robbie

encode their love and affection into literary discussions and cast themselves as “Tristan and Isolde, the Duke Orsino and Olivia (and Malvolio too), Troilus and Criseyde, Mr Knightley and Emma, Venus and Adonis” (McEwan 204). If they want to evoke the memories of their intimate encounter, they can write about “a quiet corner in a library” (McEwan 204), as their only sexual union symptomatically occurred in a library, where McEwan depicted “one of the most powerful pastiches of Lawrence’s erotic representation in recent fiction” (Ingersoll 250). During Part One, McEwan does not show Cecilia’s point of view during the exposure of the fatal letter and Robbie’s arrest. Her letters, recalled by Robbie in Part Two, shed light to her opinions and feelings on the matter. McEwan constantly reminds the reader of their connection with literature, for instance, when Robbie investigates the source of his sudden attraction to Cecilia with the help of Shakespeare, Petrarch, Keats and Freud’s *Three Essays on Sexuality*. Next example of his omnipresent link to literature is Robbie’s march through France, when he measures his steps with metrical feet. “He walked/across/the land/until/he came/to the sea. A hexameter. Five iambs and an anapest was the beat he tramped to now” (McEwan 219).

Another couple, rather unconventional considering the circumstances of their relationship, is also partly described through their knowledge of literature and is sharply contrasted with Robbie and Cecilia. During their short conversation in the nursery, Lola and Paul both pretend to know Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, even though their knowledge is limited to the famous quotation “to be or not to be”. Their little episode perfectly depicts their ignorance and shallowness. Paul Marshall does not seem to need literature in his life. He can manage to look knowledgeable and make a conversation without being read which he demonstrates when he talks with Lola. Paul’s life goal is money and he can pursue this end without the thing that Robbie calls “the desirable adjunct to a civilised existence” (McEwan 91). He is even thrilled by the idea of war which he views as a profitable business. Given his pretentious nature and the fact that he studies chemistry, it is not a surprise that the product that is supposed to earn him a fortune is *fake* chocolate. On the other hand, Robbie, even though he does not intend to follow the course of his education and decides to study medicine, still values his knowledge of literature and is sure that “he would be a better doctor for having read literature” (McEwan 129). Robbie makes a correlation between literature and medicine and claims that the two share the same subject – “birth, death, and frailty in between” (McEwan 129), and he believes that reading will

help him to understand his patients better. Whereas Robbie and Cecilia's conversation depicted or referred to in the novel centre on literature, Paul and Lola exchange petty lies and compliments about clothes.

In Part II, McEwan abandons the multiple-perspective narration and focuses solely on Robbie and his war experience. He adds information about the events following his arrest and also uncovers several parts missing from Part I, for example the farewell scene between him and Cecilia. The author puts Robbie and his fate in context with the lives of all people, who too are caught in the injustice of war. As Grmelová observes: "this part of the novel focuses on human suffering both private (Robbie) and collective" (Grmelová 156), and Robbie realizes the correlation too. "First his own life ruined, than everybody else's" (McEwan 217). Apart from obvious references, Part II is inexplicitly in parallel with W. H. Auden's *Musée des Beaux Arts*, which is dealing with people's indifference towards the suffering of the others. In accordance with Riffaterre's theory, the word that might function as an interpretant of the connection between *Atonement* and *Musée des Beaux Arts* is 'suffering'. "*Musée des Beaux Arts* is the key intertext in this part of the novel as its echoes reverberate" (Grmelová 157) several times throughout this part. The poem is never mentioned, yet as Grmelová states, "the ethos is most Audenesque when the poet or poem is not invoked explicitly but rather when it is done covertly" (Grmelová 156).

