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Ian McEwan as a Modern Moralist

Bachelor Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 11. 8. 2017 …….…….

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1 Introduction

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse three works by the British author Ian McEwan, specifically how the topic of morals and morality is portrayed in those novels. The novels chosen are *Amsterdam*, *Saturday* and *Solar*.

The first chapter of this thesis briefly introduces the author. Ian McEwan is a famous award-winning author, who is mostly known for his novel Atonement. McEwan is not only a best-selling novelist but also a screenwriter.

The following chapter offers a closer look at the concept of morality. Definition of morality, its origins and different interpretations are discussed. Morality is not a term that is easy to define and scholars since the times of ancient Greece up until today have been trying to properly describe it.

The third chapter deals with the portrayal of the concept of morality in English literature. Three prominent British authors and their works are discussed, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. All three Victorian authors discussed morals and morality in their novels.

The subsequent chapters provide a detailed analysis of three novels by Ian McEwan. First analysed novel is *Amsterdam*. A story about a suicide pact between a newspaper editor Vernon Halliday and a composer Clive Linley. Following discussed novel is *Saturday*, which follows one day in a life of a neurosurgeon called Henry Perowne. The last analysed novel is *Solar*. The novel tells a story about the life of a Nobel-winning physicist Michael Beard and his attempt to find solution to climate change.

2 Ian McEwan

British writer Ian McEwan was born on June 21st in Aldershot to David McEwan and Rose Lilian Violet. He attended the University of Sussex and then got his master's degree in literature at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of not only many novels, screenplays and short stories but also a few children's books and plays.

His first publications were collections of short stories *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) and *In Between the Sheets* (1978), which were positively received by the critics but caused some controversy due to some of the stories containing quite shocking themes.[1] After that, McEwan became focused more on novels, which dealt more with family issues and politics, such as *The Child in Time, The Innocent* or *Atonement*. Most of his novels examine a great variety of serious topics such as politics, gender inequality, violence, war or science. His protagonists are hardly ever ordinary people. They are physicists, neurosurgeons or composers. His latest novel, *Nutshell*, was published in 2016.

His works have received popular as well as critical acclaim and McEwan has been nominated for many prestigious awards. In 1998 he received the Man Booker Prize for his novel *Amsterdam*. He has been previously nominated for this Prize for five other of his novels. In 2008 he was included on a list of 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945' published by The Times.[2] There are also several film adaptations of his works, the most famous one being Atonement from 2007 directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightley and James McAvoy. The film was nominated for Best Motion Picture at the 80th Academy Awards.

[1] Dominic Head, *Ian McEwan* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 2014), 30.
[2] "The 50 Greatest British Writers Since 1945", Thetimes.Co.Uk, 2017, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-50-greatest-british-writers-since-1945-ws3g69xrf90.

3 Morality

In order to analyse the moral themes in the work of Ian McEwan it is necessary to first look at what exactly morality means. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the term morality as follows: a set of personal or social standards for good or bad behaviour and character.[3] APA Dictionary of Psychology provides a slightly more elaborate definition, describing morality as: a system of beliefs or set of values relating to right conduct, against which behaviour is judged to be acceptable or unacceptable.[4]

However, as Bernard Gert points out, morality is not a concept that is easily defined. The author suggests that morality is a system that people use when they are trying to reach a morally acceptable choice out of various alternatives or when people make moral judgements about themselves, their own actions or the actions of other people. [5]

Morality has been a topic of interest since the beginning of the human civilization, and later on has been studied by philosophers since the era of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Since then, many moral theories came into existence, the most notable in modern philosophy being the ones developed by Immanuel Kant and David Hume. Kant argued that our morality comes from reason and that all humans should strive to be the best versions of themselves and behave the way they expect others to. Hume on the contrary thought our morality came primarily from sentiment rather than knowledge and logic. [6] Hayes claims that Hume considered morality to come from *the virtue of humanness itself*[7]. Strickland, on the other hand, suggests that scientific study of morality did not come into existence until the nineteen fifties with Lawrence Kohlberg and his six stages of moral development.[8]

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[3] morality Dictionary, "Morality Meaning In The Cambridge English Dictionary", Dictionary.Cambridge.Org, 2017, http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/morality.
[4] Gary R. VandenBos, *Dictionary Of Psychology* (Washington: American psychological Association (APA), 2015), 667.
[5] Bernard Gert, *Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.
[6] Lara Denis and Eric Wilson, "Kant And Hume On Morality", Plato.Stanford.Edu, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-hume-morality/.
[7] Charles D. Hayes, *Beyond The American Dream* (New York: Autodidactic Press, 1998), 44.
[8] Bonnie Strickland, *The Gale Encyclopedia Of Psychology* (Farmington Hills: Gale, 2006), p. 436.

According to James Fieser, moral theories are nowadays divided into three fields: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics.[9] The first field tries to understand where morality comes from, whether it is something that comes from within every individual, religion, society, nature or all of these together. Normative ethics concerns itself with what is morally right or wrong and what makes a certain individual good or bad. Lastly applied ethics focuses on specific controversial issues and tries to apply moral theories to determine the appropriate action to be taken.

Different theories of psychology perceive morality in different ways. As Strickland elaborates, the social learning theory assumes that people acquire morality by learning the rules of right and wrong from the environment they are living in. The theory of psychoanalysis suggests that people develop morality through the conflict between their own drives and the needs of the society. Lastly the cognitive development theory sees morality as a product of cognition and reasoning.[10]

When it comes to morality, Charles D. Hayes recognizes three spheres of functionality; traditional, practical and idealistic. The traditional realm concerns itself with the way things were, the practical deals with the way things currently are and the last, idealistic sphere, talks about the way things could be.[11]

Many researchers believe that morality differs based on the culture and society, as Strickland notes. Different societies have different sense and standards of morally acceptable behaviour hence many philosophers and psychologists believe that morality is completely culturally conditioned. Whether there is a universally right or wrong behaviour and cross-cultural norms continue to be the subject of study. [12]

[9] James Fieser, "Ethics | Internet Encyclopedia Of Philosophy", Iep.Utm.Edu, 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/.
[10] Strickland, *The Gale Encyclopedia Of Psychology*, 436.
[11] Hayes, *Beyond the American Dream*, 44.
[12] Strickland, *The Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 436.

4 Morality in English Literature

This chapter deals with the theme of morality and ethics in the works of several prominent English novelist from the 19th century, when the issue became a prominent topic in literature. The authors are Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot and they were chosen because their works were significantly influenced by social issues relating to morality.

