The Motif of Death in Ian McEwan’s Novels

Diplomová práce

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Ian McEwan, born on 21\textsuperscript{st} June 1948 in Aldershot, Hampshire, England, is one of the most internationally recognized British writers of the contemporary fiction. He is the author who writes about the topics which are not generally talked about and he is famous for the dark portraits of human society and unusual relationships between people. His focus, even obsession, with body, violence, complicity, cruelty and death is apparent within all the examined books. He precisely describes all events that surround the characters and feelings that depict every single detail of emotions.

Although every McEwan’s novel is specific, there are some themes that link the works and the plot usually centers round some tragic or traumatic event in human life. As the title of the thesis suggests it targets various motifs of death of characters and it will focus on perception of passing and its different forms.

His novels contain Gothic themes as well as pornographic scenes and another important aim of the thesis is to analyze and explore motifs connected with death and how is the theme of death deployed to raise the atmosphere of terror and fear. According to Ryan Kiernan, who writes about Ian McEwan, “[t]he secret of his appeal lay in his stylish morbidity, in the elegant detachment with which he chronicled acts of sexual abuse, sadistic torment and pure insanity.”\(^1\) Within the selected novels, the reader can notice many attributes that are also connected with Gothic themes such as cemetery, tomb, torture, blood, house isolated as a castle, funeral, deadly combat zone, and suffering.

The thesis also examines the reasons and consequences of death and how it changes people’s thinking and character. Another important aspect connected with motifs of death in the novels is sexuality and its different forms.

The focus will be put on the perversity, criminal acts as well as love relationships between the main protagonists.

From a wide range of McEwan’s novels and short stories containing the theme of death, five novels were chosen to depict the whole range of the motifs; *The Cement Garden* (1978), *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), *The Innocent* (1990), *Enduring Love* (1997) and *Atonement* (2001). The selected novels, which were published in different periods of McEwan’s writing, contain the most significant elements of Gothic and motifs of death and they were chosen to show and prove various improvements and changes in his career. The motif of death has different forms; fatal disease, murder, sado-masochism, perverse sexuality, accident as well as death in war. The novels describe quick and painless death, long and painful suffering, brutal but necessary murder, killing for sexual pleasure, deathly accident and senseless death in war. All the motifs are tragic and lead to character’s destruction or spoil their hopes and beliefs.

In the first chapter the concept of Gothic in McEwan’s novels and the reason of his nickname ‘Macabre’ will be analysed. Secondly his first novel *The Cement Garden* will be discussed and the focus will be put on death of parents and its consequences that lead to children’s disclosure. The novel contains the motif of death from the beginning till the end and it is one of the most shocking books of contemporary literature. The second examined novel is *The Comfort of Strangers* with its frightening final scene, where the true characters of sadomasochists are revealed. The next discussed novel will be *The Innocent*, which contains the morbid, even disgusting, scene of dismembering of the dead body and then the focus will be put on *Enduring Love* where death is not the central theme of the story but the deadly accident influences the main protagonists’ life and perception of the world. Finally one of McEwan’s most successful novels, *Atonement*, will be examined, mainly the motif of repentance and lost lives in vain. Although this novel is not fully focused on macabre and death, it contains many significant elements connected with Gothic and terrifying acts of characters and situations.
The last chapter of the thesis will include the summary of different motifs of death and its influence on individual characters. In conclusion I would like to point out how the theme of death changes and develops within McEwan’s works and how his perception of tragedy and impact on characters differ.

Even though all the five novels vary in the background, they share similar topics especially in the area of sexuality, solitude, death and dealing with difficult life situations the characters have to face. McEwan’s ability to haunt, scare, disgust and even entertain helped him to gain readers of different generations in various countries.
2. Ian ‘Macabre’ and Gothic Themes in his Novels

Children who bury their mother in a basement, a married couple of sadomasochists who brutally kills a victim for their sexual pleasure, a man who cuts a dead body of his girlfriend’s ex-husband into pieces, a tragic accident that leads to mad events in a man’s life and a little girl who convicts an innocent man to death. Welcome to the cruel, dark and rotten world of Ian McEwan, whose books are according to Petr Chalupský typical for “an atmosphere of stiff stillness, a paralyzed sterility disguised as seeming peacefulness which evokes an evil foreboding in the reader that something terrible is about to happen that will ruin or completely change the characters’ lives, probably for the worse.” The thrilling premonition as well as the dark mood accompanies readers within the whole books. Ian McEwan describes all tragic situations and accidents mentioned above with the emphasis on details and analyses of characters’ perception of death. He seeks to exploit the bad characters of human nature. “His writing serves as a warning to the state of contemporary society, cautioning the populace of the horrors and atrocities that result in a blind and pitiless world.” In his fictions he tries to show the cruelties in everyday situation and by describing the most violent and shocking acts, he opens the eyes of society and forces it to realize how tragic consequence can ensue from its unwillingness to fight with the evil.

In the course of his career he was influenced by many unhappy events that affected his writing. His life was connected with war as his father worked as an officer in the army so the family did not have any stable home. He himself admits, “[t]he war shaped our family life.” His relationship with father was

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emotionless, which has an impact on his behaviour as well as on various characters who live with the absence of father in his stories. Probably his unstable family and social background learned him notice and transform feelings on his characters in the novels. In fact, The Cement Garden and Atonement are the only two novels describing the whole family unit living together although every parent is absent in a different way. It is certain that he puts some elements of his own experience and personality into his writing.

With half-brother and half-sister much older than him, he felt as an only child and it is evident that the emotional isolation is also common for many of his characters who share his feelings. When his lost brother appeared after many years, it was a big surprise for him and maybe he found his lost soul mate. Other important areas that influenced his writing are political and social situations of the then world and he belonged to “writers [who] use their fiction to convey the anger they feel toward the weaknesses, blunders, and injustices of society.” In fact, every character represents lost soul in the world of dominance, loneliness and suffering caused by invisible power.

The dark atmosphere, shocking situations as well as “[t]he exploration of grotesque and disturbing themes (such as the breaking of social conventions, codes and taboos, incest, sado-masochism, rape, pornography and the murder of children) in the early work earned him with the illustrious nickname ‘Ian Macabre’”. The only thing which cannot be found in most of McEwan’s novels and short stories is the happy end.

The period includes his collections of stories First Love, Last Rites (1975) as well as In Between the Sheets (1978). Considering the novels from his early writing that could be classified as ‘macabre’, there are The Cement Garden (1978) and The Comfort of Strangers (1981), which are the classic examples of

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5 Slay, Ian McEwan, 3.
shock, sexual disorder, violence, disgust and death. According to Martin Jacobi, “[t]he macabre has death as its subject and produces horror in a beholder.” In some cases the victims in the novels seem to be reconciled with their tragic destiny and feelings of pity are not fully evoked in readers. It is mostly the emotion of shock, disgust and terror. The novel’s intention depends on the reader’s point of interpretation that has many ways but it is definitely macabre. Considering the beginnings of McEwan’s career, it is obvious that his “earlier writing is characterized by a literature of shock, a conscious desire to repel and to discomfit the reader. It is a fiction inundated with incest, regression, brutality, perversion, and murder.” Sexual or criminal desires of children and adults force readers to think about the perversity from the other side and sometimes they are able to understand what society made of innocent people. McEwan tries to show the horror of everydayness and his label of Gothic writer is supported by David Punter who claims that those writers use “themes to which Gothic addresses itself- incest, rape, various kinds of transgression of the boundaries between the natural and the human.”

His later novels containing 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 Sweet Tooth (2012) focus on different themes, but still certain common features, only the motif of death is not usually the central point of the stories in some cases. As David Malcolm claims:

His later work certainly does deal with public and political issues, ranging from childcare to German unification. Here equally, however, it is by focusing narrative attention not on

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8 Slay, Ian McEwan, ix.
the general but on the particular, on the private psyche of individuals, the problems and disturbances of their thinking and feeling, that broader insights are captured.\textsuperscript{10}

McEwan tries to focus on psychological aspects of the individual protagonists and their feelings in different situations in detail. “He uses fiction to understand the mind and to explore human nature, as well as uses words to alter reader’s consciousness.”\textsuperscript{11} In the course of his writing career he underwent certain changes, which are obvious but his masterly used language connects all his works as well as his unique narrative style.

Although the later novels mostly focus on politics, public events and psychological minds of characters, it is evident that motifs of death never fully leaves McEwan’s writing. Nevertheless death is not the central point of the story but the novels contain Gothic elements connected with terror and lost innocence as the “[c]ontemporary Gothic is not preoccupied with the end of the world, but rather the end of innocence.”\textsuperscript{12} The main characters usually change their view of the world after experiencing some tragic or traumatic event. According to Punter, one of the typical characteristics of Gothic novel is “an emphasis on portraying the terrifying” \textsuperscript{13} and it is another significant sign in McEwan’s works. He focuses on death and emotion of tragedy in different forms but the general impressions from his novels are mostly fear and disgust. His ghoulish characters are real people although some of their acts could be compared to acts of monsters and sci-fi creatures.

With respect to the fact that the theme of this diploma thesis deals with the concept of death, it is worth pointing out that death is closely connected

\textsuperscript{13} Punter, \textit{The Literature of Terror}, 1.
with perverted sexuality within all the examined fiction. Punter claims that “Gothic fiction is erotic at root: it knows that to channel sexual activity into the narrow confines of conventionality is repressive and, in the end, highly dangerous, that it is a denial of Eros and that Eros so slighted returns in the form of threat and violence.” In fact, it is apparent that love leads to destruction and the relationships between people never survive the pressure of crossing the boundaries between humanity and inhumanity in the selected novels.

Considering sexuality, McEwan creates characters who are not afraid of incestuous relationships, sado-masochistic games, uncontrollable desire, unrequited obsession and rape. According to Punter, love and sexuality “are the products and visible outcroppings of darker forces, and thus the Gothics persist in trying to come to grips with their alternative forms – incest, sexual violence, rape – and in questioning the absolute nature of sexual roles.” Loneliness, confusion and unfulfilled desires make monsters from the male characters in the novels. Their suppressed emotions impel their nature to explode and do something forbidden.

The selection of the novels reflects the evident examples of death and sexual disorder. The following chapters will attempt to identify and analyze Gothic elements containing unusual death, perversion, strange kind of sexual practices and their influence on human mind and character in the particular novel.

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14 Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 411.
15 Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 411.
3. Death of Parents in *The Cement Garden*

The first book, published after two scandal collections of short stories, was written in 1978 and nobody expected that McEwan would present the novel so shocking and extraordinary. “With this first novel McEwan continues his literature of shock, fascinating and repulsing us with incest, dysfunctional families, infantile regression, and decaying corpses.”

