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GABRIELA NOVOTNÁ

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**IAN MCEWAN'S ATONEMENT: COMPARISON OF
THE NOVEL AND THE FILM ADAPTATION**

Bakalářská práce

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím literatury a pramenů uvedených v bibliografii.

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OBSAH

ABSTRACT	5
INTRODUCTION	6
1 IAN MCEWAN	8
2 ATONEMENT	11
2.1 THE NOVEL.....	11
2.2 THE FILM ADAPTATION.....	12
3 THE PLOT	15
4 COMPARISON OF THE CHARACTERS	17
4.1 BRIONY TALLIS	17
4.2 CECILIA TALLIS.....	20
4.3 ROBBIE TURNER.....	22
4.4 EMILY TALLIS	24
5 THE FORM OF NARRATIVE	28
6 FORESHADOWING AND METANARRATIVE	30
6.1 FORESHADOWING.....	30
6.2 METANARRATIVE.....	31
6.3 FORESHADOWING AND METANARRATIVE IN THE FILM ADAPTATION.....	32
7 THE TRIALS OF ARABELLA	35
8 THE PORTRAYAL OF THE WAR IN THE NOVEL AND THE FILM	37
8.1 IAN MCEWAN'S PORTRAYAL OF WWII.....	37
8.2 JOE WRIGHT'S PORTRAYAL OF WWII	38
9 COMPARISON OF THE EPILOGUE	41
CONCLUSION	43
SOURCES	45

ABSTRACT

In my thesis I focus on the comparison of Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* and the film adaptation of the same title directed by Joe Wright and written by Christopher Hampton. The thesis deals with the key differences and similarities of the main characters as well as the structure and narrative of both the novel and the film, and the story as a whole. A short chapter about Ian McEwan's life and literary work and an introduction to *Atonement* are also provided.

INTRODUCTION

Even though I had been previously introduced to Ian McEwan's literary work, my first encounter with *Atonement* was through the film adaptation by Joe Wright. Being a fan of British cinema and the topic of WWII in the film and literature, *Atonement* caught my attention enough to look up the novel as well. It helped me to understand some of the motives of the main characters on a deeper level and view the entire story a little bit differently. I found McEwan's style of writing and his ability to create a story within a story impressive and the novel immediately became one of my favourite books.

The main objective of the thesis is to find and analyse the key differences between the novel and the film adaptation, to compare the form and the style of narrative, evaluate to what extent the original story has been transferred to the screen and finally to provide general information about both, the novel and the film.

The thesis consists of nine main chapters, some of them further divide into subchapters. The first chapter provides information about the author of the novel Ian McEwan and includes a short biography and bibliography.

The second chapter concentrates on general information about the novel and the film adaptation of *Atonement*, such as the success of both and the casting of the film. Book and film reviews from various critics are also provided.

In the next chapter, the major themes of the novel are mentioned and a brief summary of the plot is provided.

The fourth chapter is focused on the characters, specifically Briony, Cecilia, Robbie and Emily. Their characters are introduced and the book and film versions of these characters are compared.

The next chapter contains comparison of the form of narrative used in both, the novel and the film, whether the film version differs or whether it follows the book original.

The sixth chapter concentrates on the foreshadowing and metanarrative used in *Atonement*. It is divided into three subchapters – two of them focused on foreshadowing and metanarrative used in the novel and finally a subchapter dealing with the film usage of both elements.

The chapter called “Trials of Arabella” focuses on Briony’s play and deals with its importance and most importantly meaning in the novel.

In the next chapter, the portrayal of the WWII in the film and its portrayal in the novel are compared. Some extra information about filming the Dunkirk scene is also provided.

The final chapter concentrates on the epilogue of the book and the film and compares the two in terms of visual appearance and subject matter.

1 IAN MCEWAN

The following chapter introduces the author of the novel. The information about his early life and family background is provided. His other literary work is also included in this chapter to point out the success of McEwan and the diversity of his work.

Ian McEwan is an English professional writer who has been active for almost forty years. Although he is mostly famous for his novels, his work also includes short stories, books for children and few screenplays, including *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983), *The Last Day of Summer* (1984) and *The Good Son* (1993) starring Elijah Wood and Macaulay Culkin (IMDb).

Ian Russell McEwan was born on June 21st 1948 in the military town of Aldershot, England to Rose and David McEwan. His mother's first husband died during World War II, leaving her with two children. Ian McEwan's father has joined the British army in the 1930s due to unemployment in Glasgow and became a sergeant major. He married Ian's mother Rose after the war. Ian McEwan spent the early years of his life on English military basis and later in Libya and Singapore (Malcolm, 2002, p. 1)

McEwan received his BA degree in English literature in at the University of Sussex in 1970 (Roberts, 2014). During his studies, he started writing short stories and decided to become a writer (Malcolm, 2002, p. 2). After his graduation he took the opportunity to continue with his studies and received his MA degree at the University of East Anglia (Roberts, 2014).

His literary career started in 1975 when his short stories were published under the title *First Love, Last Rites*. In 1976, Ian McEwan was awarded the Somerset Maugham Award for this collection (Roberts, 2014).

In 1978, he published another collection of short stories titled *In Between the Sheets* and his first, hugely successful but also quite shocking novel *The Cement Garden*. The story of four siblings that bury their dead mother in cement in the basement of their house and live on their own touches few controversial topics, including incest between a fifteen years old brother and his two years older sister (McEwan, 2006). The novel was later adapted into a motion picture (1993) (IMDb).

After the success of his debut, McEwan continued writing novels. In 1981 *The Comfort of Strangers* was published followed by *The Child In Time* (1987), *The Innocent* (1990), *Black Dogs* (1992), *Enduring Love* (1997), *Amsterdam* (1998), *Atonement* (2001), *Saturday* (2005), *On Chesil Beach* (2007), *Solar* (2010) and his most recent novel called *Sweet Tooth* that was published in 2012 (Roberts, 2014). According to Patrick Henry (2008, p. 76), the dark themes such as violence or incest in his novels, specifically *The Cement Garden*, *The Comfort Strangers* and *The Innocent*, earned McEwan a nickname “Ian Macabre”.

