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Faculty of Education  
Department of English Language and Literature

BACHELOR THESIS

Intertextuality in Ian McEwan's *Sweet Tooth*  
Intertextualita v románu *Sweet Tooth* Iana McEwana

Tereza Friesingerová

Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph.D.

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I hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Intertextuality in Ian McEwan’s *Sweet Tooth*” and authored under the guidance and supervision of doc. PhDr. Petr Chalupský, Ph.D., is my own original work except for the source material explicitly acknowledged. I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Prague, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018

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Tereza Friesingerová

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je poskytnout pojednání o užití intertextuality jako narativní strategie v románu *Sweet Tooth* (2012) od autora Ian McEwana, jednoho z předních současných britských spisovatelů. Hlavní důraz práce, která je rozdělena na dvě části, je v části teoretické kladen především na nastínění několika hlavních teorií intertextuality vznikajících v průběhu 20. století; v praktické poté na ozřejmění možných důvodů pro užití daných intertextuálních odkazů právě ve zmiňovaném románu *Sweet Tooth*.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

intertextualita, Ian McEwan, *Mlsoun*, postmodernismus

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to provide a discussion of the employment of the narrative strategy of intertextuality in the novel *Sweet Tooth* (2012) by Ian McEwan, one of the contemporary leading British writers. The objective of this thesis, the main body of which is divided into two parts, is to offer a brief outline of several principal theories of intertextuality, which emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the theoretical part; in the analysis of the novel *Sweet Tooth*, on the other hand, the emphasis is put on the clarification of the possible purposes for the employment of the specific intertextual references.

## **KEYWORDS**

Intertextuality, Ian McEwan, *Sweet Tooth*, postmodernism

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## Introduction

Intertextuality, generally understood as a narrative strategy the core of which is the employment of references or allusions to works of art which significantly contribute to the shaping of meaning, is a literary device which has been thoroughly revised by the literary theorists since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a brief theoretical outline of some of these theories and to offer an intertextual analysis of the novel *Sweet Tooth* by Ian McEwan, one of the leading contemporary British writers, in which intertextuality shapes the meaning profoundly and therefore may be considered one of McEwan's most important narrative strategies (together with metafiction).

While this section of the thesis provides the necessary introduction and the last one concludes, the main body is divided into two parts, which are closely linked and the relation between which is also explained in this thesis. In the first, theoretical part, several definitions of intertextuality are provided and the origins and development of the term 'intertextuality' itself, coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, are thoroughly discussed, drawing on the already existing research conducted on the topic of intertextuality and particularly following the structure of the seminal work authored by Allen. The leading theorists of intertextuality which are introduced therefore, apart from Kristeva, also include Saussure, Bakhtin, Barthes, Riffaterre, Genette and Bloom. In addition, intertextuality is presented as a trademark of the era of Postmodernism, providing numerous examples of specific works of literature which successfully managed to make extensive use of this narrative strategy. In the second part of the thesis, an analysis of the references and allusions which are present in the novel *Sweet Tooth* is included. This analysis, which is further divided into two pivotal parts, offers a discussion of not only the references to works written by other authors, but, even more importantly, provides an overview of the numerous instances in which McEwan alludes either to himself as a person or to his own works written earlier in his literary career. The main objective of this second part of the thesis is then to uncover the possible intentions with which these references and allusions are employed.

# 1 Theoretical Part

## 1.1 Intertextuality

The purpose of this part of the thesis is to offer a discussion of the concept of intertextuality from a theoretical perspective, together with the history of the term itself. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of intertextuality is by no means limited solely to literary arts, but is applicable to various other cultural fields, for instance music, cinema or photography, the following discussion is only limited to works of literature; the discussion of intertextual references to the whole range of other works of art is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis, the focus of which is purely literary.

The term ‘intertextuality’ is commonly associated with notions such as interdependence or interconnectedness. The Merriam-Webster dictionary literally defines intertextuality as “the complex interrelationship between a text and other texts taken as basic to the creation or interpretation of the text”. The importance of intertextuality for interpretation is also central to Homoláč (108), who defines intertextuality as a relation, the core element of which is not the presence of a part or a level of a text within another; instead, the core element is the fact that the relation of one text to another contributes to the shaping of meaning. Moreover, the notion of meaning is indispensable for yet another definition of intertextuality by Allen, who claims the following:

Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art, forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature. Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. (1)

As Worton and Still (1) notice, the meaning in an intertextual text can enter in two distinct ways – firstly through the authors, who themselves are readers of other texts by which they are significantly influenced, and secondly through the readers, who, when

approaching and interpreting a text, inevitably depend on their own knowledge acquired from the previously read texts.

The first to coin the term ‘intertextuality’ and to introduce it into the French language was Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French literary critic, philosopher, feminist and psychoanalyst, who in her seminal work on intertextuality, the essay *Word, Dialogue and Novel* (first published 1969), argues that “[a]ny text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (66).

However, the concept itself is much older than the 1960s. Worton and Still dedicate a substantial part of the introduction to their *Intertextuality: Theories and practices* (1990) to providing a (pre-)historic overview of intertextuality and present an argument that intertextuality is already deeply rooted in antiquity, i.e. centuries before the term was even introduced, as some basic ideas of the theory of intertextuality may be recognized in the works of the philosophers Plato (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) and Aristotle (4<sup>th</sup> century BC), followed by the Roman politician and orator Cicero and rhetorician Quintilian (1<sup>st</sup> century BC). It is particularly the Socratic dialogue in which the truth is supposed to be found by the virtue of the plurality of voices (which is reminiscent of the concept Bakhtin will later term ‘dialogic novel’ and which is discussed below). In the Middle Ages, it was predominantly during the Renaissance period that authors such as Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon and William Shakespeare openly expressed their dependence on previous texts and created works which are highly allusive.<sup>1</sup> The body of literature produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Romantic poets, who are addressed below in more detail due to their profound influence on Harold Bloom, is also characteristic of frequent allusions and references. In addition, as Haberer

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<sup>1</sup> In his essay entitled *Seven Types of Intertextuality*, Robert Miola offers a comprehensive analysis of all the possible intertextual relations in Early Modern literature, especially in the works of Shakespeare.

(59) argues, intertextuality is also present in the works of modernist authors (a prime example of which is, obviously, James Joyce's *Ulysses*).<sup>23</sup>

What Haberer also claims is that it is “most doubtful” (57) that there exists some consensus on a single definition of intertextuality, as theorists have been, since the 1960s, attempting at formulating their own, multiple definitions. The notion of intertextuality can be fully grasped only in case its theoretical linguistic background and its origins and development are, at least to some degree, understood. The next part of this thesis therefore offers a concise explanation of the development of intertextuality, which has since the 1960s spread across not only Europe but the whole world, resulting in numerous, to some degree contrastive theories. Due to the scope of this thesis, it is not possible to cover all literary theorists who deal with the topic and therefore, the focus is shifted to those considered the leading ones, drawing on the frequently cited work by Allen. Despite having already introduced Kristeva as the originator of the term, a question may arise whether she is, therefore, the sole inventor of the concept. Apparently, the answer is no – for the development of her own theory, Kristeva derived major sources of inspiration from the theories which preceded her, namely those of Ferdinand de Saussure and Mikhail Bakhtin, which are, consequently, inseparable from the concept of intertextuality and are, therefore, introduced in the next part of the thesis in slightly more detail. In addition to these, the

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<sup>2</sup> In his essay *Intertextuality in Theory and Practice*, Haberer explores the works of Thomas Stearns Elliot and David Jones, stressing the importance of tradition and culture for the latter and reminding the readers of the employment of allusions and quotations in his masterpiece *The Wasteland* by the former, which is so elaborate and extensive that, as Haberer (59) puts it, even seven pages of Elliot's own explanations are not sufficient for the readers to fully comprehend the indicated relations between the various texts. Furthermore, Elliot is sometimes understood as a forerunner of the theoretical research in the field of intertextuality due to his “quasi-intertextual” insights expressed in *Tradition and Individual Talent* (Zengín 300, Alfaro 270).