The novel deals with the death of both parents and following children's attempts to cope with their loss. Firstly, the father dies because of heart attack and after few weeks the mother becomes the victim of unknown disease. Both parents never offer the children the opportunity to socialize. The first-person narration of Jack provides readers an insight into his life and various situations and feelings which accompanies his sexual, emotional and tragic adventure. From the beginning of the novel it is clear that the theme of death penetrates the whole story and force of psychological unease is apparent from the first lines where Jack states: “I did not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way.” Unemotional reaction to father’s death presents Jack’s inability to feel sorrow and later readers realize that he really helped him die. The perverted sexual values which culminate at the end of the novel are the result of anarchy and confused feelings that cannot be controlled by any authority.

The dark and tense atmosphere is present through the whole story and the symbols of Gothic such as death, the cellar and unknown disease make the story frightening from the beginning till the end. The semi-nightmare scenario and immoral behaviour of children evoke the idea that the society is evil. Unfortunately, the children live in the social conditions where the parents learned them such habits and manners. In fact, the society of adults destroyed the society of children.

Considering the surrounding where children grow, it is described by Jack as “desolate suburban fortress [that] stands alone on an empty street, surrounded by wasteland of rubble and burnt-out prefabs.” and in fact, it resembles their empty lives. As Punter claims, “the image of the castle is multifaceted: it is the established world conceived as enclosure and bondage, it is the retreat of the mind tortured by chaos, it is the sign of the failure of human aspiration, and it is the locale for the persistence of primal fear.” It is apparent that the isolation and loneliness have huge impact on their behaviour and social integration. The only outer element, Julie’s boyfriend Derek, brings some kind of order into the family. Moreover the children are scared to experience the outside world behind their doors and inside they prefer to be emotionally sterile. Derek represents the morality and justice but his entry only causes that the children become closer in their small society of confusion. Derek reveals the nasty secret which leads to their end. Probably it is not the end for the children but a new beginning of the life without perverse sexuality, death, decaying mother’s corpse, transsexualism and fear that someone will reveal the true characters and feelings.

Although the father, described by his son as “frail, irascible obsessive man with yellowish hands and face” should be considered as the head and leader of the family, it is apparent that the children do not have any positive emotions about him and his death is insignificant in comparison to mother’s burial. The story is narrated from Jack’s point of view but it is obvious that neither him, nor his siblings suffer after the father’s death. The act when he dies seems to be even comical and the situation when he is trying to destroy any living plant by cement in the garden appears to be an answer of nature to his heartlessness. Jack claims: “Above all, mixing concrete and spreading a levelled garden was a fascinating violation.” His death body is imprinted in wet cement, material

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18 Ryan, Ian McEwan, 19.
19 Punter, The Literature of Terror, 376.
hard as his heart, and the children’s emotions about father’s death are obvious, especially as Jack states: “I did not have a thought in my head as I picked up the plank and carefully smoothed away his impression in the soft, fresh concrete.” By this act, Jack is smoothing away his past, led by the despotic father as well as fear from him.

“The story revolves round the corpse of the mother, but it begins with the death of the father.” In contrast to their father’s death, no children want to accept the fact that their mother is dead. Considering the mother, she suffers from unknown disease that disables her to take care of the family. Later on, when she dies, the children try to hide her corpse in a trunk full of wet cement situated in their dark basement in order to avoid being taken into care by the authorities and split apart. The part of the novel when the children have to move the mother’s corpse is relieved by the comic scene when the children laugh. It is obvious that they lose judgement about ordinary behaviour in such situations. As Ryan states: “By this grotesque expedient they contrive to banish their dead mother from their minds and preserve her nevertheless as the invisible foundation of their lives.” One of the emotions that McEwan associates with death is laughter that represents the relief of the horrible and tragic incident. Children do not know how to treat with death in such a situation because nobody showed or explained them what can change and follow. Jack claiming that “the death meant very little to our parents” confirms their inability to express emotions and create strong relationship with their own kids. In fact, the children are confused with ordinary behaviour in unknown situations and as Ryan states about mother’s death, “by secreting her body in the home, the children deny her death and protract her sway, deferring the demise of their own childhood.” Her presence resembles them that they are still children who need

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23 Ryan, Ian McEwan, 20.
24 Ryan, Ian McEwan, 20.
26 Ryan, Ian McEwan, 21.
protection, order and authority in their lives. It is apparent that the children strive to conceal her death.

Home is not home without a complete family although for the first time it is connected with freedom and excitement in the novel. The death of both parents in the novel opens a new gate in the world of anarchy, relief and new rules are introduced. On the other hand, “[I]ong before the children are orphaned, the family unit has begun to disintegrate. Family members wander aimlessly about the house, ignoring one another, vying for love but rarely finding it.”27 The disorder is caused by inability to express their emotion and communicate. Although they live close to one another in the isolated place, they seem to live in the six different worlds.

In fact, the rest of the family is overwhelmed with the freedom they received after the tragedy. When a parent dies children usually feel a huge loss and their life is full of grief and loneliness for the whole life. The situation described in *The Cement Garden* is different and for readers it may seem as the children have big problems with controlling their emotions and coping with tragic situations. It is a kind of dysfunctional mourning which has its roots in the isolation and no accurate model of loving parent. According to Slay, McEwan’s “earliest fiction, for example, is characterized by repellent characters and their inhumane, brutal actions; there is a conscious desire to shock readers, forcing them to gaze directly into the horrors of contemporary society.”28 Childhood of four kids, who uncover things that most adults try to deny and forget, is ruined and they have to become strong and brave in order to keep the rest of the family together.

The death of both parents seems to be the beginning of the new free and adventurous period but later in the novel the children realize that they miss their mother as the symbol of stability and care in the family. According to Jack, there

27 Slay, Ian McEwan, 40.
28 Slay, Ian McEwan, 6.
“was no excitement now. The days were too long and; it was too hot; the house seemed to have fallen asleep.” 29 From that moment the time of decay and regression begins. The mother’s burial is followed by a period when the house and children’s lives seem to fall asleep and decay as the dead body in the basement. The smell of the corpse buried in cement is connected with decaying home, decaying character and decaying morality.

The science-fiction novel that Jack got for his fifteenth birthday contains the story about Commander Hunt, the main hero who fights with monsters. Mental and physical loneliness and isolation cause that Jack identifies with him as Hunt’s task is “not only to destroy this beast but to dispose of its gigantic corpse.” 30 Subconsciously he needs to disable mother’s power in the house and establish the freedom. Although he loved his mother, the life without her surveillance seems to be more attractive, thrilling and as he himself admits “beneath my strongest feelings was a sense of adventure of freedom”. Nevertheless, mother’s corpse hidden in the trunk constantly reminds the children her presence, especially when her body starts to stink.

The family created their own world and the children have no idea how to treat and behave in different situations after parents’ death. According to Kiernan, “conventional family roles are scrambled, sexual norms flouted and stable identities undone”. 31 The adolescents slip in the roles that should be natural, when the role of mother is replaced by Julie and Jack becomes the father. The mental burden of parents’ loss and the fact that children are not loved by anyone is apparent in the course of the story, especially at the end. “Oscillating between fear and desire, tears and laughter, Jack’s ambivalent

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response reflects the uncertainty of knowing how to negotiate trauma.”³² Their sexual act at the end of the novel is considered by them as normal course of events between a man and woman in an attempt to keep the family together, because the society could not learn them that what they are doing is bad and forbidden.

Both parents’ bodies are buried in cement and in fact the bags of that material also caused the father’s death as well as the crack in cement revealed the smell of the mother’s dead body. It is a kind of material than hardens with time as well as the children’s hearts that become emotionless under the influence of external factors. The passionate incestuous love is the strongest feeling within the whole story.

Another most important theme in the novel considers sexuality. In fact, there is a very thin line between death and sexual activity. At the beginning of the story father dies at the moment when Jack achieves his first orgasm. Although he was warned by the mother that masturbation is bad, he prefers his needs and in fact it is the only pleasure in his teenage life. He enters the adolescent and unfamiliar world full of surprises and emotions. According to Punter “there is something adolescent in Gothic fiction. For it is in adolescence that the need for secrecy is at its most acute, because much of what is happening to the body is secret even to ourselves, and certainly would not ‘stand up’ in court of law.”³³ Jack finds the relief in frequent masturbation and separates from the rest of the family. The only important thing for him is to satisfy his desires and he loses his authority as the only man in the family. “After Mother’s death his isolation becomes exclusion, as Julie and Sue increasingly choose to avoid him, to omit him from their conversations, their activities, their lives.”³⁴

³³ David Punter, Gothic Pathologies (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998), 79.
³⁴ Slay, Ian McEwan, 43.
The Oedipal complex is apparent in situations when Jack and Tom compete for his mother’s attention with the father as well as at the beginning of the story when Jack admits that he could be able to kill his own father. To become the authority and to have the place next to the mother is his new function after parent’s death and he plays his role very naturally considering his sexual lust. As Chalupský states: “The taboos are broken, sexuality is released from its restrictive bonds, and true identities are discovered.”

His desire to defeat his father was fulfilled and he moves to his new position. All in all, the death of the mother and the loss of order and rules connected with her personality open the gate to various sexual transgressions and sins. McEwan himself claims that loss of control and surveillance leads to confusion and need to become a part of any unit, especially in the case of adolescents: “I had an idea that in the nuclear family the kind of forces that are being suppressed—the oedipal, incestuous forces—are also paradoxically the very forces which keep the family together. So if you remove the controls, you have a ripe anarchy in which the oedipal and the incestuous are definitive emotions.”

The final act at the end of the novel reveals the true desires of Julie and Jack and readers realize that the emotional isolation and no present warm hand to care lead to their destruction although they only require what humans need. It is obvious that “incest in this novel is nothing more than a need to share, a need to love.” Although they heartlessly hid the mother in the trunk, they sacrifice their freedom for their lust. According to Slay “Jack and Julie discover each other, reaching out to share their need, their loneliness, their love.” The tragedy that influenced their lives, unstable emotions and fear from the future deepens their relationship and desire to mean something to somebody.

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37 Slay, Ian McEwan, 46.
38 Slay, Ian McEwan, 50.
Every child suffers in a different way after the parent’s death and another important consequence is the regression into childhood. The youngest male character Tom tries to hide in the cot to forget his siblings’ worries and fear from reality. Slay claims that “Tom’s regression is a defence mechanism. Through it he achieves a life of little effort and no responsibility; it is the easiest way for him to escape this new and confusing life. Like his cross-dressing, his infantile behaviour provides a safe haven.”