4.1 Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was an influential novelist, who was known for his harsh critiques of moral, economic, and social issues in Victorian Britain. He was one of the most significant authors of British social novel. His work often deals with topics such as child labour, class division, poverty, poor education and many other problems faced by the working class in that era. McClinton-Temple suggests that Dickens very much disagreed with the very common belief in the nineteenth century; that one's virtue and good character depend on the person's social class. He thought this notion to be fundamentally wrong and believed that to base one's character on their class was morally unacceptable.[13]

As Gluchman points out, Dickens' first novel which contained a strong social commentary was *Oliver Twist*.[14] In this novel, Dickens explores the abuse of orphans and the dangerous criminal underworld in London. Diana Chlebek argues that the novel offers hope. Hope that innocence, represented by the main protagonist, can survive the morally corrupted forces that threaten the Victorian society and can perhaps even challenge it.[15]

[13] Jennifer McClinton-Temple, *Encyclopedia Of Themes In Literature* (New York: Facts On File, 2011), 341.
[14] Vasil Gluchman, "Reflexion Of English Morals In The Literature Of The 19Th Century (Charles Dickens And His Contemporaries)", Filozofia 61 (2006): 405.
[15] McClinton-Temple, *Encyclopedia Of Themes In Literature*, 343.

In his later novels such as *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield* he continued to explore the lives of children and focused on the poor education system in Victorian Britain. Other moral issues examined by Dickens were those associated with the flawed legal system and incompetent bureaucracy, for example in his novel *Bleak House*.

Dickens was very compassionate towards the less fortunate and believed in the necessity of social commitment and bettering one's self, as we can observe in one of his letters: 'Everything that happens […] shows beyond mistake that you can't shut out the world; that you are in it, to be of it; that you get yourself into a false position the moment you try to sever yourself from it; that you must mingle with it, and make the best of it, and make the best of yourself into the bargain'.[16] Characters from all classes can be found in Dicken's works, but as Hawes observes, Dickens' main focus was on the lives of the poor living in urban areas, especially in London. He also mentions that Dickens hardly ever portrayed his characters of higher social status positively. Unlike the characters from the lower classes, they rarely possess any noble qualities and most of the time they are nothing more than caricatures.[17] Dickens openly criticizes the hypocrisy and selfishness of the rich and powerful.

As Coyle, Garside and Kelsall write, Dickens' biggest achievement was showing the Victorian society the hopelessness and despair of the working class living in that era and helping to start a conversation about the much needed social and moral reforms. [18]

4.2 George Eliot

George Eliot was an English novelist but also a poet and a translator, whose works are known for their psychological realism.[19] Along with Charles Dickens she provided a social commentary on the situation in Victorian Britain in her works but

[16] Charles Dickens, Georgina Hogarth and Mary Dickens, *The Letters Of Charles Dickens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 461.
[17] Donald Hawes, *Charles Dickens* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2007).
[18] Martin Coyle, Peter Garside and M. M Kelsall, *Encyclopedia Of Literature And Criticism*, 1993, 548.
[19] George Levine, *Cambridge Companion To George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3-4.

unlike Dickens she focused more on life in rural areas of Britain. As Anne Marie Hacht comments, Eliot's novels offer an analysis of moral issues relating to the increasing agnosticism in England and spiritual hopelessness that started to take root in the society of nineteen century England.[20]

Her best-known novel *Middlemarch* is about a fictitious English town and the lives of its citizens. In this novel Eliot offers a closer look at, for example, the institution of marriage, the position of women in society or the role of religion in rural England.

According to Tim Dolin, a very strong influence on Eliot's views on morality, religion and humanity were the works of several philosophers, primarily those of Comte, Spinoza and Feuerbach. She became deeply acquainted with Feuerbach's moral theory and views on religion while translating his work *The Essence of Christianity*.[21]

As Angelique Richardson suggests Eliot's works were also heavily influenced by Charles Darwin and his studies. They confirmed Eliot's belief that morality should not come from religion but rather from nature.[22] As Anderson and Shaw point out, Eliot refused the idea that to be a moral person one must simply behave as God would expect them to. They argue that Eliot's sense of morality is instead derived from sympathy and love for the humankind. [23]

4.3 Elizabeth Gaskell

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) was another Victorian writer, who offered sharp commentary on moral and social issues of 19th century Britain. Her first novel called *Mary Barton* is set in Manchester, a city Gaskell was deeply familiar with, and focuses on the lives of the poor working class. In this work, as James Eli Adams notes, Gaskell sticks to the usual form of a Victorian novel while at the same time depicting the

[20] Anne Marie Hacht, *Gale Contextual Encyclopedia Of World Literature* (Detroit: Gale, 2009), 550.
[21] Tim Dolin, *George Eliot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188.
[22] Angelique Richardson, *After Darwin* (Amsterdam: BRILL, 2013), 136.
[23] Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw, *Companion To George Eliot* (London: Wiley, 2013), 280.

suffering of labourers in the age following the industrial revolution as well as the strong division between the wealthy and the poor at that time.[24]

Gaskell's next novel *Ruth* is about a young woman who falls in love with a man who ends up leaving her upon discovering she is pregnant with his child. As Adams observes the story challenges the stereotypes about unwed mothers, or as they were often called, 'fallen women', since Ruth is portrayed as a virtuous and moral character.[25] She becomes a nurse and consequently dies after attending to the very man who left her, causing her to end up at the very bottom on social hierarchy.

Gaskell's most famous novel is probably *North and South*, a story of a woman named Margaret Hale living in a town in the middle of a social unrest. As Coyle, Garside and Kellsal observe, Gaskell in this novel offers a unique view of the clash between workers and employers through the eyes of a female protagonist while also demonstrating the strength and potential of women living in the era.[26]

As George Levin writes, what is most evident in Elizabeth Gaskell's works is her sympathy and deep compassion for the working class, which was something she hoped would transfer to the readers of her books.[27]

The next part of this thesis deals with the works of Ian McEwan and their moral themes. Each chapter starts with a brief plot summary and then behaviour and actions of the protagonists of *Amsterdam*, *Saturday* and *Solar* are described and analysed in detail.

[24] James Eli Adams, *A History Of Victorian Literature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012), 151.
[25] Adams, *A History Of Victorian Literature*, 153.
[26] Coyle, Garside and Kelsall, *Encyclopedia Of Literature And Criticism*, 525.
[27] Shirley Foster, *Elizabeth Gaskell* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 172.

5 Amsterdam

Amsterdam is a novel by Ian McEwan, which was published in 1998. The book opens with a funeral of an artist and a photographer Molly Lane, who died of an unknown disease after suffering for months. Here we are introduced to the main characters of the story; newspaper editor Vernon Halliday and composer Clive Linley, who are both former lovers of Molly. The narrative oscillates between these two protagonists. We also meet another man, with whom Molly had an affair; British Foreign Secretary Julian Garmony as well as Molly's husband George Lane.

Throughout the story both of the protagonists struggle with a moral dilemma of their own. Vernon obtains compromising photographs of Garmony from Geroge, which could possibly help his struggling newspaper. He is faced with the decision, whether to publish these photographs or not and the moral implications of his decision. Clive, who is working on the most important symphony of his life, is a witness to an assault of a woman. In that moment, he must decide if he is going to help the woman and risk losing the inspiration for a crucial melody for his symphony or if he is not going to interfere. Both Clive and Vernon disagree with the moral decision of the other, which leads to a heated conflict between them. They reach a point where their dislike for each other turns into hate and they start to seek revenge. The book ends with Clive and Vernon killing each other in the city of Amsterdam.