<sup>3</sup> The intertextual practices in the Postmodern era are addressed in more detail in the last subsection of the theoretical part of this thesis.

analysis presented below also briefly addresses the pivotal concepts of the theoretical approaches of Roland Barthes, Michael Riffaterre, Gerard Genette and Harold Bloom.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Intertextuality: Origins and Development

### 1.2.1 Saussure and Bakhtin

As has been already mentioned, the linguistic theories which comprise a prerequisite for the birth of the term ‘intertextuality’ can be traced back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. to the very origins of modern linguistics, which is associated particularly with the theoretical framework developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. In order to understand the interconnectedness of his thoughts with the concept of intertextuality, Saussure’s theoretical legacy, best articulated in the collection of his lectures *Course in General Linguistics* (published posthumously in 1916), which laid the foundations to the movement of structuralism, must be addressed and the need arises of the explanation of his theory of the linguistic sign, which, if applied to literary texts, helps to completely redefine and reconsider the very nature of a literary work itself.

According to Saussure, as stated in Allen, a linguistic sign can be perceived as a “two-sided coin” (8) which is a combination of a *signifier* and a *signified* and the meaning of which is non-referential, i.e. the sign does not directly refer to the object in the extra-linguistic reality. Instead, signs, whose nature is therefore inevitably arbitrary, “possess meaning [...] because of their function within a linguistic system” (9) and as such only refer to the linguistic system. In Saussurian’s theory, it is only possible to explore the meaning of words by the means of an analysis of their relations with other words in the system, which are based on certain degrees of similarity and/or difference and operate on two notoriously

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<sup>4</sup> The theoretical overviews presented in works of other authors also pinpoint other notable literary theorists, namely Laurent Jenny, Heinrich Plett or Michal Glowinski in Homoláč or Jonathan Culler and Michel Foucault in Alfaro.

known axes: the syntagmatic axis (horizontal, representing combination) and the paradigmatic axis (vertical, representing selection or choice). However, if completely isolated, a sign has no meaning on its own.

For the application of the theory of the linguistic sign to literary texts, it suffices to draw a simple, straightforward analogy between these two. As Zengín explains, “[t]exts are interrelated with each other and they gain their meanings through their relations with each other in a larger context” (308) – exactly in the same manner the linguistic signs do. Therefore, as Allen (11) notices, authors of literary works are always working on two levels and with two systems – with the system of language in general, as well as with the whole literary system.

Before moving on to Kristeva, a considerable part of the theoretical discussion must be devoted to the introduction of the Russian philosopher and literary theorist and critic Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work, although existing from the early 1920s, remained rather unknown for decades, mostly for political and personal reasons. Kristeva, who read Bakhtin’s essays in Russian while still living and studying in Bulgaria before relocating to France, presented his theory in France in her own works, including *The Bounded Text* (first published 1969) and the already mentioned *Word, Dialogue and Novel*. Since this pioneering discovery of Bakhtin, he has become extremely influential and celebrated by (not only) the intertextual theorists mostly for his essay *Discourse in the Novel*, included in the collection entitled *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929).

Most importantly, Bakhtin marked a shift of the focus of attention from *langue* to its *parole* counterpart and specifically to the fundamental unit of his theory – the *utterance*, which is always situated within a broader social, cultural and ideological context. Bakhtin therefore brings a new, highly relevant view on communication and its occurrence “in specific social situations and between special classes and groups of language-users” (Allen 15). Moreover, Bakhtin emphasizes the concept of the *addressivity* of a word, concluding that the word meaning is defined by two agents, the addresser and the addressee, and is therefore “a two-sided act, determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant” (Bakhtin/Volosinov 95), an aspect of communication completely neglected by Saussure. Furthermore, Bakhtin also criticises Saussure’s synchronic, objective approach to language,

which disregards its dynamic nature. The principle tenet of Bakhtin's theory is the notion of *dialogism* – i.e. a notion that the meaning of all utterances is implicitly dependent upon what has been said previously, as well as upon their reception. The logical counterpart to dialogism is *monologism* – a notion that an utterance possesses a single, stable meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Stemming from this sharp distinction, Bakhtin discriminates two poles of literature, monologism and dialogism, and classifies genres into *monologic* ones, for which he employs the term 'poetry' and which are associated with a single meaning and encompass poetic forms, such as epic and kinds of lyric, and *dialogic* ones, for which he employs the term '(dialogic) novels'.<sup>67</sup> As a result of this train of thought, Bakhtin is an adamant critic of Saussure's linguistics, which he considers too abstract and which "strips language of its dialogic nature" (Allen 19). As another principal aspect of Bakhtin's theory, the concept of *heretoglossia* or the *double-voiced discourse* must be highlighted. From the Greek 'hetero' – 'other' and 'glot' – 'voice', heteroglossia stands for the ability of language to "contain within it many voices" (Allen 28). A prime example of this ability is any polyphonic novel (i.e. a novel having hereroglot qualities) in which, according to Bakhtin, the discourse of the characters includes not only one, but two voices – of the character and of the writer – as well as these two speakers' intentions.

To summarize, what Bakhtin articulates may be seen a predecessor of the theory of intertextuality in the sense that all utterances are responses to something previously said and

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<sup>5</sup> Owing to the fact that monologism is closely associated with societies with strict hierarchical and centralising forces (such as the medieval church or Saussurian linguistics) as a means of maintenance of the power of the dominant ideology (Worton and Still 16), Kristeva will later find Bakhtin's focus on dialogism as possessing a revolutionary potential (Alfaro 275).

<sup>6</sup> At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that the genres do not precisely correspond to the traditional categories, as Zengín (312) and Worton and Still (15) point out – while Heine's lyrical poetry is seen as a 'novel', only certain kinds of the traditional novel are (typical examples of what Bakhtin considers 'dialogic novels' are the works of Dostoevsky, while Tolstoy, on the other hand, is presented as monologic).

<sup>7</sup> However, as Allen (25) notices, this argument may seem rather contradictory as Bakhtin discusses the whole language system in terms of dialogism and is a staunch proponent of the notion that dialogism is inherent in language itself (Kristeva 67); yet by drawing this distinction he seems to be arguing against his own point.

no utterance has a single and definite meaning on its own, but must be decoded and interpreted only in relation to a wider (social, cultural) framework. In addition, considering the dialogic novels, Bakhtin introduces an idea of a single utterance serving two purposes at a time. By this assertion of the absence of a single, objective narrative voice guiding the readers through the novel, Bakhtin paves the way to intertextual plurality of interpretations and multiplicity of meanings.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.2.2 Kristeva: Blending of Saussure and Bakhtin

Julia Kristeva, combining fields such as literary theory with mathematical logic and psychoanalysis in her works, developed her theory of intertextuality in a period of a great social as well as political turmoil in France, of mounting criticism of Saussurian structuralism and of the transition from modern to postmodern. Kristeva, together with the other vitally important literary theorists of the period associated with the rise of poststructuralism, including Roland Barthes (discussed below in more detail), Michel Foucault or Jacques Derrida, all gathered around the avant-garde literary magazine *Tel Quel*. Despite the fact that Kristeva coined a completely new term, ‘intertextuality’, she largely drew on the already existent theories of Saussure and Bakhtin, using them as points of departure and combining Bakhtin’s dialogism<sup>9</sup> and social determination of the meaning of a text with Saussurian approach to language as a sign system.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In order to more fully grasp the similarities and differences between the theories which are presented in this thesis, an important note about the role of Bakhtin’s author and his position within the text must be made at this point. Bakhtin states that although “the author (as creator of the novelist whole) cannot be found at any one of the novel’s language levels: he is to be found at the centre of organization where all levels intersect” (qtd. in Alfaro 274). As a result, it is principal to summarize that Bakhtin, as opposed to Barthes, whose theory is addresses below, does not call for the dissolution of an author.

<sup>9</sup> In a sense, what Bakhtin calls ‘dialogism’, is understood as ‘intertextuality’ by Kristeva (Zengin 314).

<sup>10</sup> Alfaro makes a witty observation that “[d]evelopment of the theory of intertextuality would constitute in itself a complex intertextual event” (271). As Kristeva directly expands on the conclusions made by Saussure

Kristeva, nevertheless, does not only depart from Bakhtin's theory, but also expands on it profoundly; for instance, by presenting the argument that there is a possibility of the co-existence of both monologic and dialogic poles in any text and therefore concluding that these two phenomena cannot be mutually exclusive (Worton and Still 17). Moreover, she also notes that the status of a word is defined by its relation on two axes and explicitly states that: "the word's status is [...] defined horizontally (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as well as vertically (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)" (65), merging together the three pivotal dimensions of each dialogue – the writing subject, the addressee and all exterior texts. Given the above, Kristeva declines any single, eternal and absolute meaning in the text and attacks the objectivity of language as studied by Saussure, claiming that "language cannot be objective, because it depends on the subjectivity of the speaker" (Zengín 315). Due to this subjectivity, which is inherent and unavoidable, there are no two readers who are the same and, accordingly, neither any two readings of a text can possibly be the same.