Solitary and distressing atmosphere in the house, absence of loving parent and the lack of supervision cause that Tom is looking for solace in his early childhood. His need for attention and protection changes his personality into infant. The idea that “you don’t get hit when you’re a girl” evokes the urge to be the opposite sex. His experiencing with transvestism also gives him the protection from being bullied or hurt.

Considering Sue, she was the only child who cried after the father’s death and in fact the only one who expressed some emotion. Although she was frequently the victim of children’s sexual plays, she could be considered as an unspoiled and mentally stable sort of person although she “struggles to accept the loss of her mother and to survive in her new life.”

Her solitary character makes her different from the rest of the children and her diary, where she informs her dead mother about the desperate conditions in the house, helps her to cope with her death.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing out that that the lack of speech, emotional sterility and endless monotony cause that “[r]ather than murdering one another, McEwan’s children simply snap rudely at each other and whine about the monotony of their isolation.” With burying their mother, they also buried their chance to survive in the world of unknown and confusion. The

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39 Slay, Ian McEwan, 49.
40 McEwan, The Cement Garden, 47.
41 Slay, Ian McEwan, 47.
42 Slay, Ian McEwan, 37.
cruellest consequence of the whole tragedy in the novel is the fact that although the children are too young, they are all predestined to fail.
4. Sadistic Murder in *The Comfort of Strangers*

The novel offers readers an insight into the life of two lovers Colin and Mary on holiday, probably in Venice. Their monotonous seven-year old relationship has fallen into routine. They are uninterested, exhausted and bored with each other. They are lost in their emotions and even lost in the city, which could be considered as one of the most romantic places in the world. Unfortunately, a very friendly stranger crosses their road and with a view of a new adventure they join him. From that moment as Ryan claims: “*The Comfort of Strangers* turns to look its demons in the face.”

They did not know that they chanced upon Robert intentionally and that he planned the encounter before. Later they meet Robert’s wife Caroline, who impress them with her hospitality and distinction. Without any intention they become drawn into the world of obsession and violence.

The novel focuses on the theme of terror and Colin’s death at the end is the inevitable consequence of sadistic perverse who finds satisfaction in pain, subservience and dominance. The strong focus is on the protagonists’ feelings of misery and aimlessness. The dark atmosphere of the city, murder and perverted sexuality contribute to the sense of Gothic style. As Malcolm claims, “the novel’s Gothic elements are used to emphasise the intrusion of past into present and the eruption of the brutal and the macabre into the seemingly everyday.”

Gothic motifs as well as gloomy characters are connected with mystery of the historic city. “Venice is frequently portrayed as a place of wonder, a place of mystery, and McEwan’s use of the haunting opulence of the Italian city accentuates the gruesome action of the novel.” Venice’s complexity of canals and streets represents impossibility to find the right way. The loss of direction is symbolic, it

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is an easy place to lose or hide as well as people can hide their real personality or lose in their own feelings.

Colin’s death is the climax at the end of the whole story. There are no monsters or nightmares but something more frightening – horrifying aspects of human nature. McEwan concentrates on the depiction of the dark atmosphere of the city. “With the city, for example, come dark doorways and honeycombed passageways, a sense of the ominous, the enigmatic.”  

It evokes the feelings of fear as the Venetian labyrinth leads them to the end, unfortunately to the end of everything. The fatal ending seems to be inevitable from the beginning of the story. Colin ends up as the victims of Robert’s perverted plan.

Loneliness and isolation is another frequent theme in McEwan’s novel. The lovers seek for some adventure and thrill. “No longer in control of their aimless existence, lost in their passivity they get easily attracted by any promise of life’s intensity, be it an evil of the worst kind in the form of the enigmatic Robert and his wife.”

Imprisoned in their dull relationship they visited different country with hope to move from one place and to meet new people who would spice their boring relationship. It is obvious that “inherent danger in travel is the heart of McEwan’s novel.”

There are only four main characters in the novel, two absolutely distinct couples on the first sight but with deeper recognition it is certain that they have many things in common.

Mary and Colin’s sexual life is influenced from the moment they met Robert and although he destroys their lives at the end of the story, they seem to be thankful for the fact that he brought some thrill and passion into their relationship. They lost all excitement and the new intruder evokes hidden emotions. Slay admits that “the only time during the vacation that their

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46 Slay, Ian McEwan, 73.
48 Slay, Ian McEwan, 74.
relationship comes alive is immediately after this bizarre night with the sadomasochistic couple.” Colin and Mary become inseparable and passionate again. Their experience with being close to death causes that they appreciate each other.

Within the story the focus is put on Colin and his beauty. He is described in detail while Mary seems to be uninteresting for the pervert. Colin is easily manipulated and he could be considered as the weak and dull character. As a young and strong man, he should be able to protect his girlfriend and fight with evil in the form of Robert. On the other hand, he is subdued by the perverse who longs for him and his beautiful face. Colin could be considered as a female element in their relationship with Mary as he becomes the object of desire and perfect beauty, which is not typical for men.

Considering their intimate life, Colin and Mary also dream about special sexual excitement as they talk about the machine that “would fuck her, not just for hours or weeks, but for years, on and on, for the rest of her life, till she was dead”. An idea of oppressor and oppressed comes to their mind as they confess their deepest wishes. In their cases it is obvious that they talk only about fantasies while the theme of death and making love is reality in Robert and Caroline’s case. Mary and Colin admit that “[b]ecause of that possibility hanging over us, we made love like never before” and by this sentence they confirm that the smell of death during their sexual intercourse brings the thrill and excitement.

The mysterious stranger interrupts their way and from the beginning of their meeting it is certain that something strange is going to happen. Although there are some clues that indicate Roger’s sick character and warning uneasiness, the curious couple disregards them, which leads to the tragedy.

49 Slay, Ian McEwan, 77.
51 McEwan, The Comfort of Strangers, 110.
According to Punter, Robert could be the character whose “beast within cannot be killed, but that is because he derives his strength from the pressure with which he is held down by the smooth-faced man on the outside.”\textsuperscript{52} The strangeness of Robert’s stories from his childhood, permanent touching of Mary and mostly Colin, unreasonable punching in Colin’s stomach, the strange disease of his wife or secret pictures of Colin should kept them away. It is obvious that they are unable to fight with the outside intruder in their relationship and in some cases they seem to welcome him with open arms.

In spite of all the evidence that the couple is dangerous and finds predilection in violence, Mary and Colin find themselves in the house of perversity and abuse where he is violently murdered and she has to face the whole process of killing. When they both admit: “‘We didn’t exactly plan to come, but it wasn’t completely accidental either’”\textsuperscript{53}, it is apparent that they were scared but the sense of adventure and unknown forced them to meet the strangers again. There are some cases when the protagonists are close to death, such as the situation when Mary nearly drowns in the sea or when Robert hits Colin in his stomach. “What makes the story so unnerving is the couple’s passive collusion in this atrocity.”\textsuperscript{54} They go towards the danger even though they know the consequences.

Considering sexual relationship of Robert and Caroline, it is clear that they both suffer from a very strange kind of perversity. During the visit in a bar and in their house Robert describes Mary and Colin unpleasant memories from his childhood. It is evident that disharmony in his family influenced his later life and relationship with his wife as he was brought up into the surrounding where men were superior to women. As the favoured child, he was permitted to torment his own sisters. On the other hand he was badly punished when he disappointed his father. According to Punter “[a]ll we do, no doubt, we do because of what has

\textsuperscript{52} Punter, The Literature of Terror, 411.
\textsuperscript{53} McEwan, The Comfort of Strangers, 106.
\textsuperscript{54} Ryan, Ian McEwan, 34.
been done to us.\textsuperscript{55} Male-dominated rules in his family make him believe that he can do anything and it also supports the deviation from conventional sexual life, to be more specific, the descent to sado-masochism. It becomes obvious that Robert is following the footsteps of his father in the way he treats his own wife as Slay confirms that “Robert’s obsession with his father, his dominance by him, remains with him throughout his life.”\textsuperscript{56}

Within the very honest conversation between Mary and Caroline, she reveals her secrets about the marriage with Robert and his sadistic practices: “My body was covered in bruises, cuts, weals. Three of my ribs were cracked. Robert knocked out one of my teeth. I had a broken finger.”\textsuperscript{57} The shocking confession of sexual, mainly sadomasochist, abuse makes Caroline the victim of perverse maniac. Later it is revealed that she supported him and let him destroy her physically and mentally.

“Ironically, the couple can communicate only sexually, and sex becomes the instrument of their destruction. In McEwan’s world, fantasies can turn into nightmares. Sex can be an escape but also a means of drowning in harsh reality.”\textsuperscript{58} They need violence and pain included in their sexual games. There is a thin line between satisfaction and murder and that is the deviation they require. Although Caroline was badly hurt during their perverse act, she prefers to be disabled rather than not satisfying her desire. She claims: “It’s not the pain itself, it’s the fact of the pain, of being helpless before it and being reduced to nothing by it. It’s pain in a particular context, being punished and therefore being guilty. We both liked what was happening.”\textsuperscript{59} It is the case of disorder when men desire to hurt and women desire to be hurt. According to Chalupský, Robert could be

\textsuperscript{55} Punter, \textit{Gothic Pathologies}, 16.
\textsuperscript{56} Slay, \textit{Ian McEwan}, 80.
\textsuperscript{57} McEwan, \textit{The Comfort of Strangers}, 109.
\textsuperscript{59} McEwan, \textit{The Comfort of Strangers}, 109.
considered as “McEwan’s best but also most shocking creation of a tyrant and weakling at the same time.”

He tortures his own fragile wife and manipulates with people around him as puppets to get what he needs to be satisfied.

Caroline herself admits that “[i]f you are in love with someone, you would even be prepared to let them kill you, if necessary.” She is supposed to be a victim of her naughty husband but it is revealed that “Caroline becomes not a victim but a participant, not a brutalized subject but a willing confederate.”

She needs to be punished and the terror from the fact that her husband can kill her was thrilling. The superiority of her husband is erotic and thrilling as well as the idea that she is owned by someone who can do with her body whatever he wants as “women like aggression and strength and power in men. It’s deep in their minds. [...] And even though they hate themselves for it, women long to be ruled by men. It’s deep in their minds. They lie to themselves. They talk of freedom, and dream of captivity.”

Her inner loneliness is filled with the fact that she is someone’s sexual toy which can be broken. She will never be alone because of the injury caused by Robert, who is not supposed to leave her. On the other hand, when Caroline was not imprisoned in their house, she feels that their perversity is scary. The isolation and their own sadistic world made her believe that what they are doing is natural. In contact with the outside world she realized the danger of their relationship: “When I was alone for long enough, or when I was out with ordinary people doing ordinary things, the madness of what we were doing, and my own acquiescence in it, terrified me.”