Even though Ian McEwan became a worldwide respected and acclaimed author for his novels, his bibliography contains numerous different forms and genres as well. In the 80's, he wrote a play called *The Imitation Game* (1981), screenplays for the films *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1985) and *Sour Sweet* (1988) and an oratorio titled *Or Shall We die?* (1983). In 1994, he published his children's book called *The Daydreamer* and fourteen years later he wrote a libretto *For You* (Roberts, 2014).

McEwan often projects his own life experiences into his literary work. For example in *Atonement*, he utilizes his knowledge of WWII to a certain extent for writing the second part of the novel. Some of McEwan's character features can be applied to the central character Briony, too. For instance, they are both the youngest children in their families, and they are both talented writers with great imagination.

To sum up, readers from all over the world have followed McEwan's literary career for almost forty years. Even though his novels are often full of heavy psychological and sometimes disturbing themes, they became popular among all generations of people and made McEwan one of the head figures of modern British literature. His varied work includes titles such as *The Cement Garden*, *Enduring Love* or *Atonement*. The latter features a theme of the second world war which is a topic close to McEwan and his background.

2 ATONEMENT

This chapter contains general information about the novel and the film *Atonement*, such as the critical response, received awards and the overall success of both.

2.1 The novel

The following text provides basic information about *Atonement* – the novel, such as the publishing date and the success of the book worldwide.

Atonement was published in 2001 as Ian McEwan's eleventh book. It has won numerous literary awards, such as the W. H. Smith Literary Award in 2002, the National Book Critics' Circle Fiction Award and the LA Times Prize for Fiction in 2003 and the Santiago Prize for the European Novel in 2004. According to the article published in Daily Mail Online in August 2012 by Geordie Greig, *Atonement* has sold over four million copies and became McEwan's most famous novel.

The novel was acclaimed by numerous literary critics. The chief book critic for The Boston Globe (2002) Gail Caldwell writes in her review: "The opening pages of Ian McEwan's resplendent novel possess such depth and graceful certainty that they remind one of what fiction used to do, and occasionally still does. *Atonement* is magisterial, but it's devilishly sly about its authority, ensnaring you with the even-handed confidence of early [Evelyn] Waugh and the penetrating exactitude of [Henry] James." Michael Pakenham from The Sun (2002) praises the novel, calling it a "masterwork, a novel of artistry, power and truth that puts it among the most extraordinary works of fiction of the last decade."

2.2 The film adaptation

This part focuses on the film adaptation from 2007. It contains basic information about the director and the cast as well as the awards the film has received after its premiere. It also includes film review extracts taken from various sources.

The success of the book has brought the attention of filmmakers who turned this popular novel into a hugely successful film in 2007. *Atonement* directed by Joe Wright, the director of the new adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), was nominated for seven Academy Awards including Best Picture. It won one for Best Original Score.

Atonement became a crucial point in the life of Saoirse Ronan, who stunningly plays the youngest version of Briony Tallis. She was nominated for a Golden Globe and an Academy Award at the age of fourteen for this picture. The characters of Robbie and Cecilia are portrayed by the well-known British actors James McAvoy and Keira Knightley. Joe Wright stated in an interview published by Daily Motion in 2012 that Knightley, who has previously co-operated with him on the set of *Pride and Prejudice*, was originally offered the part of Briony. However, the director agreed she should play Cecilia after she had shown a serious interest in this particular character.

The nineteen-year-old Briony is played by Romola Garai and the oldest Briony is played by the legendary English actress Vanessa Redgrave. The characters of Lola, Paul Marshall and Emily Tallis were given to Juno Temple, Benedict Cumberbatch and Harriet Walter respectively.

To adapt a book that is nearly four hundred pages long into a high-quality film is undoubtedly a challenge. However, the director John Wright and Christopher Hampton, the author of the screenplay, did a genuinely decent job. Overall, *Atonement* could be rated as one of the best book-to-screen adaptations. Peter Bradshaw from The Guardian (2007) wrote: “Hampton and director Joe Wright have certainly done McEwan proud with this lavish and spectacular screen version: they are really thinking big, in every sense, and the result is exhilarating.” Helen O’Hara from Empire (2007) agrees and rates the film as “unmissable”. According to her, Joe Wright’s *Atonement* is “an adaptation at least as good as the novel - complex, delicate and devastating. Gorgeous cinematography, a lilting score and near-faultless performances.” The Journal (2007) however thinks the film despite its perfect production design “doesn’t quite stir the heart as deeply as McEwan’s novel.”

When McEwan spoke with Word & Film (2011) about adapting his novels to film, he revealed that his favourite adaptation is *The Cement Garden* from 1993. He thought the adaptation of *Atonement* was “quite remarkable, given it was a fairly commercial kind of budget, a large budget. And large budgets are often quite distractive of contents of literary sources.” He also stated that especially the first half of the film was well adapted.

The critical response to Ian McEwan’s book is generally positive. The numerous literary awards the novel has received are indisputable evidence of that. The opinions on Joe Wright’s film adaptation differ. The comparison with the original book is unavoidable. However, majority of film critics praise the film as a very good book-to-

screen adaptation and the worldwide success of the film, in terms of awards and profit, proves them right.

3 THE PLOT

In this chapter, the main plot of the novel is revealed and the main characters are briefly introduced. The first paragraph describes the book in terms of themes, the following two paragraphs explain the content of the story itself.

For its structure and means of narration, *Atonement* is classified as a postmodern fiction (Lynn, 2007, p. 51). The title itself implies that the major theme of the novel is atonement, guilt as a consequence of an action the main character did as a young girl. The other major themes of the book are forgiveness, the loss of innocence, perception, social differences and war, which makes a significant part of the story (Gradesaver). James McAvoy, who plays Robbie in the film version, describes *Atonement* as a “story of a lie. And how that lie unfolds, and affects people“ (Rea, 2007).