The aim of the following subchapters is to analyse the moral dilemmas presented in *Amsterdam* in more detail.

5.1 Vernon Halliday's moral dilemma

Several days after Molly's funeral, her husband George invites Vernon into his home to show him photographs of Garmony taken by his late wife Molly several years ago. These photographs depict Garmony dressed in women's clothing with make-up on

his face. George wants them to be published in The Judge, a newspaper run by Vernon. However, Vernon is conflicted at first and visits Clive to ask for his advice. Their meeting quickly turns into an argument when Clive suggests publishing said photographs is a terrible idea. Vernon justifies sharing these photographs with the public by arguing that Garmony is a bad person and that this could prevent him from becoming the Prime Minister:

> If Garmony's not stopped now, if he gets to be prime minister in November, they've got a good chance of winning the election next year. Another five years. There'll be even more people living below the poverty line, more people in prison, more homeless, more crime, more riots like last year. He's been speaking in favour of national service. The environment will suffer, because he'd rather please his business friends than sign the accords on global warming. He wants to take us out of Europe. Economic catastrophe![28]

As Florentina Anghel observes, Vernon's final decision to publish the pictures reveals '…an inconsistency between moral judgment and reasoning'.[29] Vernon pretends that his reason for publishing the photographs is the fate of the country. He rationalizes his decision by convincing himself that he would help bring down a powerful man, who would only end up causing harm to the whole country. However, his motivations seem to be far more selfish than that. Vernon's main reason for publishing the photographs is to increase the sales of his newspaper, which is rapidly losing its readership. Patrick Henry claims that Vernon 'suffers from a severe addiction to authority'.[30] He believes that what he is doing is right and anyone who disagrees with him is simply wrong.

While Clive agrees with Vernon in his belief that Garmony is a despicable man, he strongly believes the photographs should not be published. He tells Vernon that 'if it's okay to be a transvestite, then it's okay for a racist to be one. What's not okay is to be a racist.'[31] He not only accuses Vernon of betraying Molly, who would certainly not

[28] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam* (New York: RosettaBooks LLC, 1998), 167.
[29] Florentina Anghel, "Human (In)Consistencies In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," *Romanian Journal Of English Studies* 13 (2016): 1-7.
[30] Patrick Henry, "Review Of Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," *Modern Language Studies* 38 (2008): 77.
[31] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 67.

want these photographs to be seen by the public, but of betraying himself as well, since up until that point 'he was an apologist for the sexual revolution'.[32]

As Malcolm points out, Vernon is deservedly punished in the end for putting his career goals and desire for fame above everything and everyone else.[33] Only a few days before Vernon was about to reveal the photographs in the newspaper, Garmony's wife made an appearance on TV and showed them herself. After defending her husband, she attacks Vernon saying to him through TV: 'Mr. Halliday, you have the mentality of a blackmailer, and the moral stature of a flea'.[34] Consequently Vernon loses his big story, is fired from his job as the editor of The Judge and is utterly humiliated in the media.

5.2 Clive Linley's moral dilemma

As Clive is close to finishing his Millennial Symphony he finds himself struggling with the final melody. He decides to visit the Lake District to relax and search for much needed inspiration. While he is hiking through a valley he is taken by surprise by a bird call and starts to scribble down notes for his melody. He is interrupted by voices and sees a woman being harassed by a man. Clive has two choices; he can either help the woman and risk losing the inspiration for his melody or he can decide not to interfere.

As Florentina Anghel observes, Clive's decision to do the latter shows the selfish nature of his personality that we can observe throughout the novel.[35] In that moment he chooses his career and his music over the well-being of another person. He completely distances himself from the situation. 'Whatever they were about, Clive's immediate thought was as clear as a neon sign: I am not here'.[36] Anghel also argues that Clive tries to rationalize his behavior by pretending that what is happening might not actually be real. She writes that there is 'an obvious overlapping of imaginary and real planes, since

[32] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 66.
[33] David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (Columbia, SC: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2002), 192.
[34] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 108.
[35] Anghel, "Human (In)Consistencies In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," 3.
[36] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 76.

he treats reality as a hypothesis'. [37] He convinces himself that the woman does not need his help and is in no danger.

Dominic Head agrees that this incident shows Clive's self-centered and egoistical personality, but argues that Clive does feel some guilt afterwards and is ashamed of himself.[38] Immediately after the incident he decides to leave Lake District, convincing himself that it is just 'creative excitement' that makes him anxious and wanting to leave as soon as possible.

When it is later revealed that the man who Clive saw assaulting the woman was an infamous Lake District rapist, Vernon takes the moral high ground and urges Clive to go to the police. Clive, however, refuses to do so which results in Vernon calling the police and informing them that Clive has valuable information about the criminal. At the police station Clive fails to recognize the man he saw at the Lake District. According to Anghel this moment again proves that Clive has completely distanced himself from the situation or perhaps willingly repressed the memory from his mind.[39]

Similarly to Vernon, Clive gets his comeuppance for his selfish behaviour in the end. His symphony is a complete debacle and he is even accused of ripping off Beethoven.

5.3 Clive and Vernon's suicide pact

As Molly's death impacts greatly both Vernon and Clive, they decide to make a pact. If either one of them ever gets in the same position Molly was in, where she was not able to take care of herself, they would help each other end the pain and misery and kill the other. As was mentioned in previous chapters, they get into multiple arguments throughout the novel. Vernon decides to publish the controversial photographs taken by

[37] Anghel, "Human (In)Consistencies In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," 3.
[38] Head, *Ian McEwan*, 145.
[39] Anghel, "Human (In)Consistencies In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," 4.

Molly even though Clive told him not to and Clive refuses to go to the police and inform them about the assault he witnessed when Vernon urges him to do so. Anghel argues that their behaviour at the end of the novel is a reflection of their personal views and principles. She believes that both Clive and Vernon are aware of their mistakes and immoral behaviour and the fact that they tried to justify it by hiding behind false reasons.[40]

The novel ends with Clive and Vernon meeting in Amsterdam at a rehearsal for Clive's symphony. They take advantage of loose euthanasia laws in The Netherlands and decide to kill each other out of revenge. As Earl G. Ingersoll points out, at first Clive's idea of revenge on Vernon was to work hard on his music, which he later will be remembered for unlike Vernon who will be forgotten by the world. At the end however, he decides for a different kind of revenge, since his symphony turned out to be a disaster.[41]

Once in Amsterdam they both make an appointment with a Dutch doctor under the false pretences of trying to help a friend suffering from an incurable disease and arrange each other's death. They put a sedative in a glass of champagne meant for the other and later are visited by a doctor, who gives them the lethal injection.