On the other hand at home, she is not scared and she knows about the possibility that her husband can kill her: “Robert was longing to pound my body to a pulp” and he

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60 Chalupský, “Atonement,” 3.
also “confessed one night that there was only one thing he really wanted. He wanted to kill me, as we made love. He was absolutely serious.”66

Robert is very unpredictable character who could be considered as homosexual who crippled his wife. His inconspicuous behaviour towards Colin reveals Robert’s true sexuality. He is influenced by the idea from his childhood that men are superior to women and he is looking for the lover who is equal. Malcolm states that “Colin and Mary, liberal, intelligent, and sensitive, are sucked into a diseased patriarchal nightmare.”67 Robert cannot kill his wife but he has no problem with murdering the innocent and handsome man he was in love with. The process of killing him is more satisfying that killing his own wife whom he does not like as Caroline admits: “I didn’t doubt Robert’s hatred for me.”68 Their sexual practices in the bedroom are not sufficient so they have to find the satisfaction somewhere else and “the only solution, they determine, is to shift their perverse desires onto an unsuspecting third.”69 Colin’s curiosity enables the couple to improve his sexual life as well as interrupt his connection with normal course of events.

The sexual content pervades within the whole story but the thrill from something dangerous, even deathly, is the key impression.

In the final scene the satisfaction from the murder is obvious and Robert enjoys every second of the whole process of killing: ‘See how easy it is,’ he said, perhaps to himself, as he drew the razor lightly, almost playfully, across Colin’s wrist, opening wide the artery.”70 Caroline, the accomplice, enjoys the show of blood as well. She also admires Colin’s appearance and when she “transferred more of her blood on the end of her finger till Colin’s lips were completely and

accurately rouged”\textsuperscript{71}, she confirms the idea that Colin could be considered as female element for the murderers as she tries to make him perfect with his lips red and emphasize his beauty. Mary is only the spectator of their cruel ritualized murder, which makes their act even more exciting as “[t]he perpetrators want her to see, but they don’t want her to intervene.”\textsuperscript{72} Mary is supposed to be the voyeur to support the monstrousness of the crime.

Colin’s beautiful face and body are sacrificed in order to satisfy the desire of two insane creatures. As Punter claims, “passions are crucially dealings with the body: when we think of lust, envy, greed, hate, we are immediately on the terrain of the body, with its inherent confusions about what is remembered and what is forgotten, what is legal and what is not.”\textsuperscript{73} Helpless Mary looking at the corpse of Colin cannot even move and the shock from the murder will change her life, personality, sexuality as well as perception of evil, because “Colin’s death is senseless, incomprehensible; he is a sacrifice to the creations of a perverted fantasy, a lost and corrupted society.”\textsuperscript{74} With the murder, the perverse subconscious desires of humans are fulfilled and the image of the dead body is considered as a part of the sexual game.

In the novel, McEwan supported the idea that “he is a writer who is an expert at writing about a kind of diseased patriarchal mentality and how men are brutal toward women in deed and thought.”\textsuperscript{75} Generally, he focuses on spoiled human characters, repressed sexual appetites and relationships between people. Colin’s death is an example how far can people go if they are not content with their present situation and it shows what danger can human being represent.

\textsuperscript{71} McEwan, \textit{The Comfort of Strangers}, 120.
\textsuperscript{73} Punter, \textit{Gothic Pathologies}, 56.
\textsuperscript{74} Slay, \textit{Ian McEwan}, 86.
\textsuperscript{75} Malcolm, \textit{Understanding Ian McEwan}, 13-14.
5. Dismembering of Body in *The Innocent*

The setting of the novel is in the mid-1950s Berlin and McEwan uses the political climates to set up the theme of love, passion and sexuality that drive the characters to face their losses, morality and the consequences of their actions. As Slay claims, “*The Innocent* is a macabre comedy of manners about twentieth-century nationality, sexuality, and political mores.”

The story takes place in Germany at the beginning of the Cold War where the post office engineer, Leonard Marnham, falls in love with Maria Eckdorf, five years older divorced German. As McEwan himself claims: “I wanted to show the brutality man can aspire to by comparing the dismemberment of a corpse to the dismemberment of a city: the bomb-devastated Berlin of the post-war.” It is obvious that the period and the setting of the novel were intentionally in post-war Berlin where death, fear and ruined city as well as ruined lives were not unordinary. As Maria mentioned: “In Berlin, people have killed each other for less than that.” It all depends on the character of humans who commit a crime and how much they let it influence them.

By moving to the city, Leonard is introduced to the different world full of new experiences, love, happiness, and on the other hand also life full of violence, disgust and death. In fact, he lives in isolation, in foreign country, with new foreign friends and foreign girlfriend. Their small and uncomfortable flat without central heating and hot water serves to them as a secret fortress of lovers.

The main plot focuses on their relationship and his secret operation in the tunnel. The term ‘innocent’ refers to his virginity and in the course of the story this word has connection with murder of Otto, Maria’s ex-husband, drunkard and self proclaimed war hero. One day Otto is found in their wardrobe in the

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76 Slay, *Ian McEwan*, 140.
bedroom and attacks them. To protect themselves Leonard and Maria kill him with strong blow to his head. Unfortunately, Otto is very famous person in the city, so the couple is scared to report the event to the police. They have to hide the body, as in the case of the mother’s death in *The Cement Garden*, and the only solution is to dismember it. In order to hide the pieces of body, Leonard wanders through Berlin with full cases but he is not successful and later comes back home. The next day he meets his friend Glass and only by a happy coincidence, he disposed of the cases and escapes without any punishment. Leonard was assigned on a top secret surveillance project, but in fact he has to hide something bigger.

The sexuality of Maria and Leonard is based on purity and true love at the beginning of their relationship. Thanks to Maria he becomes the real man and she shows him the new adventure in their sexual live. She provides him greater personal feeling and greater knowledge of possible relationship between a man and woman. With her he discovers the joys of love and sexuality. On the other hand, he slowly feels the man’s power and the need to demonstrate it. “The freedom from innocence opens for Leonard the untapped, darker side of his id, and, once again, a relationship is fouled by the horror of male sexuality.” After Maria refuses to make love with Leonard, his lust and fantasy overshadows his clear mind and he understands it as a sexual foreplay. He becomes the conqueror trying to satisfy his needs and the whole act ends by the rape of Maria. Leonard was the one who helped her to believe in good men again after her bad experience with Otto but he was also the one who irretrievably hurt her. One mistake nearly causes the end as Leonard is not able to suppress his lust and attacks Maria. With the crime he loses another part of his innocence. In fact, he realizes that it is the worst thing he has ever done in his life, so far. Luckily Maria decides to come back and trust him again after some time.

It moves their relationship to the next level and they decide to get married. According to Slay, “Leonard finds himself very quickly consumed and

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*Slay, Ian McEwan*, 136.
controlled by the secrets of his life: Maria and their relationship, his rape fantasies, the murder and eventual dismemberment.” After the first horrible experience they focus on the good and try to appreciate their relationship. It is obvious that Leonard has some problem with self-control and under his nice appearance he hides the perverse who has immature sexual desires. The act of raping shows him as weak character.

The attack of Otto also reveals their real personalities. He waited in Maria’s apartment where he fell asleep in a wardrobe. The scene shows his stupidity and problem with alcohol. Without no doubt, the murder is definitely self-defense. The accident changed their lives to horror within a couple of minutes. Otto, who is drunk but ready for a fight attacks Leonard, who protects himself as well as his girlfriend without any doubt. McEwan describes the scene as Otto’s:

hands were groping between his legs, and finding his testicles and closing round them.
The grip that had been round Maria’s throat. Burnt ochre blossomed in his vision and there was a scream. Pain was not a big enough word. It was his whole consciousness in a terrible corkscrewed reverse. He would do anything, give anything to be free, or dead.

Leonard does not know how to relieve the pain so he bites into Otto’s face and it makes the situation worse when “[t]hrough his cheek you could see a yellow molar.” The agony forces his teeth to bite Otto because in this situation, it was the only solution that could help him.

Defender of justice, the police, is influenced by the fact that they know Otto so it is not possible to solve the crime in a common way. Maria and Leonard have to choose the more stressful kind of hiding: dismembering of Otto’s body. There is another connection to The Cement Garden where children, hiding from authorities, have to inform somebody or hide the body. They all choose the

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80 Slay, Ian McEwan, 135.
81 McEwan, The Innocent, 145.
82 McEwan, The Innocent, 145.
second option but they do not realize the consequences influencing their following lives. In fact, Leonard subconsciously longs for the confession as “he wanted them to come, and quickly. He wanted to stop thinking the same thoughts over, he wanted to speak to someone official and have his words written down, typed up for his signature.”\(^\text{83}\) He cannot bear the compunction that are destroying him and his only relief would be in prison.

The part of the novel where McEwan describes the act of dismembering of the body transforms the love and spy story into horror. “The account of Otto’s dismemberment vividly and physically demonstrate the horror that decent, likable can find themselves involved in.”\(^\text{84}\) The detailed description of cutting is accompanied with Leonard’s emotions and feelings and offers an insight to the whole dreadful situation. The act of sawing the body is slow and with every move he loses some part of his soul and his life ideas. “He started in the armpit, straight into the Army jacket and the shirt underneath. It was a good saw, sharp, not too heavy, just supple enough.”\(^\text{85}\) On the other hand Maria seems to be used to the situations connected with violence and fear. She suggests the hiding of Otto’s body and without any objections, she starts to cut the body and pack it. “Maria was sitting on a wooden chair by the open cases. She took each part of her ex-husband onto her lap and patiently, with an almost maternal care, set about folding it away and sealing it and packing it carefully along with the rest.”\(^\text{86}\) The scene is described as a process of monotonous work in a factory where staff packs some items. In fact she does not realize that those parts used to be her husband.

After the shocking experience the couple is not able to be together and one evening changes their lives forever. In the course of the novel his first love connected with murder was linked with suffering so strong that it absorbed all

\(^{83}\) McEwan, *The Innocent*, 201.


\(^{85}\) McEwan, *The Innocent*, 165.

\(^{86}\) McEwan, *The Innocent*, 166.
positive emotions about Maria. With Otto’s body they also cut their love into small pieces and it was not possible to put it together. Their shared guilt does not allow them to feel the love as before the crime. The real impact of the murder on the psyche of the perpetrator is enormous. In fact, they are not able to live without consequences of their decision. Instead of connection very important for survival, they split apart and start new different lives. Their shared secret that could unite them finally leads to their separation.