The story begins in 1935. A thirteen-year-old aspiring writer with a great imagination Briony Tallis prepares a play for her older brother who is coming home for the weekend along with his friend. Briony annoyed by her cousins who are supposed to help her with the play goes to her room and sees a peculiar scene from the window. Her older sister Cecilia and her childhood friend Robbie are standing by the fountain in the garden, when suddenly Cecilia undresses and jumps in the fountain. Briony misreads the entire situation and assumes Robbie is being aggressive towards Cecilia. Her false assumptions and strong belief that Robbie is a dangerous man later intensify when Briony walks in on him and Cecilia making love in the library and interprets it as a sexual assault. During a dinner party organized by Emily Tallis the two younger cousins are found to be missing. As Briony goes search for them, she finds their fifteen-year-old sister Lola instead. Lola is

lying on the ground crying and Briony quickly understands she was raped. Briony's intense hatred for Robbie makes her falsely accuse him of the crime. Her testimony is convincing enough for the police to arrest Robbie immediately.

In the next two parts, the story follows Robbie, Briony and also Cecilia dealing with the consequences of Briony's fatal mistake. Robbie becomes a soldier in WWII while Cecilia, who has distanced herself from her family after the incident, becomes a nurse at a hospital. Even though being apart for a long time, the two maintain their mutual love and plan a future together. The grown up Briony following her sister's steps also becomes a trainee nurse. Now fully aware of her mistakes, she tries to redeem herself by helping others either in person or in her writing. She is utterly determined to fix her sins from the past.

In the following chapters I will be focusing on the most significant differences and similarities between Ian McEwan's novel and Joe Wright's film. Firstly, the book and the film versions of the main characters will be compared.

4 COMPARISON OF THE CHARACTERS

In the following four chapters, I will be focusing on the characters of Briony, Cecilia, Robbie and Emily. Each of these chapters will be dealing with the way the novel portrays the characters and whether they have been successfully adapted in the film. The first chapter introduces the character of Briony.

4.1 Briony Tallis

This chapter is focused on the character of Briony Tallis and her portrayal in both, the novel and the film. In spite of the fact that the first and the second part of the novel hugely focus on Robbie and Cecilia, Briony is the true protagonist of the novel. She is by far the most complex character of the novel and the film.

The film adaptations often partially lack the depth of the characters. In case of *Atonement*, the motives of the characters which are rather obvious in the book might not seem that evident on screen. As a result, Briony's character specifically is put in a bad light and might seem less sympathetic throughout the film until the end where she makes her confession. We can only see her actions without being given any real explanation for what is happening in Briony's head which slightly degrades her character.

Briony's vivid imagination as well as loss of innocence is very important part of *Atonement*. While McEwan provides us with large paragraphs of Briony's inner thoughts, Joe Wright had to use different methods to express the character's thinking.

For example, during the crucial scene by the fountain, Briony's imagination forces her to come up with numerous different scenarios of what the scene might mean. At first, she wonders if Robbie is proposing to Cecilia in a dramatic way, few moments later she starts thinking he is threatening her judging solely by his hand movements. However, the absence of a voice-over in the film makes it more difficult for viewers to figure out what is on her mind, despite Saoirse Ronan's brilliant acting. For that reason, Joe Wright added a short scene in the film, where Briony puts her thoughts on the paper in form of another tale.

Another example would be the part where Briony read Robbie's letter to Cecilia and misinterprets it. Unlike the film, the book provides us with a detailed description of Briony's stream of thoughts, therefore we can easily understand her further motives. Briony comes to a realization that she is no longer a child which leads her to analysing the situation more than she should. She is utterly shocked and disgusted by Robbie's choice of words and convinces herself that he must be a bad person. In reality, it is jealousy that drives Briony's hatred towards Robbie as it is discovered later via Robbie's memories. However, she also feels protective over Cecilia and her family. Briony is completely aware of the fact that people are not either utterly good or utterly bad, nevertheless her current disappointment and heartbreak, which is even intensified after Briony catches Cecilia *in flagrante* with Robbie in the library, is stronger than her beliefs which leads to tragic consequences.

The third part of the film does not differ from the original very much. It shows Briony becoming an adult, facing her old sins and taking responsibilities. The film does not *sugarcoat* the reality of the war. On the contrary, the war is not portrayed less harshly

in this part than is it in the previous one. Briony's experiences from hospital are pictured in the film as well as they are in the novel. Hampton did not forget to include details such as the head nurse scolding Briony for using her first name. As a result of this, Briony realizes that she is no longer the centre of attention but simply nobody in the hospital.

Nonetheless, there is one particular scene which was excluded from the film. The nineteen year old Briony can be seen writing a novel called "Two Figures By The Fountain" in the film. However, in the novel, we discover she has already written a novella of this title and sent it to a newspaper. Briony gets a letter in which she is told Two Figures By The Fountain were declined for print. The editor calls her style too similar to Virginia Woolf's which can be considered as an element of self-reflexivity since McEwan's own postmodern style used in *Atonement* is sometimes compared to Woolf's modernism (Hidalgo, 2005, p. 87). As stated earlier (see Chapter 1.), McEwan projected some of his own features into the character of Briony.

The epilogue of the book consists for the most part of Briony's monologue. The setting the filmmakers chose to put this part in differs significantly from the one in the novel. Nevertheless, the substance remained the same. The epilogue is closely dealt with farther in the thesis (see Chapter 9.).

Overall, Briony's character is perfectly portrayed in the film by all three actresses, although Saoirse Ronan's Briony moderately stands out. The character herself is however slightly degraded by the lack of inner monologues which make a huge part of the novel. The motives might not seem as clear and obvious without an added voice-over, therefore the film version of Briony might give an impression of an unsympathetic girl in the first half of the film.