When Robbie and the corporals are passing a bombed cottage, Robbie notices a boy's leg on a tree. Even though the war is full of horrors and similar sights, he is still caught by surprise and is deeply disconcerted by the view. "It seemed to be on display, for their benefit or enlightenment: this is a leg" (McEwan 192). He is shocked by the behavior of the people who do not seem to care about the chaos around them and are focusing only on themselves. Even his companions appear unaffected by the scene and quickly dismiss it, but Robbie cannot shake the image out of his head. Though he tries to "put some distance between himself and that bombed cottage" (McEwan 194), he is haunted by the image of the severed limb and several times throughout his narration he thinks of it. The worse his injury gets, the more concerned he is with the fleeting visions of the boy's leg and the glimpses of his memories flashing through his mind, blurring together the night when he found the twins and the moment when he was not able to save the woman and her son during the raid. He feels responsible for their death and in his "nightmarish reverie"

(Grmelová 157) oversteps the wall of indifference suggested in Auden's poem and shows concern for the fate of the people around him.

Auden found inspiration in the paining *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, where only Icarus' leg is visible above the surface whilst the ploughman continues with his job and does not pay attention to the tragedy happening behind his back. In the poem Auden notes: "everything turns away/ Quite leisurely from the disaster/ the ploughman may/ have heard the splash, the forsaken cry / But for him it was not an important failure" (Auden). McEwan describes the exact same picture, "a man and his collie dog walking behind a horse-drawn plough" (McEwan 234). Robbie spots a shoe-seller by the road and other people doing things seemingly incompatible with war and mayhem and understands that "these lives were lived in parallel – war was a hobby for the enthusiasts and no less serious for that" (McEwan 234). The people are slowly moving in the convoy, concentrating on the achieving of their survival and have neither the time nor the strength to pay attention to the suffering of the others. They are like the ship that "had somewhere to get" (Auden). In the places the convoy is passing, people are living their everyday lives. He grimly realizes that "the ploughing would still go on" (McEwan 235).

Earlier in the novel, the reader can see Robbie proudly admiring his collection consisting of the poems of Auden, Housman, Eliot, Owen and Crabbe, and the novels of Jane Austen, D. H. Lawrence and Joseph Conrad. What is more, an attentive reader can notice that Briony is not the only person with artistic ambitions. Robbie casually and without any further explanation mentions his own poems and "a printed rejection slip from *Criterion* magazine, initialled by Mr Eliot himself" (McEwan 82). Robbie's interest in poetry is reflected in his part of the narration as several of the above mentioned poets pervade it. The allusions to Auden are not limited solely to *Musée des Beaux Arts*. Auden enters Robbie's journey again when Robbie, during a sleepless night in a barn, contemplates the hopeless situation he is in. He remembers a poem Cecilia enclosed to one of the letters and the lines: "In the nightmare of the dark, All the dogs of Europe bark" (Auden qtd. in McEwan 203). The lines come from *In Memory of W.B. Yeats*, a poem Auden wrote after Yeats' death and before the start of the war. The poem laments the death of the genius and includes the vision of Europe that is awaiting the impending war. "And the living nations wait, each sequestered in its hate" (Auden). Similarly to *Musée des Beaux Arts*, Auden ponders on the indifference of people to the suffering of others,

asserting that the masses will be unaffected by the passing of the great poet. Robbie recalls these verses in a moment of a suffocating feeling of uncertainty and defeat. Once again he connects the situation around him to his own life, as he correlates France, imprisoned by German army, to his own worries about prison camps that are his bleak future if he does not manage to reach the Channel.

Later, as he is getting closer to the Channel, he rediscovers the glimpses of hope in himself and one more time he recites *In Memory of W.B. Yeats* in his head, “in the deserts of the heart, let the healing fountain start” (Auden qtd. in McEwan 242). He starts to imagine a promising future and consequently this reference is, in contrast with the previous one, much more positive. To be able to withstand the atrocities that are surrounding him, Robbie escapes into his mind and he dreams of “a little house somewhere, of an ordinary life, a family line, connection” (McEwan 241). He, more than ever, feels the absence of his father and he suddenly discovers a strong longing to be a parent. There, in France, surrounded by an endless number of nameless and faceless soldiers, he realizes the value of firm roots and connection with others. Moreover, he views parenthood as something “common, therefore human, and he [wants] it all the more” (McEwan 241). Cecilia is the person he wants to start a life with and he is driven by the need to get back to her. Furthermore, in a quotation from Housman’s *A Shropshire Lad*, he emphasizes the healing and cleaning power of their love. “Oh, when I was in love with you, then I was clean and brave” (Housman qtd. in McEwan 262).