His love to Maria gradually changes into anger and hatred. “Their heady romance culminates in another, less enchanting initiation in violence and death, when Marnham is forced to kill Maria’s ex/husband Otto in self-defence and dispose of the corpse to conceal the deed.”87 During a few hours they destroy an already tarnished relationship. “For now they could not touch each other, they could not even exchange glances.”88 Right after the murder they even start to blame each other: “Did it hurt so bad that you had to bite a hole in his face?”89

With the crime Leonard entered the cruel adult world as well as Jack in *The Cement Garden* and death, in Leonard’s case murder, changes his previous life, destroys him and he loses his innocence. Again the hiding of the death body is the same and however Leonard killed the man and the crime is more serious, the threat of being imprisoned is similar as for four children. The shock from mother’s death as well as the shock from the murder of Otto causes the situation when human behavior can go awry. “The disposal of Otto’s dismantled body becomes a macabre comedy of errors, an immediate release from the exquisite violence of the dismemberment.”90 They all have nightmares caused by difficult and scary life situations. It evokes the disgust and terror in readers and the couple in *The Innocent* cooperates as team till the last packed part of Otto’s body as well as Jack, Julie and Sue when they carry their dead mother to the

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87 Ryan, *Ian McEwan*, 56.
88 McEwan, *The Innocent*, 171.
89 McEwan, *The Innocent*, 152.
90 Slay, *Ian McEwan*, 139.
basement. As Slay claims: “Having lost his sexual and political innocence, he now loses, most devastatingly, his moral innocence.”91 With the traumatic moment Leonard gave up everything he ever had. The shame and desperation from the crime forces him to leave and start a new life without the love of his life as “what hung in the air between them was disgust, and it was not possible to pretend.”92 The purity of love was messed with Otto’s blood on their hands.

The grotesque situation of everyday life follows the story since he walks out of the door of his apartment. Despair and confusion are linked with the various meetings with the co-workers who unconsciously help him on his way to destroy the evidence. It is obvious how Leonard is not able to work under pressure and stress. Fortunately, the whole crime is solved without offender and they can go back to their old lives, but they soon realize that it is not possible anymore. “If he was disposing of Otto, in a sense he was disposing of Maria too. And she of him.”93 Leonard decides to go back home to England and leave Maria to fight with the memories from their past alone. In fact, he did not feel the sorrow that he is leaving her but relief and vision of a new beginning.

For the couple who passionately used to love each other it is the end and “now it was hard to feel anything at all.”94 The novel describes the journey of transformation when people bite more than they can chew. It is complicated movement from innocence to knowledge and experience that influence and change human lives and relationships.

Part romance and part thriller show the contrasts of emotions as real love, hatred, happiness, disgust, despair and fear. The characters at the end of the novel only regain at least some kind of control in their lives and it takes them another thirty years till they are able to forgive each other. They reconcile their destiny and forget the horrors of past. The Gothic elements are present within

91 Slay, Ian McEwan, 139.
92 McEwan, The Innocent, 171.
93 McEwan, The Innocent, 171.
94 McEwan, The Innocent, 206.
the whole story and after the murder it is obvious that the novel could be considered as psychological horror. According to Punter: “What is, perhaps, most distinctive about contemporary Gothic is the way in which it has followed the tradition of not merely describing but inhabiting the distorted forms of life, social and psychic, which follow from the attempted recollection of primal damage.”

The novel shows how lives can become horror and shock from the event that is connected with violence and murder. Leonard mired his emotion in shame and blood with the first cut of Otto’s body.

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6. Accident in *Enduring Love*

The title of the novel tells the reader to expect a love story but from the very first lines the novel appears to be a thriller. A lot of tension and fear in the opening chapter evokes the anxiety in readers and the disaster influences the lives of characters from the very beginning. According to Malcolm, “*Enduring Love* shows signs of the thriller or crime story.”

The novel describes fates of three main protagonists, Joe Rose, his girlfriend Clarissa Mellon and the stranger Jed Parry, who is suffering from de Clerambault's syndrome, the mental disorder which makes him believe that Joe fell in love with him after the scene when they face the tragic accident and then they share the same painful emotions.

The story opens with the situation when Joe has planned a perfect afternoon in the calm English countryside to celebrate a reunion with his girlfriend. During the opening of a bottle of champagne, the idyll afternoon and atmosphere comes to an end. The beautiful impression of cloudless sky is interrupted by a very loud scream. A balloon with a 10-year-old boy in a basket flies uncontrolled above their heads. Joe and other men immediately run to help and hold the rope to stop the balloon but under the pressure of wind, forcing all the men to drop the ropes, they give up, except one. John Logan, a doctor from Oxford, is the last one to try and after some time when he is carried up into the sky he falls to his death. His senseless death for unknown child strongly affects Joe and Clarissa’s emotions but they do not have any idea that the end of John’s life is only the beginning of the destruction of their relationship and previous happiness. In fact, the accident is connected with the tragic foreshadowing tone for the rest of the novel.

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After the tragedy Joe closely meets with Jed, who belongs to the group of rescuers, in the field and the only glance with devastating consequences causes that Jed fell in love with Joe. The irritating phone calls and letters are only the beginning of the symptoms of mental disorder. Some scenes seem to be a parody of two lovers. Jed follows him and disrupts his normal course of life. The stalker leads nearly to the tragedy and destruction of the functional relationship and previous happiness of the innocent man.

Generally, the novel describes the mysteries of love and relationships that are not typical in common life. There is the love triangle, originally strong and passionate love of Joe and Clarissa and unrequited love to Jed. It is apparent that the main conflicts in the novel are mostly psychological.

Considering relationship of Clarissa and Joe, they did not have any serious problems before the accident. She is not able to bear children but this fact seems to connect them even more. Malcolm describe his situation as “Joe is one minute a happy, successful man with a beautiful lover; the next minute, he is plunged into a nightmare of another’s obsession with him.”97 Their love is passionate, pure and endless till the enemy from the outside appears, and only his indirect presence destroys the happiness they have. He looks for any logical explanations and reasons of Joe’s behavior but the more he searches, the further the truth is. It seems that they both communicate in different languages. The tragedy they have to face is gradually making them strangers although the same horrible experience should connect them closer. As Clarissa writes in her letter “[w]e’ve seen something terrible together. It won’t go away, and we have to help each other. And that means we’ll have to love each other even harder.”98 The day of the tragedy when John falls from the sky, Joe and Clarissa fall from the heaven of their perfect love.

97 Malcolm, Understanding Ian McEwan, 156.
With Jed’s intrusion Joe focuses only on the stalker and he neglects his personal as well as professional life. He tries to fight with the deviant but he chose the wrong way and every step he does to get rid of him deepens the love and obsession of Jed. Clarissa who is not able to fight with Jed claims: “A stranger invaded our lives, and the first thing that happened was that you became a stranger to me.”\(^9^9\) She accuses him of permanent thinking about Parry. Joe gave up everything and he finds himself in a vicious circle. The hole between him and Clarissa became deeper and there was no way back.

Clarissa does not recognise her boyfriend and the breakdown of trust is caused mainly by the fact that there is no evidence and she believes that Joe is the one who suffers from some mental disorder caused by witnessing the unbelievable and shocking scene. When she leaves Joe for some time she tries to explain him the reality and help him to open his eyes as she leaves the message in the letter: “There should have been a moment of consolidation, of mutual reassurance, we should have been standing side by side, or back to back, protecting each other against this attempt to violate our privacy. Instead, it seemed we had already been violated.”\(^1^0^0\) Although Joe is innocent, due to his obsession with the evil he loses his love and nearly his life.

In spite of passionate love to Joe, Jed would prefer to have him dead than not having him for himself. He himself admits: “I wanted to hurt you. Perhaps even more than that.”\(^1^0^1\) Shooting in the restaurant is the desperate try how to evoke any emotions in Joe, but he made him hate Jed even more. Now he can see how dangerous his mental disease is and how easy he can be hurt or killed. Later in the course of the strange events Jed admits: “If you wouldn’t return my love, I thought I’d rather have you dead.”\(^1^0^2\) The last desperate try is the situation when Jed breaks into their flat and threatened Clarissa with a knife. He

\(^1^0^0\) McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 101.
\(^1^0^1\) McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 152.
\(^1^0^2\) McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 212.
proved that he is capable of anything to force Joe to love him back. As Joe enters the apartment with a gun, it is certain that he would be able to kill Jed. In comparison to the fool, Jed has the gun, a masculine weapon, and the superiority over Joe gives him the courage to shoot him.

Interesting aspect in the story is Jed’s love to God. After the tragic death, he finds the relief from the shock in praying. It is a kind of liberation from the grief connected with the fearful accident and the belief in God helps him, so he also offers the help to Joe: “‘What we could do’, he said with a seriousness which warned against mockery, ‘is to pray together.”103 Unfortunately Joe refuses and tries to comforts him in a common way, which evokes another kind of emotions that deepens Parry’s obsession and different view of the situation. “De Clérambault’s syndrome was a dark, distorting mirror that reflected and parodied a brighter word of lovers whose reckless abandon to their cause was sane.”104 Only few words or one look in the eyes perverts the thinking of diseased mind.

Considering Clarissa she sees the whole unearthly topic as unreal: “Logan’s fall was a challenge no angel could resist, and his death denied their existence.”105 Her agnostic view of the world makes her Jed’s enemy as well as his rival in love.

According to Malcolm, “it is a version of a very traditional, triangular, psychological love story, a version of the kind of fiction that explores characters’ minds and feelings in respect of each other.”106 In fact, love and relationships are the central motives in the novel and although the feelings of protagonists are quite uncommon, love is such a general emotion that it affects all readers.

103 McEwan, Enduring Love, 25.
104 McEwan, Enduring Love, 128.
106 Malcolm, Understanding Ian McEwan, 162.
The accident is the breaking point of Parry’s falling in love and the following harassment. According to Childs, the novel “is additionally both about the forces that are destructive of love and about love as a destructive force.”\(^{107}\) Jed interrupts Clarissa and Joe’s relationship and in the course of time his madness influences her trust in Joe and makes him mad too. In fact, Jed’s presence distorts Joe’s professional, but mostly personal life.

Considering the motif of death, the accident mostly evokes the emotion of terror and as Punter claims, “Gothic fiction has, above all, to do with terror.”\(^{108}\) By witnessing such a situation leading to death, people usually change and the perception of life is different. The balloon accident is the trigger of the events and it predicts the tragic atmosphere within the story.

In spite of the fact that the motif of death is not the main point in the story, it is obvious that the tragic death of John Logan is the breaking scene in characters’s lives and changes connected with it. Joe claims: “It was a baritone, on a rising note of fear. It marked the beginning and, of course, an end. At that moment a chapter, no, a whole stage of my life closed.”\(^{109}\) Although they do not lose anybody who is close to them, they lose a part of themselves. The human mind is so affected that it takes a long time to forget if it is even possible. Joe admits: “I had seen dead bodies before, why a pre-scientific age would have needed to invent the soul.”\(^{110}\) The paradox of being could be seen in the fact that the body falls from the sky, while the soul goes up to heaven. Generally, the death, the end of one’s life era, causes the beginning of new life in Joe’s case.