4.2 Cecilia Tallis

In this chapter, Cecilia Tallis' character is introduced and the main differences between the book and the film versions of Cecilia are emphasized. It also deals with the question whether the character have been successfully adapted to the film.

Cecilia is one of the three main characters of *Atonement*. In the novel, chapters two, four and nine are narrated from her point of view. However, Cecilia is heavily featured throughout the entire story, and although the last two parts are narrated from Robbie and Briony's perspectives, she plays an important role in both of them, too.

In the book, Cecilia is described as a twenty-three-year-old woman who just graduated from Cambridge and returned home for summer. She feels bored at her family house and a little bit useless, too. However, her sense of commitment and also Robbie, as she soon realizes, keeps her stay at her family mansion instead of going to live in a big city. Her mother views her as a wannabe independent intellectual without proper manners for a young lady. Cecilia, on the other hand, longs to have normal mother-daughter conversations with her mother despite Emily's hostility. At the beginning, it is apparent Cecilia maintains good relationships with her family, especially her older brother, and desires to be helpful to them.

On the other hand, the film does not explore Cecilia's character and her relationships with other family members nearly as much as the book. Specifically her dysfunctional relationship with Emily is completely omitted from the film, even though it is her mother via whom we learn more about Cecilia's past and her personality (see Chapter 4.4.). On the contrary, the film depicts Cecilia as a snobbish and cold from the

beginning. Christopher Tookey from Mail Online (2007) describes Knightley's Cecilia as "brittle" and "unpleasant" and according to him, she stays unsympathetic until the end. Paul Hurley from Talk Talk.co.uk., on the other hand, rates Knightley's performance as a "sublime mix of posh and beautiful unattainability."

The film mostly concentrates on Cecilia's romance with Robbie. Their relationship has been transferred to the screen rather faithfully. Yet Christopher Hampton left out some moments that nicely depict Cecilia's true personality. For example in the book, Cecilia is denying her feelings for Robbie at the beginning. However, when she is dressing up for the family dinner party which is supposed to be attended by Robbie, it takes her a very long time to pick the right dress. This manifests Cecilia's anxiety and insecurity which are hidden under her seemingly tough exterior.

Cecilia and Robbie's relationship stands in the centre in the film and it is overall well written. The dialogues and monologues which the novel is abounding with are often replaced by long glances and the natural chemistry between the actors. James McAvoy and Keira Knightley manage to express Robbie and Cecilia's feelings merely by their facial expressions. Peter Travers from The Rolling Stone (2007) calls them "heaven-sent acting partners" in his review of *Atonement*. This can be demonstrated on the scene in the café when they meet for the first time since Robbie's arrest. The initial awkwardness between them is perfectly acted and we can easily recognize the emotions they feel without any dialogue.

In conclusion, Cecilia's character as written by Christopher Hampton partially lacks depth. As Tookey points out, she is portrayed as a haughty young woman and even though her softer side shows in the second half of the film, she remains significantly less

sympathetic than Robbie's character. On the other hand, unlike Briony, Cecilia's actions never leave the viewers in a state of confusion. Despite not having a chance to peek into her mind, her actions are rather clear and obvious to them from the beginning until the end. The credit for this can be claimed not only by the screenwriter Christopher Hampton but also Keira Knightley who's "star has never shone this brightly" (Travers, 2007).

4.3 Robbie Turner

In this chapter, I will be dealing with the character of Robbie Turner and his position in the story. Robbie is along with Briony and Cecilia the main character in the story. Chapters eight and eleven of part one are dedicated to this character as well as the entire second part of the book.

Both the novel and the film show Robbie as a pleasant son of a poor housekeeper, he stands in a contrast to wealthy yet icy Cecilia. Social class plays a big part in Robbie's life, especially in connection to the Tallis family. He grew up with the Tallis children and spent a large part of his childhood at their house. Thanks to their father who paid for Robbie's studies, Robbie got a high-quality education. It is mentioned many times in the book what kind of books he has read and the reader is constantly reminded of Robbie's intelligence. His lower class status is however not forgotten by himself or anyone from the Tallis family.

The film is missing a scene where Robbie takes off his shoes and socks before entering the Tallis house. Cecilia immediately assumes that he is only "playacting the cleaning lady's son come to the big house on an errand," (McEwan, 2003, p. 30) while in

reality it is not a question of social class that makes him do that, but simply the fact that he thought his socks were too bad looking and smelly.

It is also Robbie's social status that causes Robbie is arrested in the end of part one. Neither Emily, nor Leon question Briony's accusation, even though they have known Robbie since he was a child. Paul Marshall as a man from the upper class is not even considered as the true attacker. This can be seen in the film in a scene where Robbie's mother runs after the police car screaming "Liars!" (McEwan, 2003, p. 161) while Emily, Leon and Paul Marshall stand in front of the house silently watching the car leaving. On the other hand, it is Robbie and Cecilia who are certain it was Danny Hardman, also a boy from the lower class, who raped Lola, and they are both surprised when Briony tells them the truth.

The film nicely shows the differences in social statuses and ranks, even though not to the same extent as the book. In the second part of the film, Robbie travels with two other soldiers who are of higher military rank than him but decide to follow Robbie because of his good sense of direction and ability to speak French. One of them calls him a "toff" (Wright, 2007) assuming he comes from the upper class. Unlike in the novel, Robbie reveals he was in prison to his companions in the film, yet they keep calling him "guv" (Wright, 2007) and follow his lead.

The added scene at the end of the film, which as we find out is a product of Briony's imagination, shows Robbie and Cecilia living in a small humble house by the sea away from the Tallis family and all the social differences. This scene represents the happy ending Robbie and Cecilia wished to have but never got.