For Kristeva, texts are but mere compilations of other texts, with the possibility of deciphering numberless potential meanings as a result of the existence of numberless addressees, who play an active and for that reason also the central role in shaping the meaning and on whom the meaning is thus dependent, leaving Kristeva a great proponent of post-structuralist plurality. It is also in this discussion of plurality that the critical influence of the structuralist theories developed by Saussure comes to light: while semiotic theorists assume and proclaim a stable relationship between the signified and the signifier, i.e. the notion that a signifier stands under all circumstances for the same idea or concept, Kristeva, on the other hand, criticises this view and argues that these theorists "avoid [...] any attention to the human subject who performs the utterance under consideration" and "also evade the

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and Bakhtin and therefore uses their texts and theories, she irreversibly intertwines those, making her theory intertextual. This, however, holds for all the theorists to come, who will unavoidably have to engage in the same process. This also applies for this thesis – assembled through a process of a careful choice of not only authors or theories but even specific quotations, it takes huge advantage of the system of the already existing body of literature and hence is intertextual in nature.

fact that the signifiers are plural, replete with historical meaning, directed not so much to stable signifieds as to a host of other signifieds” (Allen 32).

### 1.2.3 Barthes: Poststructuralist Articulation and the Death of the Author

Already in 1965, i.e. even before the birth of the term ‘intertextuality’, the French literary critic and semiotician Roland Barthes introduced a similar concept of the ‘cryprogram’ and stated that it is not possible to avoid “gradually becoming a prisoner of someone else’s words and even of [one’s] own” (qtd. in Worton and Still 19). Worton and Still then explain that “[t]his is intertextuality in the sense that a text may appear to be the spontaneous and transparent expression of a writer’s intentions, but must necessarily contain elements of other texts” (19). Despite the fact that the extent to which two texts are interconnected can be extremely varied, as well as the degree of ‘recognizability’ of one text within the other, the fundamental aspect is that at least to some degree, the texts are indeed interconnected always. According to Zengin (318), Barthes is the one who, by the means of his theories, paved the way for the transition from structuralism to poststructuralism. The central tenets of his theory include a clear definition of the terms ‘work’ in the traditional sense and ‘text’ in the poststructuralist sense and the clear distinction between what he calls ‘the writerly text’ and ‘the readerly text’. While in the latter, which is to a large extent associated with the realist novel of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (i.e. that considered ‘monologic’ by Bakhtin, as discussed above), the reader is passively guided into discovering the stable meaning simply by the means of following “the linear development of the story until the truth [...] is finally unfolded before him or her” (Allen 76), the former, on the other hand, implies plurality and, like Kristeva, an active role of the readers, who are invited to construct the meaning themselves.

Nevertheless, by far the most important and influential idea of Barthes is that of ‘the death of the Author’, articulated in his essay of the same name and published in 1967. As Haberer explains: “The death of the Author means that nobody has *authority* over the meaning of the text, and that there is no hidden, ultimate, stable meaning to be deciphered” (58). The death of the Author, according to Barthes, is a necessary requirement for what he calls ‘the birth of a reader’, placing the readers into a dominant position and giving them the

absolute power over the interpretation process, while the author “in the role of a compiler or arranger of pre-existent possibilities within the language system” (Allen 14).

#### **1.2.4 Riffaterre and Genette: Structuralist Articulation**

In this subsection of the thesis, two French theorists, Michael Riffaterre and Gerard Genette, who are often classed with the movement of structuralism, are introduced.

Michael Riffaterre, an influential French literary critic and theorist, is considered to follow the structuralist tradition owing to his conviction that literary texts possess a stable meaning (as opposed to poststructuralists, who, on the other hand, seek to disrupt notions of meaning). The core principle of his theory lies in the perception of two levels of reading (Worton and Still 25). The first level constitutes what Riffaterre calls *heuristic/mimetic* reading; however, the presence of difficulties which the readers encounter during the stage of the mimetic reading (i.e. while decoding a text in a linear manner) and for which Riffaterre uses the term ‘ungrammaticalities’ forces the readers to reread the text in order to discover its non-referential structures as the ungrammaticalities point to the presence of some intertext. The second, *comparative* level of reading, is by Riffaterre further divided into *retroactive* and *intertextual* (Alfaro 279) and only through the employment of the latter it is possible to reach the right interpretation of a text. According to Riffaterre, intertextual reading is “the perception of similar comparabilities from text to text; or it is the assumption that such comparing must be done even if there is no intertext at hand wherein to find comparabilities” (qtd. in Alfaro 279). However – and that is the critical point of his theory – as he assumes the readers’ awareness of ungrammaticalities (and hence of the intertext) to be within their linguistic competence, he claims that it is only crucial for the readers to *presuppose* the existence of the intertext. The readers’ (in)ability to locate the intertext (as they may often be limited in this endeavour, usually by time or education) is of no importance and therefore, the only prerequisite for discovering the right interpretation is merely based on presupposition.

Gerard Genette, another French literary theorist, limits the scope of intertextuality and solely focuses on literary texts in his theories, as opposed to Kristeva and Bakhtin. Moreover (and again in opposition to Kristeva), he rejects the term ‘intertextuality’ as inadequate and instead puts forward the term ‘transtextuality’/’textual transcendence’, by which he means “everything, that relates one text to others” (Alfaro 280). In his theory, articulated in the three most influential books of his – *The Architext* (1992), *Palimpsestes* (1997) and *Paratexts* (1997) – Genette particularly emphasizes the complex nature of transtextuality and the numerous relations by which two texts can be intertwined. In addition, Genette also offers a definition of the following subcategories of transtextuality, developing a comprehensive, systematic study of these (often overlapping) phenomena. As adopted from Alfaro (280), these subcategories include *intertextuality* (which, for Genette, only takes form of either plagiarism, quotation or allusion), *paratextuality* (the relation of the body of a text with its title, subtitles etc.), *metatextuality* (linking two texts on the basis of commentary, with one text commenting on the other without the presence of a direct quotation), *architextuality* (assigning the literary text to a specific literary genre, facilitating the determination of the nature of the text) and *hypertextuality* (the relation between a text and its pretext).

### **1.2.5 Bloom: Anxiety of Influence**

Harold Bloom, an American literary critic, who was profoundly influenced by the literary debates in Europe of the 1960s, is the author of an elaborate theory of influence articulated in his book *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Drawing on his exhaustive study of the Romantic poets, including Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley, and especially on the complicated nature of their perception of the poetic authority of John Milton, he attempts at reaching a reconciliation of the situation in which the Romantic poets, despite their embrace of the values such as originality and imagination, constantly tend to incorporate references and allusions to Milton in their poems. Bloom sees a solution to this problem in the concept of ‘belatedness’ of all poets in the post-Milonic period. Interested in psychoanalysis, Bloom draws an analogy between this anxiety of the (not only) Romantic poets and the phenomenon

of the Oedipus complex. However, there is an unavoidable twist as there is no chance of reaching an acceptable resolution of the situation for the poets – as opposed to the sons suffering from the Oedipus complex, who may, theoretically, murder their fathers, Milton is, obviously, a figure who is already dead. Bloom therefore describes a poet as “a man rebelling against being spoken to by a dead man [...] outrageously more alive than himself” (qtd. in Allen 131). Adopting Freudian terminology, Bloom also addresses the conflicting ‘drives’ which initiate the poets’ dilemma: unable to escape the desire to imitate Milton’s poetry on the one hand, they, on the other, desperately strive to be original.

Accordingly, the theory of influence is relevant to the theory of intertextuality as Bloom is a staunch advocate of the notion that all poetry (and indeed literature in general) must be, due to the references and allusions to works of the precursors, intertextual since it represents a sole imitation of the already written<sup>11</sup>, an opinion which he shares with both Kristeva and Bakhtin. At the same time, nevertheless, the poets need to generate the illusion that their status is significantly higher than that of a mere imitator (Allen 132). As a result of this inevitable split, a feeling of unavoidable anxiety – the anxiety of influence – is created.