After John’s death it is apparent that the accident was caused by the grandfather’s irresponsible behavior and in fact his fault leads to the ruined life of someone else. John’s family lost the father for the strange boy. The wasted death is the worst kind of death especially if the person is surrounded by the


\(^{108}\) Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 114.


loving people. “The impossible idea was that Logan had died for nothing.”\textsuperscript{111} He sacrificed his life to the vulnerable child who survived without his help. It is the accident that can happen to anybody and although they saw somebody died, the sorrow is not so strong as if they see their beloved in the same situation. Nevertheless, the horrifying death influences them more than they could ever expect. After the accident Joe realizes that his decision to help leads to his personal destruction.

The shock from the accident that follows the fall causes that Joe laughs. It is the same case as in \textit{The Cement Garden} when children are laughing as they carry their dead mother to the basement. The expression of happiness or fun is the consequence of inability to know what to do in hopeless and shocking situation as Joe admits: “Logan’s death was pointless – that was part of the reason we were in shock.”\textsuperscript{112} The mixture of feelings causes that laughter is the protection from going crazy. Generally, the scene resembles a part of a cartoon where characters fall from the sky every moment, but he lived in the real world where the gravity is unrelenting. The scene when “some other impossible cartoon thing came and gathered him up”\textsuperscript{113} was only his unrealizable wish. Joe describes the macabre situation as “it was a stunt, a joke, a cartoon, and a frightened laugh heaved out of my chest.”\textsuperscript{114} The shock caused that he does not feel any emotion when John falls and he stares on the damaged corpse and claims “[t]he euphoric calm I felt was simply a symptom of my shock.”\textsuperscript{115} Death is the common part of life but it still has enormous consequences on human mind and behavior.

After some time following the accident it is certain that the cooperation is the main weakness of this coincidentally group of people. Joe knows about his

\textsuperscript{111} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 32.
\textsuperscript{112} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 32.
\textsuperscript{113} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 16.
\textsuperscript{114} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 15.
\textsuperscript{115} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 20.
failure and admits: “I know that if I had been uncontested leader the tragedy would not have happened.”\textsuperscript{116}

Considering the question of morality, he excuses himself for not sacrificing his life for the boy. He feels guilty, but to survive, he needs to feel the opposite, so he uses the rational reasoning to excuse his behaviour: “The child was not my child, and I was not going to die for him.”\textsuperscript{117} With time and clearer view of the situation, the guilt is deeper and stronger. He keeps it inside and it also influences his relationship with Clarissa as he admits: “I felt the sickness of guilt, something I couldn’t yet bear to talk about.”\textsuperscript{118} He is looking for someone to blame, but no matter how much he tries according to him the responsible person is himself. On the other hand, people who suddenly occur in a stressful situation cannot think clearly.

The feeling of guilt forces Joe to visit the widow, Jean Logan, and begs for her forgiveness: “I hadn’t come to tell Mrs Logan of her husband’s courage, I had come to explain, to establish my guiltlessness, my innocence of his death.”\textsuperscript{119} Instead he is surprised to know that she blames her dead husband from adultery and she does not see in Joe the killer. His death doesn’t make sense and she does not see him as the hero as the rest of the rescuing group. She assumes that he sacrificed his life because of a younger mistress and he was showing off for her. The fact that she does not consider him as the murderer is a big relief for Joe and he helps her to find the information about the mysterious woman.

At the end of the novel it is revealed that the lack of love and care causes psychical disorder. In the medical report readers learn that the absence of father causes mental illness, which is common for the mental problems with perception of the world in \textit{The Cement Garden}, \textit{The Comfort of Strangers} and partly in

\textsuperscript{116} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 11.

\textsuperscript{117} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 15.

\textsuperscript{118} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 29.

\textsuperscript{119} McEwan, \textit{Enduring Love}, 107.
Atonement. McEwan wants to stress that the role of parents influences the quality of children’s future life.

Generally “Enduring Love lacks the more gothic excesses of McEwan’s earlier fiction”\textsuperscript{120}, but the motif of death is the leading element within the story of guilt, unhappiness, fear and madness. The protagonists are trying to make sense of the senseless accident and human behaviour influenced by inability to love or ability to adore too much.

\textsuperscript{120} Roger Clark and Andy Gordon, \textit{Ian McEwan’s “Enduring Love”} (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 80.
7. Death by Mistake in *Atonement*

The last examined novel describes fates of upper social class family and their lower-class family friend and son of their cleaning lady who is accused of raping a little girl. One mistake and following life in its shadow make Briony’s life struggle for forgiveness. The novel, divided into four parts, provides an insight into the different life periods of various people. Its metafictional structure shocks the reader at the end of the novel and shows how the ripple effect of a little mistake can be amplified from a wrong message in a letter being delivered to a wrong and biased person.

The first part of the novel generally describes crossing the boundary between the childhood and adulthood and the fatal mistake that was caused by the children’s unspoiled mind. As a child Briony discovers that there is another world, much more complicated than the one in fairy tales and romantic stories. The recognition of the difficulties that it contains is a huge disappointment and change that destroy the romantic and unspoiled soul of the innocent child.

The first factor contributing to the miserable culmination of the situation is the scene when Cecilia jumps in a fountain only in her underwear. Briony’s bedroom window provides a vantage point for her to witness the event that ruined Robbie’s life. The second case is the reading of the letter for her sister and misinterpretation of its content. Briony was disgusted by the perverted message in it, which influences her opinion about Robbie. Another event that leads to Robbie’s accusation is their sexual act in the library mistakenly considered as a raping. The prince on a white horse changes into sexual maniac in a second and Briony realizes that “[t]his was not a fairy tale, this was the real, the adult world in which frogs did not address princesses ...”\(^{121}\) She feels the need to protect Cecilia from Robbie and when she gets a chance to do so, she immediately seizes the opportunity to dispose of him as “when Robbie’s behaviour does not fit into

her scheme of a prince, he immediately falls into the category of villains and as such must be destroyed because he automatically represents a threat to the order.”

Influenced by her own wrong feelings, “[s]he had no doubt. She could describe him. There was nothing she could not describe” so she sends innocent Robbie to prison. By this time she underwent a significant change. This is the huge mistake which demonstrates her immaturity that leads to the destruction of two innocent lives. As Punter claims: “Similarly, childhood is not a pretty sight: it is the locale of the first traumatic encounters with experience, the place from which one is born into the world screaming.” In fact, the upper class commits crime, suppress and humiliate the lower class. Although Briony is a child, she has bigger power and stronger position considering the class and origin of the families

The final revelation that Robbie is not guilty shows her ignorance to the real adult world. According to Punter “children are still prevented from asking necessary questions about sex by being made to feel that sex is at the same time ‘scared’ and ‘unclean’, and the contradiction which this engenders still continues to damage personalities.” She counted on prejudgments she had on various people. The theme of sex is forbidden in her age and she does not know how to deal with witnessing any perverse situations.

However Lola is the main victim of the unforgettable act, it destroys two innocent lives and later in the story, it is revealed that she married the real rapist. The faith playing with human lives prepared very ironic situation.

The second part of the novel describes Robbie’s experience in war combat during the Second World War, which forms a part of the novel’s setting.

123 McEwan, Atonement, 165.
124 Punter, The Literature of Terror, 400-401.
125 Punter, The Literature of Terror, 419-420.
His love to Cecilia helps him to survive the tragic and violent situations and she is his only hope and reason to live. When McEwan talks about violence, he mentions that it is “something that’s certainly common in human nature”\(^{126}\) and he tries to justify the reality although it shows horror and suffering. The motif of the war is connected with death and in fact both main characters die because of fighting. The macabre scenes in the war zone and hospital are described in detail and they evoke strong emotions and omnipresent smell of death.

The third part of the novel recounts the lives of the main characters with focus on Briony’s work in St Thomas’ Hospital, where she experiences the horrors of war. Instead of studying at Cambridge, she decided to enter the nurse training in the hospital for war-wounded in London. Fictional Briony meets her sister and Robbie and she apologizes and admits that she is aware of what she has caused. She deeply suffers when she meets Cecilia, which is also a part of her atonement. She did not have a chance to be sorry for Cecilia when she was alive, so she at least suffers in the fictional world of her book.

The fourth, the last, part of the novel takes part in the present time and reveals the whole story. In fact, “Briony Tallis carries a childhood mistake all her life and, having atoned in the only way she feels she can, looks forward to escaping through illness and senility the albatross of an unalterable past to which she can only bear witness.”\(^{127}\) Briony reveals that in reality she is the author of the previous three parts of the novel. She is now a seventy-seven-year-old successful writer, who longs for forgiveness, because in reality, Robbie died in Dunkirk before the evacuation, and Cecilia was killed during the bombing in September 1940. In fact, “McEwan shapes the trajectory of his story to include a recognition that life does not come to an end the way a narrative concludes on

\(^{126}\) Reynolds and Noakes, \textit{Ian McEwan}, 22.

\(^{127}\) Peter Childs, ““Fascinating Violation”: Ian McEwan’s Children,” in \textit{British Fiction of the 1990s}, ed. Nick Bentley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 130.
its final page.”\textsuperscript{128} Briony announces that she is dying because she suffers from the same disease, vascular dementia, as McEwan’s own mother.

In spite of the fact that in the fiction they are living together and Briony’s accusation is in the past, the reality is shocking and sad. According to Frank Kermode, she is a “writer enchanted by the idea that she could in a few pages create a world complete with terrors and climaxes, and a necessary sort of knowingness.”\textsuperscript{129} The playing with readers’ emotions is a part of Briony’s atonement. She forced the readers to believe, at least for a while, that Cecilia and Robbie’s love is fulfilled and the mistake she made is partly forgiven.

Considering sexuality the love relationship of Robbie and Cecilia is based on passionate and strong emotions. They love each other and they do not let Briony win and separate them. Considering their real end it is clear that she caused their unhappiness and in fact they never fulfil their dreams to be together till the end of their lives. Although Briony has the power to make the life better than it really is, it is revealed that she joined the lovers only in her book and imagination. At least in the fictional world she provided them the chance to start new lives however she cannot repair the past. The broken vase, the present for saving life, in the scene with the fountain has direct connection with the two lovers’ faiths. The fragile object is ruined. Although the pieces are glued, there are still imperfections that cannot be repaired as well as scars in Robbie and Cecilia’s hearts. At the end of the novel, readers learn that the vase could not be ever repaired as they both die.

