

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
Filozofická fakulta
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Bc. Eva Mádrová

Concept of Irony in Ian McEwan's Selected Literary Works

Diplomová práce

PhDr. Libor Práger, Ph.D.
Olomouc 2013

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci na téma “Concept of Irony in Ian McEwan’s Selected Literary Works” vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne

Podpis

I would like to thank my supervisor PhDr. Libor Práger, Ph.D. for his assistance during the elaboration of my diploma thesis, especially for his valuable advice and willingness.

Table of contents

Introduction	6
1. Ian McEwan	7
2. Methodology: Analysing irony	8
2.1 <i>Interpreter, ironist and text</i>	8
2.2 <i>Context and textual markers</i>	10
2.3 <i>Function of irony</i>	11
2.4 <i>Postmodern perspective</i>	12
3. Fiction analyses	13
3.1 <i>Atonement</i>	13
3.1.1 <i>Family reunion ending as a trial of trust</i>	13
3.1.2 <i>The complexity of the narrative: unreliable narrator and metanarrative</i>	14
3.1.3 <i>Growing up towards irony</i>	17
3.1.4 <i>Dramatic encounters and situations in a different light</i>	25
3.2 <i>The Child in Time</i>	27
3.2.1 <i>Loss of a child and life afterwards</i>	27
3.2.2 <i>The world through Stephen Lewis's eyes</i>	27
3.2.3 <i>Man versus Universe</i>	28
3.2.4 <i>Contemplation of tragedy and tragicomedy</i>	37
3.3 <i>The Innocent</i>	38
3.3.1 <i>The unexpected adventures of the innocent</i>	38
3.3.2 <i>The single point of view</i>	38
3.3.3 <i>The versions of innocence and virginity</i>	40
3.3.4 <i>Innocence in question</i>	48
3.4 <i>Amsterdam</i>	50
3.4.1 <i>The suicidal contract</i>	50
3.4.2 <i>The multitude of perspectives</i>	50
3.4.3 <i>The paradox of parallelism</i>	53
3.4.4 <i>Extremities in practice</i>	61
3.5 <i>Solar</i>	63
3.5.1 <i>Nine years in the life of a Nobel Prize Laureate</i>	63
3.5.2 <i>The narrator</i>	64
3.5.3 <i>Analysis of irony: physics, love and the Universe</i>	65
3.5.4 <i>Biting comic</i>	75
Conclusion	77

Resumé	80
Annex I: Bibliography of Ian McEwan	84
Bibliography	85
Annotation	87
Anotace	87

Introduction

The aim of this diploma thesis is to introduce the concept of irony with respect to selected literary works by contemporary British novelist Ian McEwan. The literary works selected for analysis are the following novels: *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Amsterdam* and *Solar*.

The analyses of irony which comprise the essential part of this diploma thesis are based on and arise from the methodology relating to theory of irony included at the beginning of this thesis, after the chapter briefly introducing the author in question, Ian McEwan. The methodology clarifies the proceedings of particular irony analyses and strictly defines which terms and concepts will be taken into account: the role of the ironist and interpreter in the text, the types of irony occurring in the selected novels, the context and textual markers jointly creating the framework for signalling of irony, the function of irony recognised in the novel and its effect on the reader. The role of authorial intentions is completely excluded and the analyses conducted are based solely on the text and its complexity.

Subsequently, the particular analyses of irony are structured progressively. Prior to the proper analysis, firstly the novel in question is introduced and secondly the issue of the narrator and narrative perspective is focused on. The analysis is concluded with a general synthesis of the pivotal findings.

Proceeding from particular to general, the final implication of this diploma thesis is to illustrate the frequency of occurrences of irony in the analysed literary works by Ian McEwan and the substantial impact of irony on the novels' reception and the readers' response. Furthermore, this diploma thesis should also emphasise and demonstrate the fact that Ian McEwan's literary works are ironic, although frequently in an inconspicuous manner and in unexpected places; this irony is to be discovered.

1. Ian McEwan

British novelist and screenwriter, Ian Russell McEwan, was born on 21 June 1948 in Aldershot, Hampshire, England, and now lives in London. He is the author of novels, short stories collections, children's fiction, plays, oratorios and librettos. Several of his novels and short stories have been adapted into films.