However, there can be another interpretation of the events at the end of the novel, as offered by Dana Chetrinescu. She believes that by the time they arrive in Amsterdam, both Vernon and Clive are already seriously sick. [42] Throughout the novel we can observe many instances of their declining health. Clive complains about the deterioration of his eyesight, fevers and anxiety attacks. As Earl G. Ingersoll points out, when Clive talks to the Dutch doctor about the person who should be later euthanized, he ends up describing himself instead of Vernon. He says his symptoms are: 'unpredictable, bizarre, and extremely antisocial behaviour, a complete loss of reason. Destructive tendencies, delusions of omnipotence. A disintegrated personality'.[43]

[40] Anghel, "Human (In)Consistencies In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam", 4.
[41] Earl G. Ingersoll, "City Of Endings: Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," *The Midwest Quarterly* 46 (2005): 132.
[42] Dana Chetrinescu, "Rethinking Spatiality: The Degraded Body In Ian McEwan's Amsterdam," *British And American Studies* 7 (2001): 160.
[43] Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 133.

Vernon, on the other hand, suffers from headaches and often finds himself in a strange mental state where he feels like he no longer exists. If we accept this point of view where Clive and Vernon are already very ill, it can be argued that they truly fulfilled their pact from the beginning of the novel and performed euthanasia on each other, saving the other from suffering and pain.

6 Saturday

This chapter analyses Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday*, published in 2005. The novel is set within a single day and follows the life of a neurosurgeon Henry Perowne. Perowne is a wealthy, successful, middle-aged man with a beautiful and loving wife Rosalind and two artistic children, Theo and Daisy. Perowne seemingly has all one needs and lives a perfect life but the novel shows his pessimistic outlook on life and strong anxiety caused by the 9/11 attacks and the possibility of similar terrorist attacks happening in London.

According to Bradley and Tate *Saturday* is *"a novel about prejudice, misunderstanding and over-interpretation in an increasingly paranoid London"* [44]. Ross calls *Saturday* a 'Condition of England' novel. Representatives of this genre include Victorian writers such as Dickens or Gaskell or modern authors such as Martin Amis or William Boyd. The genre aims to portray a compassionate view of the lives of the privileged as well as the most oppressed members of the British society, often focusing on significant movements of their time.[45]

At the very beginning of the novel Perowne is awakened from his sleep and through the window he sees a burning plane heading towards London. He is reminded of the 9/11 attacks on New York and is terrified he might be a witness to a similar terrorist attack on London. The terror and anxiety caused by this incident follows him throughout the whole day. On this particular Saturday, February 15th 2003, there is a massive anti-war protest happening in the streets of London. However, Perowne is not attending this protest, due to his belief that war in Iraq might be inevitable. He is on his way to a squash game with a friend, when he has a minor traffic accident. Perowne is confronted by three men from the other car. One of the men, Baxter, demands Perowne pays them immediately for the damage on the car. When he refuses, the men get progressively more aggressive and Perowne only manages to escape a severe beating by

[44] Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel* (London: Continuum, 2010), 30.
[45] Ross, Michael L. "On a Darkling Planet: Ian McEwan's Saturday and the Condition of England," *Twentieth Century Literature* 54 (2008): 75.

diagnosing Baxter with a rare neuro-degenerative disease. This leaves Baxter humiliated and Perowne leaves for his squash game.

Later in the day he visits his mother, suffering from dementia, in a nursing home. He then goes on with his day and starts preparing a dinner for his family. He is also reunited with his daughter Daisy, who returned from France. They are joined by Perowne's father-in-law, his wife and his son Theo. They are interrupted by Baxter and one of his friends, who break into their home. They threaten Perowne's wife Rosalind with a knife to her neck and hit his father-in-law in the face. Baxter then orders Daisy to strip down naked, which reveals her pregnancy to her family. Upon discovering she is a poet, Baxter then orders her to recite some of her poetry. She recited Matthew Arnold's Dover Beach instead and surprisingly Baxter seems to be quite moved by it. Perowne then takes a chance and lures Baxter upstairs, claiming he had done research on his disease and can show him details about new experimental treatments. When Baxter is without his accomplice, Perowne and Theo take him by surprise and throw him down the stairs. After a few hours Perowne gets a call from the hospital and is asked to perform an operation on Baxter, which he does without hesitation. The novel ends with Perowne returning home from the hospital to his wife Rosalind.

6.1 Henry Perowne and the Iraq War

The novel takes place on the same day as an anti-war protest against the war in Iraq is held in the streets of London, which makes Perowne's opinions on both the protest and the war very clear. As Joanna Kosmalska observes, Perowne is torn between the pro- and anti-wars movements. He is able to see the matter from both perspectives and is aware of the consequences of the United Kingdom either joining or not joining the war in Iraq.[46] He is strongly influenced by an Iraqi professor Miri Taleb, who he once operated on. Taleb was a prisoner in Iraq during Saddam's regime and was tortured multiple times. Perowne believes that the war might be inevitable to put a stop to this kind of torture of innocent civilians, Kosmalska also notes that Perowne's negativism concerning the anti-war march stems from the fact that the protesters seem

[46] Joanna Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," *A Journal of Literature, Theory and Culture* 1 (20110): 270.

to be oblivious towards the cruelty and savagery of Saddam's regime. Perowne's is aware of the situation in Iraq because of his meetings with Taleb and therefore the happy and energetic protesters irritate him.[47] He thinks to himself:

> All this happiness on display is suspect. Everyone is thrilled to be together out on the streets – people are hugging themselves, it seems, as well as each other. If they think – and they could be right – that continued torture and summary executions, ethnic cleansing and occasional genocide are preferable to an invasion, they should be sombre in their view.[48]

Tammy Amiel Houser agrees with Kosmalska's observation of Perowne's reluctantness to choose a side. He also notes that Perowne is only able to do so thanks to his social status and wealth. He can avoid the protest in his luxurious car and forget all the moral decisions being made in the outside world. He has his nice car, his big house, his position to shield him from the anxiety affecting the rest of the world.[49]

6.2 Meeting Baxter

As Kosmalska suggests, Baxter is an offender as well as a victim and his collision with Perowne signifies a class conflict[50]. Shen Yuan and Cheng Xue elaborate claiming that the clash between Perowne and Braxton exposes the difference between London's lower and upper class and Britain's overall class discrepancy.[51] Even though McEwan himself said that he did not write an allegory he admits that "just a little or maybe a lot below the surface in his confrontation with Baxter is an echo of the

[47] Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," 270.
[48] Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 64.
[49] Tammy Amiel-Houser, "The Ethics of Otherness in Ian McEwan's Saturday," *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 21 (2012): 137.
[50] Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," 271.
[51] Yuan Shen, Xue Cheng, "An Analysis of Ian McEwan's Saturday From the Perspective of Space," *Studies in Literature and Language* 12 (2016): 49.

confrontation of the rich, satisfied, contented West with a demented strand of a major world religion."[52]

According to Ryle, Baxter seems to be a lower class white man whose occupation is never revealed; nevertheless Perowne assumes he is perhaps a drug dealer. However, Braxton does possess certain sociocultural markers; he is a smoker and he just left a lap-dancing club with his two companions. Ryle compares the contrast between Perowne and Braxton to Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll[53].