In my opinion, the character of Robbie was well adapted to the film. Except for few scenes, such as the one mentioned above where he takes off his shoes when coming to the Tallis house, Christopher Hampton managed to put in the script all important parts and sides of Robbie's character. Just like in the book, he gives an impression of an almost flawless hero. However, this was a problem for the actor James McAvoy, who said in an interview for Los Angeles Times: "I thought he was a little bit too good, too bold, too complete and too undamaged. As an actor, I've always used conflict for every character I've played and there was none there and that terrified me. It wasn't until I accepted the reality of that, that someone like that might exist, that I started being able to play the character properly. It took me a little while in rehearsals to bed that down and get over my desire to make him have an edge or be interesting from the inside out, instead of otherwise" (Salisbury, 2007).

To conclude this chapter, social class plays an important part in Robbie Turner's storyline in the novel and in the film. It is brought up several times throughout the book and it is well pictured in the film as well. Even though the film is missing some interesting details, Robbie's character was adapted to screen rather faithfully.

4.4 Emily Tallis

The chapter deals with the character Emily Tallis and her portrayal in both, the novel and the film. It is mostly focused on comparison of both versions, her personality and relationships with other characters.

Emily Tallis, the mother to Leon, Cecilia and Briony is perhaps the most neglected character in the film adaptation. In spite of the fact that she is not as important

as Briony, Robbie or Cecilia for the development of the story, compared to the film, her character takes a noticeably more space in the novel.

On the other hand, Emily's perspective mostly provides us with better understanding of Tallis family as a whole, which could be comprehended as the main purpose of this character.

Moreover, the reader gets primarily acquainted with Emily through her memories and thoughts rather than actions, thus the lack of her in the film adaptation.

In the novel, chapter six and chapter twelve are narrated from Emily's point of view. We discover Emily's husband Jack is hardly ever around meaning she has to maintain the household on her own. Emily frequently suffers from migraines, which often keeps her from taking care of her family. Her conservatism makes her criticize her oldest daughter Cecilia, who bothers her with her "pretensions to solitude, and smoking in the bedroom, and her improbable nostalgia for a time barely concluded" (McEwan, 2003, p. 60). Moreover, Cecilia admires her "bluestocking teachers—the ones with silly nicknames and 'fearsome' reputations" (McEwan, 2003, p. 60), while according to Emily, she should find a husband and start a family. McEwan makes it clear, however, that she is "not remotely jealous". On the other hand, in the part of the novel where Cecilia persuades her mother to serve roast for dinner, we can see the influence she can have on Emily.

Unfortunately, the relationship between Cecilia and Emily is almost non-existent in the film. They hardly interact, therefore the viewer cannot see the attitude Emily Tallis holds towards her daughter.

In comparison with Cecilia, Emily often treats Briony with favour. She is aware of her vivid imagination and she supports everything Briony does. It is stated Briony was born when her mother was thirty-four and Emily finds the daily round of taking care of little children soothing. Watching Briony maturing makes Emily desire for another child.

Emily's motherly love for Briony is quite obvious at the beginning of the film. Briony is looking for her mother in order to give her the play to read as first. Emily who is always supporting of her writing praises the play, raising Briony's self-esteem. Emily's immense love for Briony is also one of the reasons for Robbie's arrest in the end of the part one. Despite knowing how vivid Briony's imagination is, she fully trusts her when she accuses Robbie of raping Lola. Moreover, she encourages Briony during her interrogation with the words "Well done, darling", no doubting her testimony at all.

Emily Tallis' relationship with her sister Hermione was left out from the film as well. We can see Emily being annoyed by her nephews while she is having one of her frequent migraines and also during the dinner scene where she scolds Lola for wearing lipstick. However it is not said why Emily's attitude is so reserved toward her niece and nephews. In the novel we find out that Emily has never been close with her sister Hermione - mother to Lola, Jackson and Pierrot, since they were little children. Emily dislikes that Hermione has always been the centre of attention and she sees the same qualities in Lola. After Briony tells her Lola was hurt by the twins, Emily tries to comfort her. However, it is resentment and not pity that Emily feels towards her niece. "It was her sister Hermione she was soothing – Hermione, stealer of scenes, little mistress of histrionics, whom she pressed against her breasts" (McEwan, 2003, p. 128).

The chapters narrated from Emily's perspective in the novel are not only interesting but they also help us to understand and get to know the other characters better. Her thoughts and memories serve as a good source of information, yet the film completely leaves them out. As a result, the viewer does not find out the truth behind Emily's cold behaviour towards Cecilia or her poor opinion on Lola.

5 THE FORM OF NARRATIVE

The following chapter deals with the structure, the narrative and the differences and similarities between the film version and the original text.

The novel is divided into three major parts plus an epilogue. The first part is further parted into fourteen chapters. Unlike the first part, the second and the third part do not include numbered chapters as they are narrated from one person's point of view.

The film adaptation faithfully follows the book structure, particularly the division of the novel into four blocks. According to the screenwriter Christopher Hampton, interviewed by Moira MacDonald (2007), the original draft was more linear than the final one and included a voice-over narration. Hampton decided to change the script after the director of the film Joe Wright told him to. "Joe said, just as an exercise, try taking the voice-over out and see if you can find the right imagery to convey what the voice-over says without having it, because it's in danger of being such a hackneyed device. So I did, and I think it's better for it."

However, the postmodern features such as metanarrative make the whole narration of the novel more complex. The omniscient narrator interferes in the story in several ways (see Chapter 6.), which is not present in the film adaptation.

Most of the chapters in the first part of the novel are narrated from several different points of view without being repeated. However, some major scenes, such as the one by the fountain or the one in the library, are described twice in order to show the readers how one scene can be viewed from two different points of view. The non-linear structure might have seemed rather challenging to the filmmakers, nevertheless their

unconventional decision to include the character point of view switching paid off. In my opinion, the narrative works and it is not any more confusing than it is in the novel.

6 FORESHADOWING AND METANARRATIVE

This chapter deals with the clues and hints the author provides us with, that might help us predict the actions further in the plot. McEwan's use of metafiction is also covered, as well as the way the film adaptation deals with these clues.