Ian McEwan “gained recognition for the experimentation with form and violence, tone of macabre menace, and obsessive sexuality”¹ contained in his early short story collections and novels. Later on, he turned from his early Freudian themes to Darwin “who provides the metanarrative for his later work.”² He is the winner of number of literary prizes: the National Book Award, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, the Whitbread Novel Award, the Prix Fémina Etranger, Germany's Shakespeare Prize, the Man Booker Prize for Fiction and many others. In 2011 he was awarded the Jerusalem Prize. “He's been informally dubbed Britain's National Author and, by royal decree, Commander of the British Empire.”³

On grounds of complicated interpersonal relationships and critical situations occurring in course of life of his protagonists, Ian McEwan explores various domains such as childcare system, Cold War and Vietnam War, classical music, climate change or quantum mechanics. Every novel deals with completely new and original range of psychologically profound and elaborated characters arising from completely new and original plot and settings. The diversity of themes in McEwan's novels is moreover enriched by omnipresent humour and irony that is the subject to this diploma thesis.

The five novels selected for analyses embodied in this diploma thesis are: *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Amsterdam* and *Solar*. The selection of these novels reflects the frequency of evident and interesting examples of irony in a particular novel and the heterogeneous nature of such examples, i.e. in one novel verbal irony prevails whereas situational irony is predominant in another etc. In other words, the novels selected should be taken as representative examples demonstrating the presence of irony in Ian McEwan's fiction.

For eventual further reference, see the list of Ian McEwan's books enclosed as Annex I.

¹ See “Ian McEwan,” *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th Edition (2013): 1.

² David Impastato, “Secular Sabbath,” *Commonweal* 136.18 (2009): 15.

³ Impastato 14.

2. Methodology: Analysing irony

With respect to the fact that the theme of this diploma thesis deals with the concept of irony, it is necessary to provide a brief introduction concerning this term, its complexity and the methods used to analyse Ian McEwan's fiction with regard to irony.

“Since Socrates it has often been stated that there can be no theory of irony. Irony is the resistance to a single fixed point of view,”⁴ says Claire Colebrook in *Irony: The New Critical Idiom*. As the quotation above implies, there is no single definition of irony that would be agreed upon by everyone. Irony is a rhetorical device, an act of speech and a textual effect produced when “the said and the unsaid together make up the third meaning – the ironic meaning,”⁵ which is often missing in the traditional definitions mentioning only the said, the unsaid and their opposition. For the purpose of an analysis of Ian McEwan's fiction, this diploma thesis will be concerned with the concept of irony from the interpreter's point of view, in which “irony is an interpretive and intentional move: it is the making or inferring of meaning in addition to and different from what is stated, together with an attitude toward both the said and the unsaid. The move is usually triggered (and then directed) by conflictual textual or contextual evidence or by markers which are socially agreed upon.”⁶

In order to interpret irony and perform an analysis, several elements that combine to make irony happen are required: “the interaction of interpreter, ironist and text”⁷ plus intentionality, modality of perception, the issue of discursive communities, contextual conditioning and irony markers. On this basis, various formal categories of irony, as verbal, situational or cosmic, and other types ensuing from its content, will be analysed.

2.1 Interpreter, ironist and text

Firstly it is necessary to declare that this diploma thesis will not be interested in the author's intentions but in the integral text itself in connection with reader's response. Since the analysis of irony in this diploma thesis applies to fiction, the author's intentions are hidden behind the intentions of the narrator, and thus the intentionality of the ironist works on two levels. Therefore the analysis will deal only with the intentions of the interpreter: “All irony happens intentionally,

⁴ Claire Colebrook, *Irony: The New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) 79.

⁵ See Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 60.

⁶ Hutcheon 11.