In addition, as modernist prose accompanies Part One, Part Two is affected by modernist poetry, especially Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922) that it partly embodies. Behrman claims that “in *The Waste Land*, Eliot depicts a landscape that resembles the ravaged fields of World War II France described by McEwan, a sterile, parched world in which nothing can thrive” (Behrman). *The Waste Land* which offers a diagnosis of the world and of the decay of Western culture is characteristic for its gloomy and pessimistic atmosphere of disillusionment after World War I. Approximately twenty years after the publication of the poem, Robbie is caught in the fulfillment of the concerns voiced in modernist poetry, in the culmination of the disintegration of Europe and observes the devastating impact the war has on France. Robbie passes through the land that is scarred by the bombs and littered with “fragments of flesh, bone and brindled skin” (McEwan 214) and ponders about “the indifference with which men could lob shells into a landscape”

(McEwan 202). Such passages are sadly ironic given the fact that earlier in the novel Robbie mentions that he has been toying with the idea of becoming a landscape gardener.

## 4 Conclusion

In this thesis, I tried to analyse the role of intertextuality in Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement*. As was illustrated in the practical part, intertextuality is a flexible technique that allows McEwan to utilize it in many ways. Most importantly, the intertextual references in *Atonement* are not just meaningless adornments but they are used in order to enrich the story, to add more layers to the narration and to evoke new meanings when they put the novel into a dialogue with other works.

McEwan works with all types of intertextuality – architextuality, hypertextuality, metatextuality and paratextuality. He uses some of the allusions and quotations to alert the reader of the things that are about to happen and they help him to build the tension. Some of the references are obvious and are even mentioned by the characters and some of them, though of equal importance, are hidden and can be discovered only by an attentive and well-read reader.

What is more, McEwan uses intertextuality to introduce his characters who likened or contrasted to other literary figures appear in new perspectives. Comparing Cecilia to Connie Chatterley or comparing Robbie to Oliver Mellors or Ted Burgess provides the reader with an important outlook on them without the need to tediously describe everything about them. Furthermore, the reader can learn a lot about the characters from their choice of reading material or from the lack of it. Moreover, thanks to the fact that Robbie and Cecilia are both Cambridge literature graduates McEwan can infuse their conversations and their correspondence with allusions to many classic works of literature.

McEwan exploits the vast possibilities of postmodern fiction and he uses intertextuality to its full potential and combines it with metafiction when he creates Briony as a writer. He recounts all the stages of her transformation from the author of silly childish stories to the mature and self-reflective writer and pays attention to the specific authors that she tries to imitate. The authors and their works influence both her writing and the plot of the whole novel.

When approaching *Atonement* the reader has two options – he or she can read it as a 'simple' story and stay oblivious to the intertextual play or he or she can enter the game of decoding of the hidden meanings. What is more, the intertextual nature of *Atonement* enables the reader to read it several times and still discover new dimensions of it.

Moreover, the metafictional twist compels the reader to reread the novel at least one more time and look for clues and hints that were hidden to his or her eyes during the first reading.

Even though this thesis analyses several works that are connected with the novel, the list of the possible intertexts is by no means definite. Readers who come from different backgrounds might discover different intertexts because intertextuality is a subjective phenomenon and does not stem solely from the author but also from the reader. Therefore, his or her experience depends on his or her familiarity with the referenced works and with the literary canon in general.

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