The difference between the two characters is also shown through their appearance. As Gauthier suggests, the description of Baxter further differentiates him from Perowne and highlights the characters' intellectual differences by describing Baxter as 'simian' and someone with 'vaguely ape-like features'. Gauthier argues that Baxter is portrayed as a step backwards in evolution which all that more striking in a novel that concentrates on the progress of the Western civilization. Horton notes that such a loaded description evidently tries to portray Baxter as inferior and even animalistic.[54] Gauthier also claims that Baxter represents a potential catastrophe that threatens the Western society. [55] Ryle also comments that the fact that Baxter's intelligence corresponds with his looks is a very neo-Victorian portrayal when the bodily appearance reflects the person's character.[56]

When Perowne realizes Baxter's condition, that he suffers from Huntington's disease, his moral dilemma begins. As Kosmalska argues, from that moment on Perowne sees Baxter as both a thug and a "neurologically-conditioned being not fully responsible for his own behaviour".[57] Perowne gets control of the situation only after he

[52] Tim Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," *College Literature* 40 (2013): 7.
[53] Martin Ryle, "Anosognosia, or the Political Unconscious: Limits of Vision in Ian McEwan's Saturday," *Criticism* 52 (2010): 28.
[54] Emily Horton, *Contemporary Crisis Fictions: Affect and Ethics in the Modern British Novel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 141.
[55] Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 14-15.
[56] Ryle, "Anosognosia, or the Political Unconscious: Limits of Vision in Ian McEwan 's Saturday", 28.
[57] Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," 272.

recognises Baxter's disease and promises him treatment.[58] Perowne is very condescending during the encounter and stresses his professional supremacy as Amiel-Houser says. Perowne exploits his position and employs 'shameless blackmail' to defeat Baxter. Perowne falsely promises Baxter to help him treat his illness. [59] Perowne asserts power over Baxter not only through his medical expertise but also through his language. As Kosmalska says "McEwan's use of medical language (...) echoes the notion that by means of language people control and exclude others; that with professional jargon and idiolects, they highlight their authority and construct their position of supremacy, and Perowne is fully aware of the power of language as he interrogates Baxter."[60]

According to Gauthier, Perowne uses his diagnosis to embarrass him; once humiliated, Baxter quickly hand over the power to Perowne. As Gauthier suggests, Perowne, as a doctor, had the perfect opportunity to act with empathy, given Baxter's vulnerable position, but in fact he does the exact opposite. Perowne takes advantage of his professional superiority and uses it to escape the situation. According to Gauthier his behaviour is justifiable as an act of self preservation, however the manner in which he does so is rather questionable. As Gauthier says "the revelation of Baxter's "secret shame" is a deliberate attempt to belittle and demean him in front of his subordinates."[61]

Horton offers a different interpretation, claiming that upon realizing Baxter's condition Perowne is forced to recognize their shared humanity and the unfairness of Baxter's situation. According to Horton, Baxter's disease becomes a focus of empathy. In this way McEwan shows that violence is not something that we choose but rather a result of several biological determiners. However, that does not apply to Perowne who says himself that he is unable to feel pity. Horton concludes that "Perowne's mechanised view of neurology undermines his initial inclination towards empathy."[62]

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[58] Uroš Rot, "Ian McEwan:Novels About Neurological and Psychiatric Patients," *European Neurology* 60 (2008): 13.
[59] Amiel-Houser, "The Ethics of Otherness in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 136.
[60] Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," 271.
[61] Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 16.
[62] Horton, *Contemporary Crisis Fictions: Affect and Ethics in the Modern British Novel*, 140-141.

On the other hand, Kosmalska argues that Perowne blames himself for exploiting his authority when dealing with Baxter, he sees a victim of an illness behind Baxter's violent acts and recognizes that he is an unhappy individual behind his insanity. According to Kosmalska Perowne "simultaneously pities his fate, and hates him for threatening his well-being." [63] Similarly, Fertel claims that Perowne feels guilty for manipulating Baxter in order to get out of the situation that did not look favourable for him at all. Fertel even argues that Perowne does not condescend to Baxter and that he genuinely wants to help him.[64]

6.3 Baxter at the Perowne's House

Later on in the novel, Baxter reappears when he comes into Henry Perowne's house to attack his family. According to Kosmalska, Baxter invades Perowne's home in retaliation of him humiliating him during their first encounter. During the invasion into Perowne's home, Baxter assaults his father-in-law and forces his daughter Daisy to undress (thus revealing her pregnancy to the family) and recite one of her poems. Daisy however, decides to recite Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold instead.

Root suggests that Baxter suffers because of Perowne's supposition that he can completely understand him solely based on his diagnosis. During the climactic scene he looks at Baxter and thinks to himself "It is *written*. No amount of love, drugs, Bible classes or prison sentencing can cure Baxter or shift him from his course. It is spelled out in fragile proteins, but it could be carved in stone or tempered steel."[65] Poetry is not on Perowne's list but it ends up being the thing that eventually makes Perowne re-evaluate his understanding of Baxter. [66] Root sees Perowne's day as a set of several contests; with Baxter during the car accident, later with Strauss over the squash match,

[63] Kosmalska, "Dichotomous Images in Ian McEwan's Saturday: In Pursuit of Objective Balance," 273.
[64] Randy Fertel, "Saturn vs. Hermes: The Battle of the Hemispheres in Ian McEwan's Saturday," *Journal of Modern Literature* 39 (2016): 63.
[65] McEwan, *Saturday*, 178.
[66]Christina Root, "A Melodiousness At Odds With Pessimism: Ian Mcewan's Saturday," *Journal Of Modern Literature* 35 (2011): 68.

with his daughter over the coming war and finally the novel's climax involves a contest whether science or poetry will save the family from Baxter's aggression.[67]

As Horton says, it is literature that resolves the crisis. The verses of Matthew Arnold's poem Dover Beach have a great calming effect on Baxter. [68] Amiel-Houser suggests that this is the moment in which morality begins for Perowne. McEwan in his article 'Only Love the Oblivion' argues that the ability to enter one's mind is the foundation of compassion and the beginning of morality. In contrast, in the novel, Perowne's morality begins when he realizes that he cannot enter Baxter's mind, he cannot imagine what it is like to be him.[69]

It is literature that saves the family and changes Baxter from a "lord of terror to amazed admirer" and as Cojocaru says Perowne's "scientific reasoning is exposed as inadequate".[70] As Popiel argues it is also the first time that Perowne feels that Baxter might be luckier than him because he knows that he will never be able to enjoy his daughter's poems or be touched by them as much as Baxter can. Perowne is a man of science and cannot feel the poem's emotions.[71] Root concludes that "Henry recognizes that Baxter, despite his disease, possesses a sensitivity to language that gives him access to an experience that Henry has never had."[72] His knowledge in science enables Perowne to quickly diagnose Baxter but he cannot imagine his story beyond that point or understand his despair and its consequences. Perowne thus considers the attack on his family to be his responsibility and the result of him underestimating Baxter's story.[73]

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[67] Root, "A Melodiousness At Odds With Pessimism: Ian Mcewan's Saturday," 65.
[68] Horton, *Contemporary Crisis Fictions: Affect and Ethics in the Modern British Novel*, 145.
[69] Amiel-Houser, "The Ethics of Otherness in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 130.
[70] Monica Cojocaru, "The Limits of Empathetic Imagination in Ian McEwan's Saturday," *East-West Cultural Passage* 1 (2001): 54.
[71] Magdalena Popiel, "The Role of Art in Human Life in Ian Mcewan's Saturday," *ANGLICA - An International Journal of English Studies* 17 (2009): 105.
[72] Root, "A Melodiousness At Odds With Pessimism: Ian Mcewan's Saturday," 69.
[73] Kathleen Wall, "Ethics, Knowledge, and the Need for Beauty: Zadie Smith's On Beauty and Ian McEwan's Saturday," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 77 (2008): 778.