⁷ See Hutcheon 123.

whether the attribution is made by the encoder or the decoder. Interpretation is, in a sense, an intentional act on the part of the interpreter.”⁸

In that sense, the methodology is based primarily on the theoretical work by Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, although it is in conflict with other theoretical works, as *A Rhetoric of Irony* by Wayne C. Booth. He not only disagrees with but also criticizes the doctrines omitting the authorial intentions: “... we might well be tempted to retreat into the cowardly doctrine that author’s intentions (and of course his warnings about them) do interest us; if we trust the teller and not the tale, we commit the intentional fallacy.”⁹ Booth suggests that the interpreter should rely on a picture of the author that either is implied in the text or is not, in which case the interpreter should know or think he knows about author’s likely intentions from his own experience.¹⁰ However, such irony analysis would not only be very polemical, but could also be incorrect and therefore for the purpose of this diploma thesis the theory of Linda Hutcheon is preferred.

Another reason to avoid analysing the author’s intentions is the authorial distance produced by means of free indirect style, the technique of narration in third person singular told as if from the point of view of the main character (or one of the main characters), which Ian McEwan often uses. This style prevents the interpreter from identifying an ironist hidden behind the text as well as the ironist’s intentions, and it is difficult to determine if the irony reflects a real authorial point of view or if it is based on the beliefs and convictions of a fictional character. “Modernist free indirect style moves well beyond the clear location of irony.”¹¹ Therefore the analysing irony will take into account only the fictional world and its characters.

Moreover, it will be considered that irony is not only a manner of reading, but that it includes the modality of perception which depends on the reader’s expectations, his culture, language and social context, as well as “the mutual contexts that an existing community creates and that set the scene for the very use and comprehension of irony.”¹² The term “community” here refers to discursive communities or collectives which share a particular feature, such as gender, age, profession, nationality or experience. These communities overlap, a person can belong to more than one community at any given time and “this overlapping is the condition that makes irony possible, even though the sharing will inevitably always be partial, incomplete, fragmentary.”¹³ This modality of perception additionally connected with the third – ironic meaning mentioned above, which

⁸ Hutcheon 118.

⁹ See Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 56.

¹⁰ See Booth 175.

¹¹ See Colebrook 157.

¹² See Hutcheon 91.

¹³ See Hutcheon 92.

instead of producing ambiguity rather produces a plurality of meanings and thus the range of possible interpretations. This means that due to various “attribution of both meaning and evaluative attitude, interpreters don’t always ‘get’ the same message from the same text.”¹⁴

To complete the introduction to free indirect style, it is necessary to state that this narrative technique allows reader to obtain an insight into the complex psychology of various characters, and without this the narrator would have to provide an extra explanation, since everything is said straight through the narrator’s voice interpreting the voice of a character. “Free indirect speech is typically used in modern prose as a literary device for representing thoughts, stream-of-consciousness or polyvocality or as a vehicle of irony or empathy.”¹⁵ The recognition of free indirect speech is then possible through various textual markers, such as “the use of colloquial expressions, interjections and tag questions.”¹⁶

2.2 Context and textual markers

The analysis of irony in McEwan’s fiction will take into account various contextual signals as well as specific textual markers. The contextual conditioning of ironic meaning is inarguable, whereas the expression “context” “could be more narrowly defined as: the more specific circumstantial, textual, and intertextual environment of the passage in question.”¹⁷ Therefore, in the process of analysis, this thesis will deal with “the circumstances or situation of uttering/interpreting; the text of the utterance as a whole; other relevant intertexts.”¹⁸ In addition, ironic effect permits an interpreter to “adopt a point of view ‘above’ a context, allowing us to view the context from ‘on high’.”¹⁹ In that sense, the role of context in interpreting irony is both essential, as it helps an interpreter to reveal the ironic meaning, and creative, since an interpreter acquires a new, detached view of the context, which in this manner becomes open and fluid.

The theories dealing with textual markers are as disunited as the theories about irony itself. However, there are several signals which, when conditioned by an appropriate context and discursive community, can indicate that irony occurs in a text. The analysis presented in this diploma thesis will investigate lexical, syntactic, stylistic or contextual aspects of speech, and all discursive strategies that could indicate the presence of irony in the text. There are “five generally agreed-upon categories of signals that function structurally,” which in other words not only signal

¹⁴ See Hutcheon 122.

¹⁵ See Evelien Keizer, “The Interpersonal Level In English: Reported Speech,” *Linguistics* 47.4 (2009): 850.

¹⁶ See Keizer 850.

¹⁷ Hutcheon 143.

¹⁸ Hutcheon 143.