### **1.3 Intertextuality and Postmodernism**

The aim of the last section of the theoretical part of this thesis is to address the era of Postmodernism with respect to the concept of intertextuality. As demonstrated below on the specific examples of intertextual postmodern literature, in Postmodernism, the core philosophical concepts of which are commonly associated with the notions of plurality of views and with the rejection of unquestionable truths, intertextuality as a literary device undeniably flourishes and gains ground. As Allen argues, “[i]n the Postmodern epoch [...] it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness [...] since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art” (5). Given the

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<sup>11</sup> Bloom calls this process of mere rewriting ‘misreading’.

above, Postmodern literature and the practice of recycling are inseparable. Linda Hutcheon, a Canadian literary theorist, notices, moreover, that there is an implicit ‘double-codedness’ in Postmodernism as it “works within the very system it attempts to subvert” (49), which is Modernism. In addition, Hutcheon also draws attention to the process of a gradual replacement of references by parody.

Furthermore, the Postmodern era is also characteristic of the focus on the unclear relationship between reality and fiction. Therefore, another important term from Hutcheon’s terminology is that of the ‘historiographic metafiction’, a notion emphasizing that what actually becomes a fact in historical narratives depends, according to Hutcheon, “as much as anything else on the social and cultural context of the historian” (qtd. in Allen 186). Allen then explicitly pinpoints three postmodern novels which can be subsumed under the historiographic metafiction heading: John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969), Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1980) and Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981).

However, intertextual practices, already self-evident in the postmodern literature, can by no means be only limited to historiographic metafiction. Therefore, this last paragraph of the theoretical part of the thesis presents at least several examples of works of postmodern literature which are interwoven with intertextuality. An undeniable source of influence upon the postmodern literature is Shakespeare, as can be demonstrated for example in Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), introducing the notoriously known play of *Hamlet* from a point of view of those neglected in the original as minor characters, Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* (1991), retelling the story of *King Lear*, or Matt Haig’s *The Dead Fathers Club* (2006), yet another retelling of the story of *Hamlet*, set in present day England. Other examples of intertextual novels include, among others, Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours* (1998), a re-enactment of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996), with Fielding so highly influenced by the more than 200 years old story of *Pride and Prejudice* that she even admitted in her BBC interview to have “stolen” the plot of this Jane Austen’s novel, J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, demonstrably borrowing from J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* or J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*, and, of course, the works of Ian McEwan, a postmodern master of a variety of literary

devices, including intertextuality, which he displays not only in his *Sweet Tooth* (2012), but, for instance, already in *Atonement* (2001), which Chalupský refers to as “McEwan’s first truly intertextual novel” (“Playfulness” 108). As indicated above in the Introduction, it is McEwan to the poetic genius of whom the next part of this thesis, the analysis of the novel *Sweet Tooth*, is devoted.

## 2 *Sweet Tooth*: Analysis

While in 2009 Chalupský argues in his study of Ian McEwan's earlier works that "Ian McEwan's narrative has always been technically considerably less experimental as far as postmodern literary devices are concerned" (*The Postmodern City* 115), as a result of McEwan's development as an author in the recent years it could be claimed that he is being increasingly remembered and recognized not only for his macabre themes or perverted storylines, but also for his employment of the postmodern narrative device(s) of intertextuality (and metafiction), a tendency which can be most profoundly illustrated on his novel entitled *Sweet Tooth* (2012), the subject of the practical analysis in this thesis. Not only does the novel open with a direct quotation from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File: A Personal History*, but literally every few pages it also contains numerous references and allusions to (not only) literary efforts of various topics, genres and qualities, smoothly incorporated particularly due to McEwan's careful choice of the main characters and by the employment of the act of writing as a major element which drives the plot in *Sweet Tooth*.

Having briefly outlined the theoretical background of the development of the strategy of intertextuality in order to establish the framework for the empirical analysis, it is necessary at this point to clarify the link between the two parts of the main body of this thesis, i.e. to embed the practical part within the broader context of the theoretical one, so as to avoid any potential confusion concerning the terminology and to vindicate the course of the argument presented in the analysis below. To begin with, the understanding of intertextuality throughout this second part of the thesis is heavily based on the acceptance of the idea of many theorists, including Kristeva or Barthes, that a text is a compilation of other texts from which it borrows or steals, which is obvious in *Sweet Tooth*, and, most importantly, on the assumption proposed by Allen and Homoláč that the intertextual relations within any work are crucial determinants of its interpretation. The choice of this definition clears the way for the following fundamental question to be addressed: what message is McEwan trying to convey by the means of the employment of the specific references and what are, hence, the reasons for their use, which may vary considerably from one specific reference to another? Furthermore, the need arises to address Riffaterre's notion of presupposition introduced

above and to assess the importance of the ability to locate the specific intertexts for the readers. In the analysis presented in this thesis, at least certain awareness of the context is considered to be a pivotal requisite for the interpretation and the construction of the meaning within the text. Therefore, a mere presupposition of the existence of the intertexts is not deemed sufficient.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the major task of the following analysis is to locate the intertexts which are most frequently mentioned or seem to be of most importance and which may, consequently, contribute to the understanding of the novel and, based on this acquired knowledge, to attempt at clarifying the intentions McEwan might have had when incorporating those into his novel.<sup>13</sup> In addition, it is necessary to determine which axis, either vertical or horizontal, from Kristeva's terminology is taken into consideration. This is, however, straightforward – the axis which is addressed is the vertical one, i.e. that which explores the relation of a text to other texts, not the horizontal one, which concerns the relation of a text and the addressee. In short, the purpose of the analysis is definitely not a construction of what could be rather called a psychoanalysis of the author of this thesis, but, instead, a creation of a guide to an intertextual reading of the novel.<sup>14</sup> What is more, in the last part of the analysis, exclusively dedicated to the metafictional twist at the end of the

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<sup>12</sup> This argument is also supported by the fact that the Czech translation of the novel published in 2012 by the publishing house Odeon explicitly offers several explanatory notes for at least some specific references.

<sup>13</sup> As McEwan is deliberate enough throughout the novel, the story can be read and (to some extent) understood even without the detailed knowledge of the references or their more in-depth exploration. Nevertheless, even despite this fact, the purpose of this analysis is to address the question of what could be possibly gained when engaging in a truly intertextual reading.

<sup>14</sup> At this point, the use of the indefinite article 'an' instead of its definite counterpart 'the' must be emphasized. If the pluralist poststructuralist view is adopted that there exists no single, 'right' interpretation of the text, it must be also accepted that no outcome of an intertextual analysis, with this one being no exception, can be completely separated from the analysing subject, i.e. its author. As a result, it is understandable that an intertextual analysis of the same novel conducted by a different individual might be completely different as, for example, different individuals tend to search for different shades of meaning, based on their experience and knowledge.

novel, Bakhtin's phenomenon of the double-voiced discourse of literary characters and McEwan's treatment of Barthes' notion of 'the death of the Author' are addressed.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, it is not possible to include every single reference and allusion which appears in the novel. In addition, no summary of the novel is provided; only some specific parts of the plot, which are directly connected to the intertextual or metafictional nature of the novel and which, hence, promote the development of the argument relevant to this thesis, may be addressed in more detail. As far as the structure of the argument is concerned, the analysis is divided into two main parts, with the former dedicated to references and allusions which McEwan uses in order to incorporate works written by other authors, while the latter offers a scrutiny of the veiled references to McEwan as a person himself, as well as to his own novels and short stories which he managed to smuggle into *Sweet Tooth* and which could, nevertheless, only be discovered by McEwan's devoted admirers, i.e. those who have carefully read his books published earlier in his literary career.

## **2.1 *Sweet Tooth* and Works by Other Authors**

The first part of the analysis of the novel discusses the various references to the works by other authors. The reasons for the employment of those are divided into two major subcategories: firstly, to introduce the characters without the otherwise inherent need of their detailed verbal portrayal, and secondly, in this specific novel set in the 1970s Britain, to promote and illustrate the central theme of the ongoing ideological war. Both of these, respectively, are discussed below.

### 2.1.1 Characters: Who Are They?

As has been already mentioned, the novel *Sweet Tooth* is loaded with numerous cultural and especially literary references and allusions.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the novel, McEwan extensively uses the various references particularly in order to describe the characters – without the need to actually use his own words. And it is predominantly the main character of Serena on that the motives for the employment of the miscellaneous references to diverse works of literature can be explained.