6.4 Operating on Baxter

Later on during the invasion Perowne lures Baxter upstairs and Theo throws him down the stairs breaking his neck.[74] Gauthier argues the by agreeing to operate on Baxter Perowne shows a great amount of empathy for the intruder. Even though Baxter invaded his home and terrorized his family he still remains rational and compassionate.[75] Oxley argues that by deciding to not press charges against Baxter and agreeing to operate on him Perowne demonstrates sympathy rather than empathy.[76]

At the very end of the novel there are times when Perowne feels Baxter got what he deserves but then after a while he feels sorry for him. Perowne goes on to say: 'By saving his life in the operating theatre, Henry also committed Baxter to his torture. Revenge enough.'[77] Perowne saved his life, but he is aware of the fact, that it will not be a long or happy life. And Perowne felt responsible and guilty in a sense. After all, Baxter does not have the beautiful and supportive family, the well-paid job or a nice house that Perowne does. All Baxter has is an incurable disease.

As Gauthier writes, Perowne's decision of not pressing charges against Baxter proves he felt morally obligated to help Baxter in some way and end the violence they caused each other that Saturday.[78] Now they can both move on with their lives, even though they will be very different from each other.

[74] Fertel, "Saturn vs. Hermes: The Battle of the Hemispheres in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 63.
[75] Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 17.
[76] Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 20.
[77] McEwan, *Amsterdam*, 233.
[78] Gauthier, ""Selective in Your Mercies": Privilege, Vulnerability, and the Limits of Empathy in Ian McEwan's Saturday," 25.

7 Solar

This chapter focuses on Ian McEwan's satirical novel *Solar*, which was published in 2010. The protagonist of the novel, Michael Beard, is a middle-aged scientist, who received a Nobel Prize for his work in the early days of his career but since then has struggled to live up to his potential. The novel follows Beard through three years of his life; 2000, 2005 and 2009. The novel deals with Beard's love life, unhealthy lifestyle and his work, more specifically his attempt at finding a solution to climate change.

The novel opens with Beard in his fifties, working as the head of the National Centre for Renewable Energy. He achieved this position thanks to his reputation as a Nobel Prize winner from many years ago rather than for his current work or recent achievements. He no longer has the same passion for physics he had as a young scientist and nowadays spends most of his time giving lectures for considerable amount of money. Beard is struggling in his personal life as well. He finds out that his fifth wife Patrice is cheating on him with a builder named Tarpin. He is furious when he learns about his wife's infidelity even tough Beard himself has had numerous affairs throughout their marriage.

After a humiliating confrontation with Tarpin Beard decides to join an expedition to the Artic to observe the impact of climate change despite him being quite sceptical about the issue. Upon his return, he finds his co-worker Tom Aldous in his living room. Beard's wife Patrice has been having an affair with not only Tarpin but Aldous as well. Beard and Aldous start an argument and Beard threatens to ruin Aldous's career. Aldous, a very passionate scientist deeply interested in climate change, begs Beard to put their differences aside and work together to explore the potential of solar energy. During his plea Aldous slips on a polar bear rug lying on the living room floor and hits his head on the edge of a table. Beard quickly realizes that Aldous is dead and without almost no hesitation decides to frame Tarpin as Aldous's murderer. Everything works out in Beards's favour; Tarpin is arrested and sentenced to prison, he obtains Aldous's research into solar energy and everyone sees him as a pitiful figure.

Next part of the novel takes place in 2005. Michael Beard is again one of the top scientists in the world thanks to the research of Tom Aldous, which Beard got hold of after his accidental death. He has yet another love affair, this time with a younger woman named Melissa. Despite his age and Melissa's love for him he refuses to settle down and start a family with her. However, Melissa is determined to ensure Beard does not leave her and decides to stop taking birth control. Upon realizing she is pregnant, Michael tries to force her to get an abortion but Melissa refuses. Beard's career gets a hit after making some sexist and misogynistic remarks at a conference. He is fired from the government funded National Centre for Renewable Energy but since he is in the possession of Tom Aldous's research into solar energy he does not have much trouble finding sponsors for his promising research.

In the final segment of the novel, which takes place in 2009, Michael Beard is now sixty-two years old. He has a daughter with Melissa named Catriona. However, that does not stop him from having another affair. He has a relationship with a waitress named Darlene in New Mexico, where his solar power plant is being build. Beard is gambling in all aspects of his life. His work is based on stolen research from a dead colleague, he's cheating on the mother of his daughter and his health also deteriorates. Finally, all his mistakes and wrongdoings catch up to him at the very end of the novel. Melissa and Darlene find out about each other and are ready to fight for him. He is accused of stealing Tom Aldous's research. His solar power plant is destroyed by Tarpin as a revenge and he is diagnosed with skin cancer.

Consequent subchapters will deal with specific parts of the novel and the morality and ethical problems Michael Beard is faced with and the way he deals with them and how they shape his character, his work and life.

7.1 Michael Beard and his relationships

From the very start of the novel Michael Beard comes off as highly unlikable character. In the very first sentence of the novel McEwan describes Beard as a 'bald, short, fat, clever' man.[79] Even though Beard is without a doubt a clever man, he prefers to keep living off his Nobel Prize which he won many years ago rather than to continue with research of any kind. He has his prestigious position as the head of the National Centre for Renewable Energy, he gives expensive lectures but that is all the science he is interested in doing at the beginning of the book.

As Ilany Kogan points out, instead of devoting his time and intellect to scientific work, Beard is far more concerned about his complicated love life most of the time.[80] In the first part of the novel, which takes place in 2000, Beard is already on his fifth marriage. Beard is no longer passionately in love with his wife Patrice and is bored of the relationship. However, when he finds out she is having an affair with a man called Rodney Tarpin he has a sudden change of mind. Now that there is someone threating to take his wife away from him he starts to believe that Patrice is the true love of his life. As Shou-Nan Hsu observes, Beard has no guilt about all his extra marital affairs and instead of communicating with his wife about their problems he decides to fake an affair of his own in an attempt to make Patrice jealous. Beard himself can have as many lovers as he wants but he expects absolute faithfulness from all his wives.[81]

Hsu also believes, that Beard is unable to love and care about other human beings. He argues that this inability comes from Beard's parents and their troubled marriage. Beard's mother Angela had many lovers throughout her life as well, which made his father a miserable man. Due to an unhappy situation at home Beard learned to close himself off and put himself and his needs before everything else.[82] Beard's mother confessed to him shortly before dying that she had seventeen different lovers in eleven years. 'Without them, she had told Michael from her hospital pillows, she would have

[79] Ian McEwan, *Solar* (London: Anchor, 2011), 3.
[80] Ilany Kogan, "Ian McEwan's Solar Through A Psychoanalytic Lens," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 60 (2012): 1300.
[81] Shou-Nan Hsu, "Truth, Care, and Action: An Ethics of Peaceful Coexistence in Ian McEwan's Solar," *Papers on Language & Literature* 52 (2016): 330.
[82] Hsu, "Truth, Care, and Action: An Ethics of Peaceful Coexistence in Ian McEwan's Solar," 338.

hated herself and gone mad. But she hated herself anyway for what she thought she had done to her only child.'[83] Michael Beard is only following in his mother's footsteps, having as many lovers as he can. Although, unlike his mother, he made sure none of his marriages resulted in a child, who would suffer from his affairs. Everything changes when Beard suddenly finds himself in the position of his father, he is now the one being cheated on and feeling humiliated.