6.1 Foreshadowing

Unlike the screenwriter Christopher Hampton, Ian McEwan gives us clues for the plot from the beginning. The short extract from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* can be considered as the first clue. It is not a coincidence McEwan decided to put this text prior to the story:

„Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland what ideas have you been admitting?' They had reached the end of the gallery; and with tears of shame she ran off to her own room.” (McEwan, 2003)

The similarity between Catherine Morland of *Northanger Abbey* and Briony Tallis is obvious. They have both vivid imagination and a tendency to romanticize reality,

influenced by the literary work they read. Furthermore, they both falsely accuse innocent people of committing crime. Nevertheless, there are quite different consequences of their actions. Unlike the thirteen year old Briony, though, Catherine is stopped by Henry Tilney, as stated in the extract above, who makes her feel ashamed for her erroneous assumptions (Shmoop literature guide). Briony's decisions, on the other hand, cause a series of tragic events and change lives of numerous people, including her own.

There are a few other clues that foreshadow the crime included in the story as well. In the very end of the eleventh chapter, we find out that Robbie would be heavily included in the incident, as it is said that his decision to look for the lost twins on his own would change his whole life. The line in the beginning of chapter thirteen: "Within the half hour Briony would commit her crime" (McEwan, 2003, p. 136) specifically prepares the reader for the plot twist that is about to happen.

McEwan is not sparing in terms of foreshadowing and clues. There are a number of them throughout the entire novel, making the reader wonder and guess the plot twists which are coming farther in the story.

6.2 Metanarrative

Oxford English Dictionary describes metanarrative as "any narrative which is concerned with the idea of storytelling, spec. one which alludes to the other narratives, or refers to itself and to its own artifice."

Ian McEwan's use of metanarrative as one of the postmodernist features makes the reader question the true narrator of the whole story. For example, in chapter three, right after Briony sees the quarrel between Robbie and Cecilia by the fountain, it is

directly stated that Briony would become a famous writer and she would publish a novel about her own life: “Six decades later she would describe how at the age of thirteen she had written her way through a whole history of literature, beginning with stories derived from the European tradition of folktales, through drama with simple moral intent, to arrive at an impartial psychological realism which she had discovered for herself, one special morning during a heat wave in 1935” (McEwan, 2003, p. 40). She also thinks about writing the scene from three different points of view.

Another example of metanarrative used by McEwan can be found in the part where the nineteen-year-old Briony receives a letter from the publisher in which he rejects her novel. Therefore, we get to learn that Briony has already attempted to write a story about the fountain incident, implying she might be the actual author of the entire story.

The fact that Briony is the real narrator of the story is revealed at the end of the third part where the initials “BT” and the year 1999 are put at the bottom. As Harold (2005, p. 138) points out, the reader comes to the conclusion gradually.

McEwan leaves clues in several places in the book which make the readers question the true narrator and eventually lead them to realization that the whole story is a product of the main character’s imagination. He creates a story within another story as it is revealed at the very end. The elements of metanarrative occur in more than one place in the book.

6.3 Foreshadowing and metanarrative in the film adaptation

This part focuses on the way the film adaptation deals with the foreshadowing and the metanarrative that occur in the novel and evaluates to what extent the filmmakers managed to bring them to the screen.

Christopher Hampton used the unexpected plot twists to surprise the viewers without giving them any clues in advance. However, the exposure of the criminal is not as surprising as the crime itself. In spite of the fact that Danny Hardman's character is used to confuse the viewers' minds by watching Lola with interest, it can easily be assumed it was Paul Marshall's character who committed the crime before Briony confirms it later in the story. Paul Marshall as portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch is more *sleazy* and *likely to be the criminal* than the one from the novel, as he is watching Lola more intensely and talking to her in a slightly more subtle way.

Nevertheless, the big revelation at the end of the film is far more shocking to the viewers. The sudden cut from the young Briony sitting in a train to the old Briony talking about her life on the television show is truly unexpected as the viewers were not given any previous clues. The whole story being a metafiction becomes the biggest surprise. Moreover, the fact that neither Cecilia nor Robbie fulfilled their dream life seems to be more devastating with the addition of properly used flashbacks to the characters' last moments and the overall visual aspect.

In summary, the film version deals with the clues and metanarrative slightly differently than the novel. Even though some clues from the book are used to lead the viewer to realization in the film as well, the major clues are left out to create a moment of surprise in the viewers. As a result, the final revelation is far more surprising in the film than it is in the book.

7 THE TRIALS OF ARABELLA

The focus of this chapter lies on the play Briony has written and was supposed to perform at the beginning of the story. The content of the play is briefly mentioned as well as the two ways of interpretation and explanation why the play is important to the story.

One of the things that the filmmakers chose to briefly mention in the film but did not put a deeper look into is Briony's play *The Trials of Arabella*. However, the play has higher purpose in the novel as it is a parallel to the actual story.

In *The Trials of Arabella*, a young princess falls in love with a wicked count and runs away with him only to get abandoned by him and her family. She ends up alone and ill but discovers a sense of humour within herself. Eventually, she meets a poor doctor – a prince in disguise. Choosing wisely this time, Arabella is rewarded by reconciliation with her family and a wedding with the prince.

Patrick Henry (2008, p. 80) claims Briony's first play is a parallel to Briony's world. According to him, Briony shares similar characteristics with Arabella. They are both naive spoiled children who attempt to enter the adult world but fail. In Briony's case, it is not a young doctor/prince, who represents the second chance Briony is given, but a young French soldier called Luc.

In my opinion, the story of Arabella could be also seen as a parallel to Robbie and Cecilia's lives. In this case, Cecilia represents the character of Arabella, while Robbie represents the wicked count because that is how Briony sees him from the beginning. However, Briony eventually comes to the realization that Robbie is in fact the doctor-

prince in disguise and it is Paul Marshall who actually represents the wicked count in *The Trials of Arabella*.