As early as on page 2, the readers are already confronted with Serena's affection to reading. As a result, it may be considered that this McEwan's remark possibly serves to foreshadow the importance of the relation of other literary works to the meaning of *Sweet Tooth* and, especially, to the determination of Serena (as well as of the other main characters) as a person. In addition, Serena is also an extremely interesting character due to the fact that it is not only her mental processes, worldview and behaviour at the beginning of the novel that is studied, but also her remarkable development which is to a large extent illustrated by referring to the items on her reading list. At the beginning of the novel, Serena is described as showing keen interest in reading novels and as being a quick reader<sup>16</sup>, but does not acknowledge the importance of any messages in the works of literature, making her a rather pleasure-seeker only reading in order to escape her thoughts about maths, her branch of study, or her thoughts in general. Serena displays what could be referred to as a truly

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<sup>15</sup> The cultural references, such as the multiple works of art mentioned in the gallery, the reference to Twiggy, which Serena uses in order to describe the voice of Shirley, or the note on Laurel and Hardy, which is an office nickname given to Serena and Shirley serving the purpose of the livelier illustration of their physical appearances, are treated as if of minor importance in this (literary) analysis.

<sup>16</sup> This aspect is emphasized and illustrated by an intertextual reference describing Serena as able to read *The Way We Live Now*, a satirical novel by Anthony Trollope, in four afternoons. This manner of the usage of an intertextual relation may support the claim that the context and (at least basic) knowledge of the works which are referred to is extremely important. Only in case one is aware of the extraordinary length of the novel can they truly comprehend McEwan's intentions and the purpose of the inclusion of this reference. As a result, the need of understanding of this specific reference is in sharp contrast with Riffaterre's notion of presupposition, which is discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis.

postmodern approach towards reading as she is described as not distinguishing between books of diverse qualities as perceived by literary critics, illustrated by the fact that she even confesses that “[her] needs were simple” and causes amusement when she dares to pronounce *The Valley of the Dolls* by Jacqueline Susann “as good as anything Jane Austen ever wrote” (7). Despite the fact that *The Valley of the Dolls* was the best-selling book of 1966 and therefore commercially extremely successful, this novel, the plot of which revolves around the lives of three drug-addicted women, received largely negative reviews and is definitely not as widely recognized by the literary critics as the works by Austen. By the inclusion of this comparison, McEwan aims at mocking Serena’s literary taste and her ignorance.

The crucial literary work which profoundly shapes Serena’s character, as well as her behaviour, is *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a novel by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn set in the Soviet gulag in 1951 and providing an atrocious depiction of the lives of the prisoners. McEwan employs this reference in order to show the readers the various functions of literature – and that is, in this case, to educate and to open one’s eyes, which is exactly what happens to Serena when confronted with Solzhenitsyn and his works. A relatively naïve, isolated daughter of a bishop studying at Cambridge and completely unaware of the horrors happening on a daily basis in the world, Serena confesses that she has never before heard the word ‘gulag’, nor has she ever heard of the cruelty of communism or of the transports of people to the Siberian wastes for rather ridiculous reasons, such as sexual orientation or Jewish ancestry. This experience triggers an instant transformation of Serena into an anti-communist, even affecting her articles in the *Quis?* magazine. Moreover, not only has she never been interested in politics and has never read newspaper regularly (which will radically change once she encounters her tutor and lover, Tony), but she also makes the terrible mistake of assuming that the rest of the world is as uneducated and unaware as she used to be herself. In this way, McEwan presents literary works as a great source of not only entertainment, which used to be the sole relevant criterion for Serena, but also of information, elevating their educational value and the immense impact they may have on the readers. To further support this argument, other dystopian and/or anti-totalitarian works in which Serena suddenly becomes interested once she discovers Solzhenitsyn mentioned in the novel include George Orwell’s well-known *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (while Orwell, as a

figure and an intertextual reference of crucial importance in the novel, is addressed in more detail in the next subsection of the thesis), Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, an anti-totalitarian allegory set in the USSR, or Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend Sinister*, yet another dystopian novel expressing sharp criticism of totalitarian regimes.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, another reference to Solzhenitsyn is shown to be of fundamental importance later in the novel when the following statement from his Nobel Prize lecture of 1970 is quoted: "Woe to the nation whose literature is disturbed by the intervention of power." The presence of this quotation in the novel is considerably ironic and demonstrates a brilliant use of an intertextual reference which is directly linked to the story – as what Solzhenitsyn condemns is, indeed, the central element around which the whole story of *Sweet Tooth* revolves.<sup>18</sup>

However, McEwan also utilizes the references to a variety of literary works in order to indicate his perspective on literature and the process of interpretation as such. For instance, when Serena claims that "if [she] hadn't wasted three years being bad at maths at Cambridge, [she] might have done English and learned how to read" (127), she at the same time also raises a fundamental question – whether she would have known how to read T. H. Haley. With these words, McEwan is mediating through the character of Serena the belief that there may exist a single, unique meaning and a single, 'correct' guide of how to read, opposing the poststructuralist approach to the meaning of a text advocated by Kristeva or Barthes. Here, McEwan also addresses a central issue of whether literary studies may teach a person how to 'read properly' in order to understand the author, yet does not provide any definite answer. In addition, by the means of referring to other works of literature, McEwan

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<sup>17</sup> Ksiezopolska makes an observant remark, partly undermining this choice of McEwan's reference: she considers *Bend Sinister* "so abstract and intentionally detached from any kind of reality [...] that a reader with Serena's tastes would be highly unlikely to survive even its first chapters" (43).

<sup>18</sup> McEwan further addresses the topic of state interventions in culture later in the novel in a newspaper article exposing the details of Tom's stipend financing, by stating that "with this level of secret meddling in culture, questions are bound to be raised about openness and artistic freedom in our Cold War environment" (318). The addressing of these issues is unambiguously consistent with Solzhenitsyn's viewpoint, as he, in the same lecture, refers to any such intervention as "a violation against freedom of print".

often implicitly explores the extent to which a novel, short story or any other piece of writing reflects the authors themselves. Not only does Serena make constant attempts at deducing Tom's character from his newspaper articles (which could be understandable to some degree as in the newspaper articles, the authors may be expected to express their true opinions and therefore to reveal their true selves), but she also tries to deduce his experience (sexual in particular) simply by the virtue of having read his stories. Nevertheless, she seems to conclude that the relationship between fiction and reality cannot be reconciled as, before meeting Tom for the first time, she claims that "[w]hatever he was in reality would be a surprise" (160). As a result, McEwan may be manipulating the readers into considering the same idea – i.e. into reflecting on the question of to what extent fiction really is fiction and what, therefore, the role of the authors is and to what extent their own selves are projected into their fiction.

Having discovered Solzhenitsyn, Serena is soon to undergo an even more fundamental transformation when she meets Tony, an older Cambridge history tutor with whom she starts an affair and falls in love. Tony on the scene of the novel represents a symbol of putting an end to Serena's reading of the paperback novels, which are only described as a source of enjoyment, and, instead, marks a departure towards factual literature, aimed at educating Serena in history as she is assigned a new list of reading – namely Winston Churchill, a British politician and the Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945, and G. M. Trevelyan, a British historian and academic. Stemming from the fact that Tony can see a potential in Serena, he needs her to awake even more and to become much more knowledgeable about the current affairs, especially in terms of politics. Tony also forces her to read the newspaper, namely *The Times*, the reading of which McEwan, through the character of Tony, elevates to almost a symbol of one's social status. By the means of the employment of the factual and historic literature, McEwan also points to the presence of a crucial difference between the reading of novels and factual writings, as Serena, having read what she is assigned to read extremely quickly, is not able to answer Tony's factual questions which are related to the topic.

What is certainly questionable is the nature of Tony's feelings towards Serena, as he can be considered to be treating her only as a part of his legacy and to be behaving as a

teacher preparing his student for an important exam, i.e. for the MI5 job interview in this case, so that she does not exhibit any major ignorance. What McEwan may be trying to emphasize through the transformation which Serena undergoes is the notion that “we are what we read” – i.e. that it is also the literature which we come into contact with which defines us, shapes us and may even determine our future course, as is the case of Serena and her first job. Once the affair with Tony is over, Serena claims that she truly has absorbed a degree of taste or alternatively, as she puts it, “snobbery”, and was even so profoundly changed that “[she] no longer promoted Jacqueline Susann over Jane Austen” (76).