Kogan also believes Beard's behaviour and his attitude to women is deeply affected by his relationship with his mother. He notes that Beard seems to be continuously searching for a woman, who would replace his mother.[84] Beard is addicted to attention and praise and is deathly afraid of solitude but on the other hand he is unable to commit to anything. As soon as his relationships leave the initial stage, where he's passionately in love and start to get more serious he sabotages them and flees. Beard never shows any remorse or guilt when it comes to his infidelity, his own needs and desires are the only thing that matters to him. The feelings of women he has hurt are secondary.

It does not take Beard long to find another lover after his divorce with Patrice. His new object of desire is Melissa. As Hsu points out, Beard does not treat Melissa any differently than all of his previous lovers. She is more of an object of lust to him than a partner.[85] At one point in the novel Beard even thinks to himself, 'When he thought of her from Berlin or Rome, it was all relation and generalised desire, it was her nature he considered, herself in abstract, and his own pleasure, not the warm honey smell of her scalp, the surprising taut strength in her arms, how low her voice was pitched when she said his name.'[86] Again, Beard completely disregards the feelings of others in pursuit of his own needs and desires.

However, Beard is not satisfied with having a relationship with one woman only. He starts seeing a waitress named Darlene in New Mexico. He does not really care about Darlene, her only purpose is to keep Beard company when he is the USA and 'to

[83] McEwan, *Solar*, 162.
[84] Kogan, "Ian McEwan's Solar Through A Psychoanalytic Lens," 1301.
[85] Hsu, "Truth, Care, and Action: An Ethics of Peaceful Coexistence in Ian McEwan's Solar," 334.
[86] McEwan, Solar, 141.

fulfilled Beard's old fantasy of the grand lowlife'.[87] This all happens while Beard already has a daughter with Melissa. The fact that he is now a father in no way impacts his way of life and behaviour. He does not seem to share his mother's fear of affairs badly affecting the relationship between a parent and a child and the trauma they may cause. For Beard, not even his own daughter comes before his wishes and desires.

7.2 Michael Beard's outlook on climate change

One of the major themes of *Solar* is the issue of climate change. The focus of this subchapter is on Beard's thoughts on the matter, how they change throughout the years and the reasons behind them.

At the very beginning of the novel we are offered a good look on Beard's position on climate change:

> Beard was not wholly sceptical about climate change. It was one in a list of issues, of looming sorrows, that comprised the background to the news, and he read about it, vaguely deplored it and expected governments to meet and take action. […]. But he himself had other things to think about. And he was unimpressed by some of the wild commentary that suggested the world was in 'peril', that humankind was drifting towards calamity, when coastal cities would disappear under the waves, crops fail, and hundreds of millions of refugees surge from one country, one continent, to another, driven by drought, floods, famine, tempests, unceasing wars for diminishing resources.[88]

As Greg Garrard points out, Beard is not really concerned about climate change at the beginning of the novel. He is overtly critical when it comes to the media's warnings about climate change and believes they are greatly exaggerated. He expects the government to deal with the issue and distances himself from it, while he himself works

[87] McEwan, Solar, 203.
[88] McEwan, *Solar*, 17.

for the government as the head of the National Centre for Renewable Energy. [89] But as Stankomir Nicieja observes, the Centre is not as important as it sounds. The fact that they appointed Beard, who has done no scientific research in years, as the head only shows that the Centre's staff in not very concerned about producing any research. Its main purpose is nothing more than to convince the public the government is doing something for the environment.[90]

Beard than goes on to compare the threat of climate change to other supposed threats in history:

> The old world purified by incendiary violence, washed clean by the blood of the unsaved, that was how it had been for Christian millennial sects – death to the unbelievers! And for the Soviet Communists – death to the kulaks! And for the Nazis and their thousand-year fantasy – death to the Jews! And then the truly democratic contemporary equivalent, an all-out nuclear war – death to everyone! When that did not happen, and after the Soviet empire had been devoured by its internal contradictions, and in the absence of any other overwhelming concern beyond boring, intransigent global poverty, the apocalyptic tendency had conjured yet another beast.[91]

Beard believes climate change is an issue, that will simply go away once humanity finds itself another threat to be concerned about. As Evi Zemanek claims, this passage reveals Beard's egoistic tendencies and his apathy towards the fate of the Earth. Also, his attempt to compare the threat of climate change to the absurd threats of Nazis and Soviet communists, whose beliefs have been dismissed and rejected for decades shows his lack of judgement.[92]

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[89] Greg Garrard, "The Unbearable Lightness of Green: Air Travel, Climate Change and Literature," *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 17 (2013): 35.
[90] Stankomir Nicieja, "Forays into the Scientific Mindset: The Two Cultures in Ian McEwan's Saturday and Solar," Crossroads in Literature and Culture 1 (2012): 448.
[91] McEwan, *Solar*, 17.
[92] Evi Zemanek, "A Dirty Hero's Fight for Clean Energy: Satire, Allegory, and Risk Narrative in Ian McEwan's Solar" *Ecozon* 3 (2012): 53.

Beard shows his indifference to the state of the planet yet again later in the novel. 'The Gulf Stream would vanish, Europeans would freeze to death in their beds, the Amazon would be a desert, some continents would catch fire, others would drown, and by 2085 the Arctic summer ice would be gone and the polar bears with it. Beard had heard these predictions before and believed none of them. And if he had, he would not have been alarmed.'[93] Once again, Beard reveals his selfish nature. He is approaching his sixties after all and what happens to the Earth in a few decades will not affect him in any way. Climate change does not have any impact on his life yet so there is no reason for him to care about it.