Moreover, the entire play could be seen as an analogy to Briony's novel *Atonement*. As it is revealed at the end of the novel, the old Briony chose to change the reality and gave Robbie and Cecilia a happy ending they deserved. Just like the young Briony who closed her play with a happy ending for Arabella and the prince.

The *Trials of Arabella* are a romantic story that clearly distinguishes between good and evil. The play itself is a proof that despite wanting to look mature, Briony still thinks as a child with a remarkable fantasy which was crucial in her interrogation concerning Lola's rape.

The play opens and also closes the whole story. It is eventually performed in the last part of the novel, on the occasion of Briony's coming birthday. The old Briony reminisces the time when she wrote the play as a young naive girl.

As stated above, Briony's play *The Trials of Arabella* can be interpreted in more than one ways. Nevertheless, it is an important part of the story as it parallels the actual plot and relationships between characters. However, the play is only briefly mentioned in the film, therefore the interesting parallels are not shown at all.

8 THE PORTRAYAL OF THE WAR IN THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

The World War II is a theme often used in postmodern literature. It also takes a large part in *Atonement*. The following chapter deals with its portrayal in the novel and whether the filmmakers managed to successfully bring it on screen.

In the story, every main character gets to face the war and its consequences, however each one of them is touched by it in a different way.

In the first part of *Atonement* the war is only mentioned as a speculation, however it becomes obvious that it is going to affect the characters and their lives later in the story. The following two blocks take place during the World War II. The second part narrated from Robbie's perspective describes the war directly from the battlefield.

8.1 Ian McEwan's portrayal of WWII

Ian McEwan as a son of a WWII soldier (see Chapter IanMcEwan) utilizes his knowledge to write large detailed paragraphs about the situation in the war-stricken areas. He makes the reader get drawn into middle of horrors of the war right from the beginning of the second part of the book. This is also the point where the story picks up the pace because the scenes are no longer narrated from several points of view and the timeline of the events is much longer.

The reader gets to experience everything along with Robbie. In order to make the story real, McEwan does not use detailed descriptions of the vile side of the war sparingly. His portrayal of war might seem almost disgusting at parts, such as Robbie

discovering a child's leg in the tree or a death of a mother and her child, however this makes the whole image of the war authentic and it has a true emotional impact on the readers.

McEwan manages to describe fear, desperation, anger, the importance of friendship during war, survival instinct and many other emotions with words. The retrospect into Robbie's happier moments before the war and the memories of Cecilia are a bright point in the story and an epitome of hope for better future.

In the third part of the novel, the war remains a major topic. This time the events are narrated from Briony's point of view. Briony comes into contact with the war as well, although not at first hand like Robbie. McEwan gives readers a chance to view the war from different perspective by putting Briony's character into the hospital setting. Even though most of this part consists of Briony's thoughts and memories, the scene where Briony nurses a French soldier could be considered one of the most powerful moments in the story. The author uses the opportunity to make Briony look at the war as a kind of redemption for her sins.

8.2 Joe Wright's portrayal of WWII

Joe Wright's approach to the war part of the story is slightly different to McEwan's, especially in the second part of the film. He does not put Robbie in the middle of bombing or gunfire, yet he still manages to create an authentic and shocking picture of the tragedies of war without romanticizing the reality, as it can be seen in the scene where Robbie finds the dead bodies of young civilians.

Wright omits a large part of Robbie's journey to Dunkirk and skips right into the fifth chapter of the novel instead. The sequence on the Dunkirk beach in which Robbie is attempting to return home to Cecilia might be considered the most memorable moment in the whole film. The reason is Joe Wright's decision to film the entire scene as one single five minute long shot. According to the camera operator Peter Robertson (Steadishots) it was the most physically and logistically challenging thing to achieve. Robertson claims the scene was completed on the third take after hours of rehearsing. Approximately one thousand and three hundred extras were on the set at the moment co-operating with the crew.

Joe Wright comments on the sequence in the interview for Indie London: "It's all about capturing the light. I had faith that at a certain point we were going to get really good light that day and I'd almost chosen a location because of the direction of the light at evening. I wanted a magical, elegiac sense to that scene. It's a scene about wastefulness – of human life, of animal life, of machines, of industry, of everything... even Bibles were being thrown on the fire so the German's couldn't use them. So, we rehearsed all day and at 6pm we started shooting. I got three takes and on the third one the light was with us and it was magical."

The scene is not heavy on dialogue, besides a short conversation between Robbie and a commander, the three soldiers walk on the beach silently for most of the time. The camera follows them as they are passing by soldiers and civilians who are waiting for the ships to get them home. Robbie witnesses cavalry horses being shot in their heads, soldiers burning Bibles, other people fighting, playing cards, taking care of the wounded etc. The highlight of the sequence is a choir of soldiers singing the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" towards the ocean.

The overall atmosphere of the scene, as well as James McAvoy's perfect expression of Robbie's desperation and fear of never returning back home, make the Dunkirk beach sequence a visually stunning spectacle and undoubtedly the most interesting part of the film.

The war as viewed from nineteen year old Briony's perspective follows the original text quite closely. The setting in which this part takes place is utterly different from the one from the beginning of the film. The bright colours and idyllic atmosphere of the pre-war English countryside faded away and are replaced by dark and cold images of the second world war, which might be considered a parallel with Briony's transition from a child who tends to romanticize the world to a woman who finally sees the reality.

In conclusion, both the author and the director approach the theme of the war in their own different way. While McEwan lets the readers peek into the soldier's head and provides them with long monologues and flashbacks, Wright uses the opportunity to create a visually stunning spectacle.

9 COMPARISON OF THE EPILOGUE

This final chapter contains a comparison of the epilogue as written by McEwan and the one written by Hampton. It deals with the setting the epilogue was put into for most part.

The most significant difference between the novel and the film in terms of visual changes is undoubtedly the apparent change of the epilogue. The filmmakers preserved the climax of the final part of the story as it is written in the book, however they chose a substantially different background and means of narration.