Even after Tony’s intervention, however, Serena’s knowledge of literature is extremely limited or rather unilateral. This comes to light once Tom, a writer and a literary scholar, is introduced and it is only through Serena’s conversations with him that McEwan finally reveals the true scope of her ignorance considering the canonical literary works. Consequently, it is even more ironic that in the MI5 she is said to be chosen as a great employee to become a part of the operation Sweet Tooth as she seems to be considered almost a literary expert thanks to her eager and insatiable desire for novels. Serena, nevertheless, certainly has some ‘classical’ education – how could otherwise be explained that her first association when seeing a flock of gulls is a performance of Shakespeare’s *Othello* she attended at Cambridge<sup>19</sup>, in which the word ‘gull’ is used – but is truly ignorant for instance when it comes to poetry. In fact, Tom, a great admirer of Edmund Spenser, cannot even believe that Serena has not read “The Faerie Queene”. In addition, although she is, of course, aware of the existence of authors such as Keats, Byron, Shelley or the modernist poets (whom she, however, does not mention so it may be quite questionable whether she knows some by name or is solely aware of the name of the movement), she is not able to recall a single poem but one from which the first line is quoted: “The boy stood on the burning deck” (205). This, however, is the first verse of the poem “Casabianca” by Felicia Hemans and the piece of knowledge the reader is supposed to possess in order to complete the puzzle McEwan offers when incorporating this quotation is that the poem “Casabianca”

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<sup>19</sup> However, later in the novel Serena confesses that it was only at the elementary and high school that she was forced to read some of the Shakespeare’s plays, but that she was never really interested in them.

was compulsorily learned by heart by the whole generations of British pupils at elementary schools. If not aware of the meaning of this intertextual reference and relying only on Riffaterre's presupposition of the intertext instead of its (at least basic) knowledge, the readers (particularly the British non-natives) might be mistaken and swayed into thinking that Serena is, after all, at least to certain degree knowledgeable about poetry. However, this reference intends to illustrate that it is the reverse that is true as Serena truly possesses only the very basic knowledge. As a result of the literary discussions between Tom, a writer, and Serena, who for some time pretends to be a literature graduate, McEwan manages to smoothly and plausibly incorporate a plenty of references and the choice of his characters, as has already been indicated, can be therefore considered one of the most essential reasons for the complex intertextual nature of *Sweet Tooth*.

### **2.1.2 Cold War: The Clash of Ideologies Illustrated**

Another central issue which resonates throughout the whole novel is the clash of ideologies due to the ongoing Cold War between the Western world and the Soviet Union – and it is exactly from the employment of this theme of the clash of ideologies that another subgroup of fundamental and frequent literary allusions stems from. Not only is there no need for McEwan to tediously describe the characters thanks to the various references, but what is more: there is, for instance, even no need to long-windedly explain the operation Sweet Tooth as such and, most of all, what types of writers are eligible for the recruitment and what types of works are expected to be submitted by those. Instead, very short descriptions suffice, such as that “[t]he writer doesn't have to be a Cold War fanatic, just be sceptical about utopias in the East or looming catastrophe in the West” (148) or that the writer should be “a right-wing author who is eloquently sceptical of the general left-leaning tendencies of his colleagues” writing “passionate anti-communist articles” (318).

McEwan particularly incorporates numerous, frequently reappearing references to the works of one specific writer who comes to mind as the leading representative of the type of an author described in the first quotation – namely George Orwell, world-famous for his anti-utopic allegory *Animal Farm*. With the central theme of the novel being the (mis)use of

the literary talents for ideological propaganda, it is even claimed in the novel that “IRD<sup>20</sup> helped *Animal Farm* into eighteen languages and did a lot of good work for *Nineteen Eighty-Four*” (106) and that despite the fact that “the IRD [...] never told Orwell or Koestler what to put in their books, [it] [...] did what it could to make sure their ideas got the best circulation around the world” (148). Nevertheless, the purpose of this thesis is not to dwell on the argument whether such claims were true for the authors in the real life, outside McEwan’s fiction<sup>21</sup>, but rather to expand on one specific work, *Animal Farm*, as a prime example on which the expectations about the works of the writers involved in the operation Sweet Tooth are modelled. From the viewpoint of the clashing ideologies in the story, the work of George Orwell therefore gains critical importance. Orwell, who is also mentioned in order to explain Serena’s awakening from her naivety with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, hence also serves as a support for the explanation of the ideological clash during the Cold War and, with no further words needed, helps to explain the expectations which the agents from MI5 have from Tom. Given the above, not only Orwell as a person of his experience and political conviction but also his works, which largely stem from this conviction, even become important symbols in the novel – symbols for the author and the works that MI5 employees involved in the operation Sweet Tooth long for.

One of the major conflicts in *Sweet Tooth* arises as Tom finally reveals his contribution to the project, the post-apocalyptic novella *From the Somerset Levels*, which, indeed, represents a sharp contrast to Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, with the whole situation being exacerbated by the fact that “other Sweet Tooth writers handed in their non-fiction versions of *Animal Farm*<sup>22</sup>” (235). Highly influenced by his favourite author, James Graham Ballard, an English novelist and short story writer known for post-apocalyptic novels the role of whom is comparable to the role of Milton for the Romantic poets as elaborated on by Harold

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<sup>20</sup> Information Research Department, founded by the British intelligence agencies to counter Soviet propaganda in 1948.

<sup>21</sup> However, it is publicly known that the film version of the *Animal Farm* was funded by the CIA in order to promote and emphasize its anti-communist message.

<sup>22</sup> Here, the symbolic value assigned to this allegory becomes even more self-evident.

Bloom, Tom delivers a depressing account of “the desolation of the crashed urban masses, the raw squalor of rural poverty, the air of general hopelessness” (256). Despite the fact that the novella is undoubtedly well-written and structured, it is simply unacceptable for the scheme of the operation since it plainly does not serve the right purpose. Not only does the novel depict “a journey a man makes with his nine-years old daughter across a ruined landscape of burned-out villages and small towns, where rats, cholera and bubonic plague are constant dangers”, as Julie Myerson puts it in her review of the book published in *The Guardian*, but, most of all, the climax of this degradation is reached once the father and the daughter arrive in London, turning the story into an anti-capitalist dystopia, ideologically extremely distant from *Animal Farm*, i.e. certainly not a work which could contribute to the promotion of the the western propaganda against the Soviet one.

## **2.2 *Sweet Tooth* and Allusions to Ian McEwan**

The second part of the analysis of the novel is solely devoted to the not explicitly mentioned, veiled references in *Sweet Tooth* to McEwan himself – both as a writer and, what is more, as a person, which may be considered an interesting and to some extent also amusing strategy and it is certainly a matter to address in slightly more detail in this thesis. Not only does McEwan recycle his short stories written earlier in his career, creating a complex net of intertextual relations and raising numerous questions regarding his intentions and the purpose of this re-use of one’s own work, but he also manages to secretly smuggle himself onto the pages of the novel, even admitting in an interview for *The Guardian* that “[t]he novel is a muted and distorted autobiography, though unfortunately a beautiful woman never came into [his] room and offered [him] a stipend”. In addition, a few moments in *Sweet Tooth* in which McEwan alludes to the story of *Sweet Tooth* itself may be spotted and a brief discussion of the presence of these is also offered. Last but not least, the metafictional twist of the novel is addressed in the last subsection in order to expand on the interconnectedness of the theoretical part of the work with the practical analysis, raising the critical issues of the double-voicedness of the characters’ discourse in the novel and McEwan’s treatment of the

‘death of the Author’.

### 2.2.1 Haley or McEwan?

Ian McEwan is an English novelist, short story writer and screenwriter. Already in 2008 considered to be one of the 100 most powerful people in British culture according to the list *The Telegraph*, he is a laureate of a series of literary awards, as enumerated in Beran (123), such as the Somerset Maugham Award for his first collection of short stories *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), the Whitbread Novel Award for his novel *The Child in Time* (1987), the prestigious Booker Prize for *Amsterdam* (1998)<sup>23</sup>, the W. H. Smith Literary Award for *Atonement* (2001), the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction for *Saturday* (2005) and the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for comic writing for *Solar* (2010), as well as many others, including international awards.