After he comes into possession of Tom Aldous's research on solar energy Beard seemingly changes his mind about the matter. However, as Hsu points out, his abrupt interest in finding a solution to climate change is not caused by Beard suddenly believing climate change poses a huge threat to humanity. He is in it purely for the money and perhaps to help salvage his dying career.[94]

Later Beard goes on to deliver a speech to a group of potential investors for his future solar based power plant:

> This matter has to move beyond virtue. Virtue is too passive, too narrow. Virtue can motivate individuals, but for groups, societies, a whole civilisation, it's a weak force. Nations are never virtuous, though they might sometimes think they are. For humanity en masse, greed trumps virtue. So we have to welcome into our solutions the ordinary compulsions of self-interest, and also celebrate novelty, the thrill of invention, the pleasures of ingenuity and co-operation, the satisfaction of profit.[95]

He says that humanity is always fuelled by self-interest rather than ethics. He says virtue can only be a driving force for individuals. However, Beard himself is only interested in profit and feels no moral obligation to help deal with climate change. Emily Horton suggests that humanity's and Beard's stances on climate change are very

[93] McEwan, *Solar*, 66.
[94] Hsu, "Truth, Care, and Action: An Ethics of Peaceful Coexistence in Ian McEwan's Solar," 339.
[95] McEwan, *Solar*, 125.

similar. People feel very little ethical responsibility towards preserving the Earth and share Beard's egoistical and selfish nature.[96] The only way to prevent a global catastrophe from happening is to follow in Beard's footsteps and convince investors that clean energy is a highly profitable business. Only by using people's greed can we save the planet.

7.3 Tom Aldous's death

Tom Aldous is a young physicist working for the National Centre for Renewable Energy. Unlike Beard, he is passionate about his work and is devoted to help find a solution for climate change. He's focused on using Beard's Conflation Theory, for which Beard won a Nobel Prize many years ago, to find a way to generate solar energy. Stankomir Nicieja points out, that despite Aldous being the most hard-working and enthusiastic scientist at the Centre, he is disliked by most of his colleagues including Beard. Beard dismisses all of Aldous's ideas and treats him with little to no respect.[97]

When Beard finds about his fifth wife Patrice having an affair with Aldous he is extremely angry. Beard immediately threatens to ruin Aldous's career, as his position at the Centre is Aldous's superior. Aldous tries to reason with Beard and persuade him to focus on their work and how they could benefit from their scientific collaboration. Beard, blinded by rage and feeling humiliated, does not listen to anything Aldous is saying. While Aldous is begging Beard not to destroy everything he has worked on, he slips on a rug and hits his head on a glass table. As Kogan observes, Beard does not perform first aid, call the ambulance or try to help Aldous in any way.[98] Instead, he almost immediately decides to frame Patrice's other lover Tarpin as Aldous's murderer. He will get his revenge on Tarpin for sleeping with his wife and he will make sure he is not a suspect himself. Beard does not feel guilty at all, justifying his actions by convincing himself Tarpin deserves to go to prison for physically abusing his wife.

[96] Horton, Contemporary Crisis Fictions: Affect and Ethics in the Modern British Novel, 150.
[97] Nicieja, "Forays into the Scientific Mindset: The Two Cultures in Ian McEwan's Saturday and Solar," 448.
[98] Kogan, "Ian McEwan's Solar Through A Psychoanalytic Lens," 1305.

Beard is questioned by the police numerous times but as Greg Garrard points out, as a scientist and a Nobel Prize winner, he quickly gains the trust and respect of the police.[99] Everything goes according to his plan and Tarpin is arrested and sentenced to prison. Beard does not regret his actions at any point and does not seem to feel guilty at all. When he comes into possession of Aldous's research he quickly uses it for his own gain, justifying it by saying: 'What could precedence or originality mean to the dead?'[100] Everything worked out perfectly for Beard. He got rid of his wife's two lovers and acquired valuable research, which will bring him glory and wealth.

Throughout the novel Beard is forced to make a life changing decision several times and seems to choose the morally wrong one almost every time. He cheats on his wife, he doesn't offer any help to injured Aldous, he frames an innocent man for Aldous's murder, he steals Aldous's research and cheats once again on the mother of his only daughter. It is no surprise when all his mistakes catch up to him in the end. He is accused of the theft of Aldous's research, his grand solar power plant is destroyed, his lovers find out about each other and he is diagnosed with skin cancer.

[99] Garrard, "The Unbearable Lightness of Green: Air Travel, Climate Change and Literature," 36.
[100] McEwan, *Solar*, 156.

8 Conclusion

The first part of this bachelor thesis offered a brief look on Ian McEwan, one of the most popular and critically acclaimed English author. McEwan is mostly known for his novels in which he predominantly focuses on exceptional individual, who often find themselves in morally challenging situations.

The second chapter of this thesis in short dealt with the term morality. In the most basic definition morality is understood as the conflict between what is the right or wrong thing to do. It is a topic, which has been discussed by philosophers for centuries. Including famous philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume.

The third theoretical chapter gave an overview of three other English novelists, who were also concerned with morality in their works. First there is Charles Dickens, perhaps one of the most well-known British authors. In his works, such as Oliver Twist or Hard Times, he criticizes the Victorian society and their immoral values. Similar issues can be found in the works of female authors, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell.

The following three chapter provided analyses of three selected novels by Ian McEwan. The first novel was *Amsterdam*, a story about a newspaper editor and a composer. They make a series of unwise decisions, which lead to their ultimate demise. They both chose their careers over what was morally right, according to the contemporary society's standards of morality.

The next discussed novel was *Saturday*. This novel takes place in one day in the life of a neurosurgeon Henry Perowne. He abuses his power as a doctor to escape a dangerous situation. Later on in the novel, he makes another morally ambiguous decision, when he throws an invader down the stairs. Ultimately, he chooses the moral high ground when he saves the intruders life on the operating table.

The last analysis was of McEwan's novel *Solar*. The novel's protagonist Michael Beard is a middle-aged scientist, who lives off of his fame as a Nobel Prize winner. He

has little to no respect for others, as he cheats on his wives and girlfriends, he frames an innocent man for a murder and steals his dead colleague's research. His actions and decisions lead to him losing everything in both his personal and professional life.

Ian McEwan often puts his characters in uncomfortable positions and forces them to make difficult decisions. They frequently must choose between doing the right thing or advancing their own careers. He, as an author, does not judge his own characters and their choices. It is up to the readers to decide, whether the characters chose the right or wrong path.

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10 Résumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá moralitou v románech Iana McEwana. Po představení autora je rozebrána moralita, její definice a historie ve filozofii. Další kapitola pojednává o třech významných viktoriánských autorech, Charlesi Dickensovi, George Eliot a Elizabeth Gaskell, kteří se zabývali moralitou ve svých dílech. Následuje rozbor tří románů od Ian McEwana; Amsterdam, Saturday a Solar. Je analyzováno chování a činy hlavních postav a jejich vztah k moralitě a morálnímu cítění.

11 Annotation

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Abstract: This thesis is concerned with morality in selected works of Ian McEwan. The work primarily focuses on the novels *Amsterdam*, *Saturday* and *Solar*. The thesis offers an analysis of the actions and behaviour of the protagonists of said novels.

12 Anotace

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Abstrakt: Tato práce se zabývá moralitou ve vybraných dílech Iana McEwana. Práce je zaměřena na romány *Amsterdam*, *Saturday* a *Solar*. V práci je analyzováno chování a jednání hlavních postav již zmíněných románů.