In the novel, the final part of the book is no longer narrated in the third person. The whole epilogue is in fact Briony's monologue. She is a successful writer coming to her old house, which was rebuilt to a hotel, for her birthday party. The party is organized by Pierrot's grandson and numerous Briony's relatives are present, including her brother Leon and his family. Briony explains that her "last novel, the one that should have been [her] first" (McEwan, 2003, p. 321) cannot be published until both Paul and Lola Marshall are dead. However, due to Briony's terminal illness, the Marshalls are definitely going to outlive her. Briony also tells us in her monologue about the process of writing her book and what happened to the rest of her family.

The filmmakers decided to set Briony's confession in the completely different environment. The monologue Briony has in the novel is replaced by an interview in a television show. After being asked about her new novel called *Atonement*, Briony has to take a minute in her dressing room to calm down a little bit. She is obviously nervous, yet determined to tell the truth. Instead of her relatives, Briony is surrounded by audience

and cameras. When the interviewer asks her about *Atonement* again, she explains it is her last novel because of her disease and also tells her confession about Robbie and Cecilia.

The last two lines Briony delivers in the film do not differ from the ones written by McEwan. “I like to think that it isn’t weakness or evasion, but a final act of kindness. I gave them happiness” (Wright, 2007). The clever preservation of these particular sentences helps us understand why Briony decided to replace the tragic reality by fictitious happy ending.

In my opinion, the change of the epilogue in the film makes us feel more sympathetic toward Briony. She published her novel and she is ready to face the response of other people as well as publically talk about her mistake. She is alone in the television studio without her friends and family explaining what actually happened before and during the war and why she changed the reality.

The flashbacks to Robbie and Cecilia dying during the war and the following dialogue-free dream sequence of the couple running on the beach and looking happy makes the overall film experience evoke strong emotional feelings in the viewers. The emotions are also intensified by the beautiful soundtrack by Dario Marianelli.

To sum up, the epilogue was put in a completely different setting in the film. Briony’s birthday celebration with her relatives and her first play were replaced by a television studio with a host and cameras. However, the substance of the epilogue and its importance for the story were preserved without any change.

CONCLUSION

The thesis focused on the comparison of Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* and the film adaptation of the same title directed by Joe Wright in 2007. The main objective of the thesis was to find the key differences between the two and provide an analysis of these differences.

Based on the positive opinions expressed by majority of film critics and the acclaim of the general audience, Joe Wright and the screenwriter Christopher Hampton successfully managed to adapt McEwan's hugely popular novel into a high quality film. They had to deal with McEwan's complicated style of narrative, which they partially managed to transfer to the screen. The non-linear narrative was preserved, nevertheless some features such as McEwan's foreshadowing and interference of the omniscient narrator were left out.

There are some interesting elements in McEwan's novel which were neglected or completely ignored by the filmmakers despite their importance. These elements, such as Briony's play *The Trials of Arabella* and its interpretation or Emily Tallis' character are also discussed in the thesis. Other characters, specifically Briony, Cecilia and Robbie are analysed as well. Chapter three shows that Briony and Cecilia's characters might appear slightly less sympathetic in the film as there is no voice-over in any of the scenes which would clarify the actions of these characters. For that reason, I would recommend reading the novel before watching Wright's film.

The final part of the thesis focused on the portrayal of the war in both the novel and the film. While McEwan uses inner thoughts, flashbacks and overall very descriptive style,

Wright turns the shorter part of the book into a visually striking high-budget spectacle. His transition between the colourful summer of 1935 and the dark horrors of the war, and its parallel to Briony's difficult maturing is truly remarkable. This chapter suggested that both portrayals of the war were well done despite the different approach of the novelist and the film director. The very last chapter of the thesis dealt with the epilogue of the story. The visual aspect as well as the content of the coda were discussed and compared.

The thesis was focused on the most noticeable differences between the novel *Atonement* and the film adaptation. However, the complex novel and the film based on it could be also analysed in terms of symbols, as the original is full of them, alternatively the details used in the film such as lighting and meaning of the colours or the unusual score. The minor characters could be also explored on a deeper level.

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Resumé

Tato závěrečná práce se zabývá komparací románu Ian McEwana Pokání s filmovou adaptací z roku 2007, která byla napsána scénaristou Christopherem Hamptonem a režírována Joe Wrightem. Práce je zaměřena především na klíčové rozdíly mezi knihou a filmem a odpovídá na otázku, do jaké míry se povedlo adaptovat román z hlediska celkové struktury, formy vyprávění, postav a vizuální stránky.

ANNOTATION

Jméno a příjmení:	Gabriela Novotná
Katedra:	Katedra anglického jazyka
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, PhD.
Rok obhajoby:	2014

Název práce:	Pokání od Iana McEwana: Porovnání románu a filmové adaptace
Název v angličtině:	Ian McEwan's Atonement: Comparison of the novel and the film adaptation
Anotace práce:	Tato práce se zabývá komparací románu Iana McEwana Pokání se stejnojmennou filmovou adaptací režiséra Joe Wrighta. Cílem je snaha najít a analyzovat klíčové rozdíly a podobnosti mezi hlavními postavami, strukturou a stylem vyprávění románu i filmu a dějem obecně. První kapitola se zabývá autorem knižní předlohy, následující kapitoly rozebírají hlavní rozdíly mezi knihou a filmem.
Klíčová slova:	Ian McEwan, Joe Wright, Pokání, komparace, filmová adaptace
Anotace v angličtině:	The thesis deals with the comparison of Ian McEwan's novel Atonement and the film adaptation of the same title directed by Joe Wright. The aim is to find and analyse key differences and similarities between the main characters as well as the structure and narrative of both the novel and the film, and the story as a whole. The first chapter is focused on the author of the book, following chapters deal with the main differences between the novel and the film.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Ian McEwan, Joe Wright, Atonement, comparison, film adaptation
Rozsah práce:	49 s.
Jazyk práce:	Anglický jazyk