As far as the life circumstances of Ian McEwan are considered, Chalupský notices some remarkable similarities to Tom Haley as both “grew up in Suffolk, studied at the University of Sussex, experienced [their] first great love at the Brighton seaside, and graduated from the University of East Anglia in Norwich” (“Playfulness” 112). However, not only their lives but also their literary careers bear resemblance which surely cannot be attributed to mere coincidence – for instance, the careers of both are strongly connected with Ian Hamilton, a critic, editor, publisher and also the founder of the literary magazine *The New Review*, in which McEwan’s as well as Haley’s stories appeared before being published. In addition, both McEwan’s and Haley’s publisher is Tom Maschler and the public reading with Martin Amis, which is such a disaster for Haley, is also based on McEwan’s own experience.

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<sup>23</sup> Apart from this up to date sole victory, four other novels were also shortlisted, namely: *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), *Black Dogs* (1992), *Atonement* (2001) and *On Chesil Beach* (2007).

Most importantly, however, the themes, plots and narrative strategies of some of their works are strikingly alike. McEwan's first collection of short stories, *First Love, Last Rites* "earned him the reputation of a macabre writer of 'literature of shock'" (Childs 8), which also pervades in his second collection, *In Between the Sheets* (1975). With his early fiction fascinated with "incest, paedophilia, sadism, cross-dressing and many other kinds of deviance and perversion" (Ryan 13), McEwan surely resembles Haley and his short stories to which the readers are exposed through Serena who, step by step, reads every single one and it is therefore through her reading experience that the stories are mediated to the readers. However, it is not only the macabre atmosphere which links McEwan's and Haley's works. The discussion presented in this subsection of the thesis offers an insight into the relations between the texts of McEwan and Haley and briefly addresses their various similarities as well as some notable differences.

*Sweet Tooth* as a whole is most heavily linked to McEwan's two earlier novels, namely the spy thriller *The Innocent* and the metafictional novel *Atonement*. A detailed comparison of these novels and *Sweet Tooth* is given in Chalupský ("Playfulness" 103-111), who, most importantly, emphasizes the extraordinary similarities between the characters of the main protagonists of the novels, the themes of the novels or the employment of the narrative strategies of intertextuality and metafictionality (in case of *Atonement*), while also noticing the aspects in which the novels differ significantly. Furthermore, it is not only the whole novel itself which is reminiscent of McEwan's earlier literary efforts but even the literary efforts of Tom included in *Sweet Tooth* conspicuously resemble some of the short stories included in McEwan's second collection, *In Between the Sheets* (1978) – for example, the story "Her Second Novel" largely draws on the "Reflections of a Kept Ape". In addition, Tom's first novel, *From the Somerset Levels*, is closely based on his story "Two Fragments: March 1999-", painting a dystopian picture of a father and a daughter in post-apocalyptic London.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Nagy, however, expresses no doubt that *From the Somerset Levels* unambiguously refers to *The Road* by McCarthy or *The Pesthouse* by Jim Crace, both post-apocalyptic novels depicting the state of the world after an unknown catastrophe, and seems to be missing the link to McEwan's own story.

Nevertheless, the real prime example of this recycling technique is the unnamed story of a man who falls in love with a mannequin which he notices in a shop window, which is only a slightly revised version of McEwan's earlier story "Dead as They Come", offering a great chance to explore the similarities and differences between these two, which both Beran and Ksiezopolska engage in and it is this unnamed story, which bears the most resemblance to its 1970s model counterpart, towards which the attention in this thesis is oriented as well. Despite the fact that the backbone of the storyline is the same for both stories, some differences may be certainly spotted – either in the plot (as, for instance, it is the main protagonist's chauffeur who is suspected from having an affair with the mannequin in the original version of the story, not his maid servant) or in some other respects, namely the style of narration. Beran (124-125) in his analysis is particularly preoccupied with the emphasis on the fact that the plotline of the story is revised, especially stressing the difference in the endings of the stories, as in the original "the frustrated millionaire [...] destroys his precious collection of art objects in a fit of rage but leaves the dummy untouched" (124) while in Tom's story, it is the mannequin herself who is dismembered and disposed of. Ksiezopolska (423-426), on the other hand, pays much more attention to the differences in the stances of the narrators. While the original version is narrated by the hero himself, Tom's story in *Sweet Tooth* is slightly abridged and, what is more, only mediated to the readers through Serena. As a result, as Ksiezopolska notes, the wealth of the main character is described much more moderately in *Sweet Tooth* than in the first-person narration, as the descriptions of the hero provided by himself may only be his exaggerated fantasies, a risk which is mitigated with the introduction of the third-person narrator. Even more importantly, Ksiezopolska also notices the slightly modified ending of the story, but from a completely different viewpoint than Beran as she notices and "the narrative [of the original story] seems to resemble that of John Fowles' *The Collector* and the story closes with a strong suggestion that its narrator will be likely to replay the role of Frederick Clegg, repeating his outrage on a live person next time" (424). This, however, is not the case of Tom's story, which concludes by stating that "[h]e forgot about her and never lived so intensely again" (144).

It automatically suggests itself to address the possible reasons for McEwan to employ his own stories and to force the readers to experience them, which, at first sight, might at least seem as a great way of recruiting some new members of his own reading 'audience'.

Although Beran (125) claims that it is not exceptionally original to use one's own works, as it is a trend already employed by even McEwan himself (by referring to *The Child in Time* in *Saturday*), it is certainly interesting and of some purpose. Beran argues that this practice "reveals how McEwan sees his literary beginnings and, perhaps, how he would like to see them" (126), offering great self-reflection, emphasized by the fact that the stories in *Sweet Tooth* are retold from Serena's subjective perspective. As a result of this inclusion of McEwan's own work, McEwan may force his characters to engage in the assessing discussions – which he frequently does, particularly in the conversations between Serena and Max and, most importantly, between Serena and Tom. Therefore, McEwan deliberately subjects his own earlier work to constant self-scrutiny, offering multiple points of view – for instance, while Serena likes the mannequin story and finds it interesting, by Max, on the other hand, it is described as "completely implausible" (158). Max also expresses his demands for a much more definite ending than that which is offered by Haley/McEwan, while Serena does not mind. McEwan hence accurately expresses different attitudes and approaches the readers may adopt towards his work, probably suggesting that it is never possible to please everyone. In her discussions with Tom, i.e. the 'real' author of the stories, Serena also admits that she finds the stories "utterly brilliant" (166), with McEwan forcing her to highlight her favourite ("This Is Love") and to enumerate its qualities, including its themes or the thoughtful depth of its characters.

Moreover, McEwan even dares to award Tom's novella *From the Somerset Levels* the (fictitious) Jane Austen Prize, by the means of which he automatically places his own work above his celebrated contemporaries (Chalupský, "Playfulness" 113), such as Burgess, Spark or Murdoch, or directly flatters Ian Hamilton and Tom Maschler as "two of [the literary circles'] most important figures" (261), emphasizing the complimentary nature of their interest in Tom's, i.e. McEwan's works. At this point of the argument, a question may arise whether all of this is not simply too daring or boastful. Apparently, the answer is no. The purpose of these references in the book is not for McEwan to boldly escape into an imaginary world of fantasies in which he is a respected writer but rather to play games and to experiment while being a realist who is fully aware of his earlier achievements. Moreover, if the fact is ignored that McEwan primarily wants to include Serena's opinions in order to let Tom plausibly get to know her and to be able to construct her detailed profile, it could be

argued that McEwan also touches upon the topic of the importance of feedback for any author, when Tom literally urges Serena that “[her] appreciative remarks meant a lot to [him]” and that [he]’d like her honest criticism” (201).

In addition, the employment of the stories in the text paves the way to the introduction of another interesting phenomenon which elevates the intertextual nature of the story, bringing it to a much higher level. This phenomenon, which could be referred to as a ‘multi-layered‘ intertextuality, stems from the fact that not only are McEwan’s own stories already intertextually incorporated within the novel itself, but that those as such also include numerous intertextual references (for example to quotations from Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen or W. H. Auden in the story entitled “This Is Love”), resulting in a second layer (or dimension) of referencing.