Generally, the war transforms people into monsters. The scary scenes from the war evoke the emotions of hopelessness and terror. The parts where McEwan describes direct connection with death in detail are macabre, even disgusting, and Briony has to face the real world with the real violence:

\textsuperscript{128} Childs, Ian McEwan’s \textit{Enduring Love}, 3.

“This was all ruin, crimson and raw. She could see through his missing cheek to his upper and lower molars, and the tongue glistening, and hideously long. Further up, where she hardly dared look, were the exposed muscles around his eye socket. So intimate, and never intended to be seen. Private Latimer had become a monster, and he must have guessed this was so.”\(^{130}\)

The missing parts of body, blood, scream and suffering are the strongest Gothic elements within the novel. Briony often describes the macabre situations: “The hair was shaved well back from the missing portion of skull. Below the jagged line of bone was a spongy crimson mess of brain, several inches across, reaching from the crown almost to the tip of his ear.”\(^{131}\) By experiencing the serious violence, she realizes how wrong and exaggerated her accusation was. She became the base of evil that ruins human lives.

The disappointment and loneliness are other important motifs in the novel. Such a strong emotion changes people’s mind and evokes unpredictable behaviour. The absence of parents influences the course in the family and Briony lacks some authority that would show her what is good or bad and explain the incomprehensible situations of life. Considering the mother, because of her self-pity, illness and weakness she is not able to take care of the family and help the children with unfamiliar and strange occurrences in common adolescent life. Father’s duties keep him of the scene and it has enormous impact on Briony’s perception of the world and different situations.

The motif of death is the central element at the end of the novel when readers learn the truth about the real destiny of two lovers.

Briony’s immaturity is tested when she reads the message not intended to her. “With the letter, something elemental, brutal, perhaps even criminal had been introduced, some principle of darkness, and even in her excitement over the possibilities, she did not doubt that her sister was in some way threatened

\(^{131}\) McEwan, *Atonement*, 308.
and would need her help."\textsuperscript{132} The replaced paper with the perverse message has more power than the fact that she knows Robbie the whole life and that she loved him before. Briony who misinterpreted Cecilia and Robbie’s affair as an assault, identifies him as the criminal.

As Punter claims, the accusation could be considered as “the alternation between childishness and terror, between apparent innocence and actual violence which is so effective, and the parallel alternation between significant and insignificant detail.”\textsuperscript{133} The love confession can be considered as the beginning of Robbie’s downfall. In order to protect Cecilia, Briony ruined their lives.

She did not succeed in getting the role in her play so she decided to create the new one, which is more thrilling and realistic. Punter also describes childhood “first as a time when lies may originate and control future development, and second as a symbol of the locked room of the unconscious.”\textsuperscript{134} Unfortunately she unintentionally acts as the bad character, in fact the worst in the whole performance as “[h]er intense imagination, her inability to distinguish her art from grown-up passions and emotions, and her belief in her own talent make her the shaping force of the story.”\textsuperscript{135}

The tragic death caused by the war, in fact also by other people, enables the lovers to connect and forget previous injustice. According to Spooner, “Gothic horrors are superseded by those of modern warfare; the curt conclusion suggests that death in the trenches is a more pressing fear than bloodsucking fiends.”\textsuperscript{136} Robbie’s experience and later death in cruel conditions is connected with many tragedies, lost friends and unimaginable fear. The knowledge of the fact that death is too close is still present and the fear from killing is macabre.

\textsuperscript{132} McEwan, \textit{Atonement}, 113-14.
\textsuperscript{133} Punter, \textit{The Literature of Terror}, 400.
\textsuperscript{134} Punter, \textit{The Modern Gothic}, 48.
\textsuperscript{136} Spooner. \textit{Contemporary Gothic}, 43.
In the hospital Briony had to face death every minute. She was happy when she was able to postpone the pain or even save somebody’s life and “by incurring the hatred of an adult whom everyone had trusted, she had become a participant in the drama of life beyond the nursery”.  

In fact seeks redemption, so she starts to works as a nurse and help people from pain when she cannot get rid of the agony in her heart. Although the war killed her sister and Robbie, as a nurse “she understood how the war might compound her crime.” The novel is written in order to reach the purification and forgiveness of the sin that should lead her to hell.

In conclusion it all depends on ability of humans to forgive and during the second reading of the novel, readers gain absolutely different perspective on the plot and its perception.

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137 McEwan, Atonement, 160.
138 McEwan, Atonement, 288.
The selected novels were chosen as the representative examples demonstrating the presence of death in Ian McEwan’s works. The main aim of the thesis was to provide various aspects considering the motives of death such as the fatal disease, the sadistic murder, the self-defence murder, the tragic accident and the death caused by inability to distinguish good and evil. It is difficult to classify the author into a particular literary movement due to McEwan’s uniqueness of style and storytelling. From all the mentioned novels it is apparent that Gothic elements permeate every story and strong emotions of fear, disgust, lost innocence and shock are present. The rejection of happy end and descriptions of nightmarish scenes is another sign that connects the novels, which are thrilling from the beginning till the end. Comparing the five novels, it is obvious that all of them contain similar dark topics and tragic situations that in some cases also influenced McEwan’s own life.

In fact, McEwan’s novels underwent remarkable changes that serve as a proof of his gift to evoke any kind of emotions in his exceptional works. Although there is the difference of twenty-three years between the first and the last examined novel, it is evident that *The Cement Garden* and *Atonement* contain many similar themes and motifs. The ruined family, missing parents and inability to create a suitable surrounding for adolescents caused that children created their own fictional world and relationships based on wrong emotions and feelings. In fact, due to the confusion of their own minds children destroyed themselves and with the death of parents as well as beloved sister, they have to face the cruelty of the adult world and the compunction accompanies their whole life.

Considering the whole range of McEwan’s works, from violent, perverse and shocking themes he slowly moves to the problems of politics, society and psychology of human mind. He does not focus only on one place and one social
unit but he portrays wide surrounding and different situations in longer time period. On the other hand death and human tragedy becomes a major and often the strongest motif in his works. Loss of innocence is another important element and character that recognize cruelty and pain to endure relentless suffering in order to survive in the world of violence and sadness. The protagonists have to change their attitude to life, which brings them only torture. As Julian Barnes states, Ian McEwan is one of the authors “addicted to the casual violences of life.” The focus on bizarre and shocking deaths and situations that preceded or followed the tragedy is obvious in all the examined novels.

Every novel is specific in a way and it is apparent that they contain themes that link them and the plot usually focuses on some tragic or traumatic event and suffering in human life. The analysis targets various motifs of death and killing and it is revealed that perception of passing and its different forms distinguish in many aspects. Generally, the protagonists facing death has to undergo significant change and fight with the tragedy of life. All novels are characterized by mental and sexual instability of the main characters and the fatal consequences that lead to their destruction. Their lives are changed in a very negative way and the human relationships full of harmony are frequently lost in vain.

The individual works also shows that the theme of death is closely linked with the issue of sexuality and particular sexual disorder. Children who are not afraid of incestuous relationship, the loving homosexual who tortures his victim and then let the person bleed to death, the rape and perverted sexual practices are indicators that show readers how thin is the line between death and playing with human body.

In the novel The Cement Garden two teenage children commit sexual incestuous act after the death of their parents and they bury the mother's dead body in cement to prevent their revelation. The smell of rotting body and

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curiosity of Julie’s boyfriend uncovers their horrific past and the sexual act at the end of the book shows their real emotions and desires. Generally, the death of both parents leads to anarchy, disorder, mess and incestuous relationship between brother and sister.

Another book *The Comfort of Strangers* describes the lives of two couples, one of which consists of two very special characters who necessarily need to feel the violence, pain and close death in their sexual games. The second pair is tired of the monotony of their relationship, and therefore they welcome the excitement of new experiences. They have no idea that they soon become the victims of sadomasochistic pervert who abuses his wife and at the end of the book he cruelly kills the man whom he secretly admires and probably loves. His girlfriend must watch the entire perverse act, which makes it more exciting for the murderer.

*The Innocent* belongs to the category of the novels that deal with common social problems and political organization of the world after the Second World War. The young man moves to post-war Germany in order to fulfil a secret mission. He meets a girl, falls in love, and then they plan a future together. As a divorced and experienced woman, she draws him into a world of sexual feelings and the games that he has never experienced before. One day a huge desire for domination causes the brutal raping of his girlfriend. She forgives his action and tries to function normally. Unfortunately her ex-husband crosses their ways and in order to protect themselves, they kill him. Due to the fear of imprisonment they cut his body in small pieces, wrap them and then they try to hide them somewhere. Horror and terror associated with the brutal murder and dismembering of the body lead to the fact that the strong feelings for each other had fundamentally disappeared in a second.

In the novel *Enduring Love* readers meet with the motif of death in the first pages of the book. The tragic fall from a flying balloon starts a chain of events that lead to the fact that the mentally ill man falls in love with another main character in just a few seconds. The whole plot of the book is based on
persecution, harassment and destruction of the happy couple’s life. Psychological pressure and doubts about the human mind cause that the pair breaks up and the stalker causes physical attacks that multiply his cruel and stupid actions. *Enduring Love* is one of the selected books that finish with happy end despite the fact that the main characters must endure a lot of pain.

The last examined novel, *Atonement*, describes the happy relationship of young people who love each other. But during one unfortunate incident, when the young girl is raped, their life changes as the innocent man is accused of the terrible crime and subsequently imprisoned. Confused girl's mind affects the poor judgment, supported by the witnessing the sexual act and reading the perverse message in the letter that was supposed to remain unread. The hero who saves the lost twins changes into the pedophile and rapist. The couple in love is divided by walls of jail and the two later die during the war. Their fates are never connected, only the girl causing the tragedy revives their lives and love in the novel that she writes in order to find forgiveness.

In fact all men characters in the novels; Jack, Colin, Leonard, Joe and Robbie have experience with disordered sexuality. To be more specific, they all have unusual desires that cause their fall and in some cases even death.

Women characters; Julie, Mary, Maria, Clarissa and Briony are mainly the victims of perverted men world and their love to men leads to their destruction. In fact, their acts and behaviour have principal importance that forms the fates of male characters in the novels. To sum up, family, love or sexual relationships are predestined to be destructed.

In conclusion after the analyses of five novels, it is apparent that the motifs of death are closely connected with sexuality, mostly perverse sexuality, and it is possible to trace links between all the mentioned novels. They contain sexual and social aberrations of adolescent or adult mentalities. All works could be classified as Gothic novels with their themes of morbidity, fear, violence, mystery and unusual sexual practices. All in all, the examined stories contain
Gothic elements and the most evident is the human pain. To hide their suffering, the characters find any kind of connection with family members or partners, they want to be loved and forget the dark side of their thoughts and actions.
9. SHRNUTÍ


Cílem práce bylo představit vybraná literární díla ve spojitosti s motivy smrti, které se v románech vyskytují v různých podobách. Analýza poukazuje hlavně na gotická témata se smrtí spojená v rámci tématu celé diplomové práce.