### **2.2.2 Intertextual Relations Within *Sweet Tooth* Itself**

In addition to McEwan’s impudence to smuggle his own self together with his earlier works into the novel, he goes even further and makes numerous references to *Sweet Tooth* itself within the novel, mainly by the means of the depiction of Serena’s literary tastes, to which the readers are exposed very early on in the novel:

I didn’t bother much with themes of felicitous phrases and skipped fine descriptions of weather, landscapes and interiors. I wanted characters I could believe in, and I wanted them to be made curious about what was to happen to them. Generally, I preferred people to be falling in and out of love, but I didn’t mind so much if they tried their hand at something else. It was vulgar to want it, but I liked someone to say ‘Marry me‘ by the end. Novels without female characters were a lifeless desert. (7)

I paid special attention [...] wherever a London street I knew was mentioned, or a style of frock, a real public person, even a make of a car. Then, I thought, I had a measure, I could gauge the quality of the writing by its accuracy, by the extent to which it aligned with my own impressions, or improved upon them. (76)

However, it is impossible for the attentive readers to ignore the fact that it is *Sweet Tooth* that Serena loves and praises as all of the aspects mentioned in the quotations above are also present in this novel. For instance, there are no lengthy depictions of weather or landscapes and the characters are very believable. Throughout the whole novel, there resonates an omnipresence of numerous real-life events, including not only the broader framework of the Cold War, but also events such as the miners' strikes, the burning question of Ireland or the Troubles. These, consequently, help to describe the atmosphere of the period of time in which the novel takes place, to place it within a specific social, historical and political framework and, therefore, to promote the novel's authenticity and plausibility, which may, to some extent, more closely attach the readers to the story. The storyline is remarkably dramatic, with Serena being a strong female character madly falling in love and experiencing heart-breaking breakups and with Max also driving the plot for most of the novel with his deception (in the form of his engagement to another woman) and his desire for revenge. Serena is also constantly wandering the streets, faithfully describing London and Brighton, and, probably most importantly, at the very end of the novel there is the long-desired marriage proposal. As a result, it seems that what McEwan aims at is either a plausible self-promotion of his own work as of undoubtedly great quality or, on the other hand, a playful self-irony.

In addition, considering the references to *Sweet Tooth* within *Sweet Tooth*, the embedded stories must be addressed once again as they, apart from their intertextual nature acquired by the virtue of being recycled, also contain a second, extremely inventive and amusing intertextual dimension as all of them can be read as analogies to the whole story. As a result, they significantly contribute to the emphasizing of the meaning of the novel, which, however, may not be immediately spotted by the readers. Nevertheless, this most difficult part of the work is performed by McEwan himself who in the last chapter of the novel, i.e. the letter from Tom to Serena, alone embarks on the mission of explaining the various relationships of these embedded stories to the novel as a whole and the extent to which an analogy between the higher segment of the novel with the lower segments of the stories may be drawn. Tom/McEwan hence provides a story-by-story explanation of the manner in which the plots of the short stories are directly linked to the main plot of the novel. For instance, while the story "This Is Love" describes a man who falls in love with a woman

who ultimately destroys him (which, however, may have been the case of Tom and Serena as well), in “Pawnography”, Tom depicts “the foolish husband lusting after the wife” (360) even despite the fact that he is at that time fully, yet secretly aware of her deceit (which, again, bears striking resemblance to Tom’s own plotline and to the deceit by Serena he discovers but decides to keep as a secret). Moreover, the story “Her Second Novel” may be read as an almost complete analogy of *Sweet Tooth* as it represents a story with an interesting and unexpected metafictional twist at the very end, the plot of which revolves around the struggle of an author who is driven to the completion of her second novel by her apish lover who is, however, only an illusion. Furthermore, it is only at the last page of the story that Serena realizes that “the story [she] was reading was actually the one the woman was writing” (224). This also greatly foreshadows the ending of *Sweet Tooth* – being in fact forced by Serena to write his second novel, Tom reveals at the very end of the book that it is exactly *Sweet Tooth* he was actually working on, hence including the same denouement. Last but not least, the altered version of “Dead As They Come”, i.e. the mannequin story discussed above, describes a relationship between a man and his lover who, however, is only “a counterfeit, a copy, a fake” (360) – which also perfectly holds for Serena who is to a large extent only dreamt up, a fact which Tom realizes once he discovers the full scope of her deception.

### **2.2.3 Metafictional Twist**

This last, short subsection is dedicated to the exploration of McEwan’s metafictional twist and particularly to the metafictional nature of the novel in relation to some of the theoretical tenets addressed in the first part of this thesis. In this discussion, the fundamental element of analysis is the viewpoint on the narrative strategy of metafiction, which, in case of Serena, may be deduced from her discussions with Tom. While Tom admires, for example, John Fowles’s *The Collector* or *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, with the latter being one of the finest examples of postmodern metafiction, Serena disapproves of any narrative tricks. Tom, however, this time possibly articulating McEwan’s own thoughts, replies that “it wasn’t possible to recreate life on the page without tricks” (214). Alghamdi in his study, in which

he provides a guide to the reading of *Sweet Tooth* within the broader context of Barthes' theory, drawing on the metanarrative nature of the novel openly challenges one specific aspect of Barthes' notion of the 'death of the Author'. According to Alghamdi, Barthes claims that "the author is merely a vehicle through which the words are transmitted: the author does not retain control or presence in the written work" (90). However, this is certainly not the case of *Sweet Tooth*, where the role of Tom as the author (and hence of McEwan himself, who resembles Tom in so many respects) is truly pivotal, possibly suggesting McEwan's reservations against Barthes' notion, since, as Alghamdi puts it, "[l]ike a spy himself, in keeping with this theme, the author infiltrates the narrative" (92) and is by no means absent from the story.

Furthermore, Ksiezopolska describes Serena as "a triple agent: an avatar of an avatar of a writer reminiscing on the nature of fiction and his own textualized self" (419). As a result of the metafictional twist, it could be therefore argued that Bakhtin's notion of the double-voiced discourse is "upgraded" into a triple-voiced one with McEwan speaking through Tom, the alleged author of the story who is in all but one chapter in turn speaking through Serena and hence including the voices of not only two but even three different individuals. Last but not least, as the layered nature of intertextuality has been discussed above, the same applies for its metafictional counterpart as, for example, the story "Her Second Novel" is clearly an employment of the technique of metafiction within broader, again metafictional context, which, however, only comes to light on the very last pages.

## Conclusion

To bring this bachelor thesis to a close, it could be argued that intertextuality, a literary phenomenon thoroughly explored and revised by the literary theorists including Kristeva, Barthes, Riffaterre, Genette or Bloom in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is as a trademark of Postmodernism one of the most important narrative strategies used by Ian McEwan in his novel *Sweet Tooth* (2012). Full of various intertextual references to not only works by other authors but also to McEwan's own novels and short stories written earlier in his career, the novel *Sweet Tooth* represents a great material to work with in order to uncover a wide range of intertextual relations and to trace the possible purpose of their employment.

The intertextual references to works by other authors are primarily used in order to enhance the narration and to serve the economy of expression as they allow McEwan to depict and/or emphasize the qualities of the characters or their mental development (which is the case of Serena) or to describe the ideological and political background of the era without the use of tedious explanations. The allusions which McEwan incorporates to himself as a person or to his own earlier works, on the other hand, offer an interesting insight into the way he revisits his own life and particularly his own literary beginnings, included in the collection *First Love, Last Rites* (1975), and in particular the story "Dead As They Come", which is included in the novel in a version which is only slightly revised. As a result of this inclusion of his earlier works, McEwan throughout the whole novel provides the readers with multiple viewpoints and assessments, constantly self-scrutinizing himself and appearing to be either self-promoting or, alternatively, self-ironic.

In addition, the intertextual references and the metafictional twist at the end of the novel enable the readers and literary theorists to explore McEwan's narrative strategies within the broader intertextual theoretical concept. For instance, it is possible to explore the hints McEwan leaves throughout the novel concerning his treatment of the poststructuralist notion of texts possessing a 'single' meaning (which Serena seems to be looking for in the novels she is confronted with), or the role of the author in the novel, which is for McEwan crucial and the understanding of which therefore sharply contrasts with the theory developed by Barthes. Furthermore, the metafictional nature of the novel can be also viewed through

Bakhtin's perspective of the 'double-voiced discourse', offering an upgraded alternative of a discourse which is even 'triple-voiced'.

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