Práce začíná stručným představením autora, charakteristikou jednotlivých období a typickými znaky jeho děl, které obsahují ponurou a depresivní atmosféru a od prvních řádků je čtenářovi jasné, že se nejedná o vtipné a veselé vyprávění, ale o díla, která se především zaměřují na kolize a tragédie v lidském životě. Jeho počáteční tvorba, kam můžeme zařadit jeho sbírky krátkých povídek První lásk, Poslední pomazání, Psychopolis a jiné povídky a romány Betonová zahrada a Cizinci ve městě se zaměřují především na problematiku krutého násilí, sexuální deviace, incestu, smrti rodičů a sadomasochistických praktik. Jeho díla jsou plná emocí a smutku, ale je patrné, že hlavní postavy nejsou schopny odlišovat dobro od zla a samy se topí ve svých myšlenkách a pocitech, které vedou k jejich vlastním zkáze. Ve většině jeho románů a povídek se objevují prvky spojené s gotikou, jako jsou například smrt, samota, izolace v domě, který připomíná osamocenou pevnost, hrobka, hničící tělo, mučení i zneuctení těla, které muselo být rozřezáno. Hranice mezi lidskostí a nelidskostí se často v jeho dílech překračuje.
Jeho druhá fáze tvorby, kam se řadí romány Dítě v pravý čas, Nevinný, Černí psi, Nezničitelná láska, Amsterdam, Pokání, Sobota, Na Chesilské pláži, Solar a Sweet Tooth, se liší od jeho počátků hlavními tématy, ale v dílech jsou zřejmé situace, které spojují celou jeho tvorbu od začátku jeho kariéry. Smrt, násilí, perverzita a sexuální témata už nejsou převažujícími problémy, kterými se autor zabývá. Je zde zřejmý přechod do nitra individuálních hrdinů a jejich pocitů, psychologické aspekty a myšlenky se stávají hlavní problematikou. Dále se v jeho dílech nově objevuje problematika politiky a současného světa, který nepopisuje jako zrovna příznivý. Očividně jsou zde ale stále patrné prvky, které ho neustále spojují s jeho počáteční tvorbou, a to je ztráta blízkého člověka, brutální vražda a následné rozřezání těla, tragická nehoda, která ovlivní všechny zúčastněné, problémy s vlastní sexualitou i samota člověka, která vede k tragédii.

Ian McEwan během své tvorby prošel významným vývojem a jeho jedinečný styl psaní a popisy myšlenkových pochodů hlavních postav ho zařadily mezi nejvýznamnější autory světa. Obecně lze říci, že smrt nebo lidská tragédie se stává hlavním a často i nejsilnějším prvkem v jeho dílech.

Ztráta nevinnosti je dalším významným aspektem v jeho románech a postavy, které poznaly krutost a bolest musí přetrvávat neúprosná utrpení, aby přežily ve světě násilí, bolesti a smutku. Často musí měnit svůj postoj k životu, který jim přináší pouze bolest a neschopnost dál žít.

Co se týká motivů smrti, McEwan popisuje tragickou smrt otce i matky, sadomasochistickou smrt nevinného muže, který se stal obětí psychopata, vraždu v sebeobraně a následné rozřezání a ukrývání těla, tragickou nehodu, která má obrovský vliv na následný vývoj v životě třech lidí a smrt, způsobenou zhrzenou a zmatenou myslí dítěte, které si vytvořilo vlastní svět.

Z jednotlivých děl také vyplývá, že motiv smrti je úzce spojen s problematikou sexuality a hlavně sexuální poruchy. Děti, které se nebojí incestního vztahu, zamílaný homosexuál, který svou oběť týrá a následně nechá vykrvácet, znásilnění a perversní sexuální praktiky jsou ukazatelé, které
přibližují čtenářům, jak tenká je hranice mezi smrtí a zahráváním si s lidským tělem.

Výběr daných románů byl zvolen na základě jednotlivých situací, které se v románech vyskytují a jsou to především tragická úmrtí, která ovlivňují a často i změní celý svět pro jednotlivé hlavní postavy. Všechny romány se vyznačují mentální i sexuální nestabilitou hlavních postav a následky, které vedou k jejich zkáze.

Po úvodních kapitolách se práce zabývá jednotlivými romány a analýza je strukturovaná do tří částí, kdy první část stručně uvádí čtenáře do děje, především představuje hlavní dějovou zápletku se zaměřením na zmařený lidský osud, a dále jsou představeny hlavní postavy v románech. Druhá část zkoumá určitou tragickou okolnost, která vede k úmrtí některých z představitelů a následné situace, které z tragédie vyplývají. Třetí část se zaměřuje na sexualitu, především mezi hlavními hrdinami, a zvláštnost, až téměř zvrácenost ve vztazích ať už dospívajících dětí nebo dospělých jedinců. Častá ukázka a následné komentování nejdůležitějších pasáží z určitých románů přibližují události, myšlenky a pocity jednotlivých postav. Dále je práce doplněna informacemi z rozmanitých děl, které se zabývají tématem gotiky, sexuality a smrti.

V románu Betonová zahrada se dvě dospívající děti dopustí incestního aktu po smrti rodičů a mrtvé tělo matky ukryjí do betonu, aby zabránily svému rozdělení. Pach hničícího těla a zvířavost přítele jedné z hlavních postav je nakonec odhalí a sexuální akt na konci knihy odkrývá jejich pravé emoce a touhy.

Další kniha Cizinci ve městě popisuje osudy dvou párů, kdy jeden z nich tvoří dvě velmi zvláštní postavy, které při svých sexuálních aktivitách nutně potřebují pociťovat násilí, bolest a blízkou smrt. Druhá dvojice už je unavená stereotypem v jejich vztahu, a proto přivítají vzrušení z nových zážitků. Netuší ovšem, že se stanou obětí sadomasochistického úchyla, který týrá svou ženu a na konci knihy krutě zabíjí muže, kterého tajně obdivuje a pravděpodobně i miluje.
Jeho přítelkyně musí sledovat celý zvrácený čin, což pro něho činí vraždu více vzrušující.

_Nevinný_ patří do kategorie románů, které se věnují častým politickým problémům a uspořádáním světa po druhé světové válce. Mladý muž se stěhuje do poválečného Německa, aby zde splnil tajný úkol. Setkává se s dívkou, do které se zamiluje, a později plánují společnou budoucnost. Jako rozvedená a zkušená žena ho vtáhne do světa sexuálních hrátek a pocitů, které nikdy nezažil. Jednoho dne se v něm ale probudí obrovská touha po nadvládě a svou přítelkyni krutě znásilní. Ona mu časem jeho čin odpustí a snaží se normálně fungovat dál. Do cesty se jim ale připlete její bývalý manžel, kterého v sebeobraně zavraždí a ze strachu z uvěznění jeho tělo rozřežou, zabalí a následně se ho snaží někde skrýt. Hrůza a děs spojený s brutální vraždou nahradí všechno milostné citi, které k sobě měli, a dříve zamílaný pár se od základu změní, když už jeden druhému nejsou schopni pohledět do očí.

V románu _Nezničitelná láska_ se čtenáři s motivem smrti setkávají již na prvních stránkách knihy. Tragický pád z létajícího balónu odstartuje sled událostí, které vedou k tomu, že psychicky nemocný muž se během pár vteřin zamiluje do jiné hlavní postavy, také muže, a celý děj knihy je založen na pronásledování, obtěžování a ničení života spokojeného páru. Psychický nátlak a pochybnosti o lidské myсли způsobí, že se dvojice rozchází a pronásledovatel své činy znásobí, když fyzicky napadá jednu z hlavních postav. _Nezničitelná láska_ je jediná z vybraných knih, která končí dobře, i přes to, že si hlavní hrdinové musí vytrpět spoustu bolesti.

Poslední dílo, _Pokání_, popisuje spokojené soužití mladých lidí, kteří se vzájemně milují, ale během jedné neštastné události, kdy je znásilněno malé děvče se jim změní život, když je nevinný muž z hrozného činu obviněn a následně uvězněn. Zmatená mysl děvčete ovlivní její špatný úsudek, podpořený perverzní zprávou v dopise, která měla zůstat nepřečtená a hrdina, který zachránil ztracená dvojčata, se během vteřiny mění na úchynného pedofila a násilníka. Zamílaný pár je rozdělen stěnami vězení a oba později umírají během
závěrečná kapitola pak obecně shrnuje nejdůležitější poznatky společné pro jednotlivá díla. Je zřejmé, že motivy smrti jsou velmi úzce spojeny se zvrhlými sexuálními praktikami různých postav a evidentně je extrémní touha a chtíč vedou k tragickým událostem, které ničí nebo úplně ukončují životy na první pohled běžných lidí.
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources:


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11. ANOTACE

Příjmení a jméno: Čiklová Kristýna
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Abstrakt:

Diplomová práce se zabývá díly Iana McEwana Betonová zahrada, Cizinci ve městě, Nevinný, Nezničitelná láska a Pokání. Analýza se zaměřuje na motivy a určité druhy smrti, a to především smrt rodičů, sadomasochistickou vraždu, vraždu v sebeobraně a následné rozřezání těla, tragický pád z létajícího balónu a zbytečnou smrt milenců ve válce. Důraz je především kladen na následky smrti a vliv na jednotlivé postavy. Dále se práce zabývá různými formami zvrácené sexuality a její vliv na osudy hrdinů, kteří se musí vypořádat s krutostmi života a mezilidských vztahů.
12. ANNOTATION

Surname and Name: Čiklová Kristýna
Department: Department of English and American Studies
Title of Thesis: The Motif of Death in Ian McEwan’s Novels
Supervisor: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, PhD.
Number of Pages: 67
Number of Enclosures: 0
Key words: Ian McEwam, death, murder, violence, sexuality, Gothic, interpersonal relationships

Abstract:

The thesis deals with Ian McEwan’s novels The Cement Garden, The Comfort of Strangers, The Innocent, Enduring Love and Atonement. The analysis focuses on different types of death and the motifs of death, especially the death of parents, the sado-masochistic murder, the murder in self-defence and subsequent dismembering of the body, the tragic fall from a flying balloon and the unnecessary death of lovers in the war. The emphasis is mostly put on the consequences of death and the affect on the individual characters. The thesis also deals with various forms of perverse sexuality and its impact on the lives of protagonists who must deal with the cruelty of life and interpersonal relationships.