¹⁹ See Colebrook 133.

the opposition between the said and the unsaid within a specific context, but also create a foundation upon which the ironic meaning develops. These five categories include: “various changes of register, exaggeration/understatement, contradiction/incongruity, literalization/simplification, repetition/echoic mention;”²⁰ all these generally acknowledged markers will be examined. Additionally, the fact that “all markers are more than likely culture – and situation – specific and therefore what may function ironically in one social context might well gravely offend in another,”²¹ will also be dealt with.

2.3 Function of irony

The function of irony in Ian McEwan’s fiction will be one of the subjects of this diploma thesis and will first be discussed separately in a particular analysis of McEwan’s novels and subsequently in all the analysed novels together. Nevertheless, a number of generally acknowledged functions of irony should be mentioned. First of all, irony poses questions and reinforces fixed attitudes; it also represents a challenge for the reader or interpreter because it forces him to reflect upon the issues proposed in the text; it is also the source of humour. Secondly, the following nine functions of irony are universally agreed upon and each of them exists either in its positive or negative articulation:

Aggregative (inclusionary, connecting people into communities, or exclusionary and elitist), assailing (corrective and satiric or destructive, aggressive), oppositional (transgressive or insulting), provisional (demystifying or hypocritical and duplicitous), self-protective (self-deprecating and ingratiating or arrogant and defensive), distancing (offering a new perspective or non-committal), ludic (humorous or trivializing), complicating (complex or misleading and ambiguous) and reinforcing (emphatic or decorative).²²

All these functions will be taken into account in the course of the analyses and will serve as a basis for a more general conclusion relating to the role of irony in Ian McEwan’s fiction.

²⁰ See Hutcheon 156.

²¹ See Hutcheon 155.

²² See Hutcheon 47.

2.4 Postmodern perspective

The last point of this introduction should state the general attitude towards the concept of irony. “Reading irony *is* in some ways like translating, like decoding, like deciphering, and like peering behind a mask,”²³ says Wayne C. Booth; however, it also depends on perspective from which this reading is realised. The analysis included in this diploma thesis will be especially interested in the postmodern perspective, which relates to the ironic interpretation of our epoch. “Our very historical context is ironic because today nothing really means what it says. We live in a world of quotation, pastiche, simulation and cynicism: a general and all-encompassing irony.”²⁴ This also applies to irony as “the continual questioning or distance from fixed norms,”²⁵ since ironic challenge leaves nothing sure or clear, creating a new ironic meaning, and in that manner, irony is said to be “always polemical.”²⁶ This perspective is another reason why the methodology of this diploma thesis inclines to Colebrook and Hutcheon, rather than to Booth.

In addition, the polemical feature of irony will be further extended by cosmic or tragic irony, which concerns the unpredictability and paradoxes of human destiny, the factors acting against people’s expectations. In this case, “the word irony refers to the limits of human meaning; we do not see the effects of what we do, the outcomes of our actions, or the forces that exceed our choices. Such irony is cosmic irony, or the irony of fate.”²⁷ This kind of irony is realised by means of the reader’s omniscient or God-like position, in which he knows more than the character placed in the ironic situation.

The very last point of this introductory chapter will be a quotation from D. C. Muecke, who pronounced this generally valid truth which confirms the polemical nature of irony and which does not require any further comment: “Irony isn’t irony until it is ‘felt.’”²⁸

²³ Booth 33.

²⁴ See Colebrook 1.

²⁵ See Colebrook 43.

²⁶ See Hutcheon 40.

²⁷ See Colebrook 13.

²⁸ D.C. Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969) 53.

3. Fiction analyses

3.1 Atonement

3.1.1 *Family reunion ending as a trial of trust*

Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* from 2001 narrates the story of the Tallis family, especially their youngest daughter Briony. The following paragraphs will firstly analyse the structure of the novel, including the basic plot and characters, since this is necessary for further focus on the narrator and narrative perspective. After this introduction to the plot and framework of the novel, an analysis shall be conducted with regard to the forms and motives of irony.

The novel is divided into four parts: the first of them takes place in 1935, the second and third five years later and the fourth part is supposedly from 1999. The first part introduces the reader to the Tallis and Quincey families, describes the network of relationships and draws him into the thought processes of almost all of the characters. The crucial situations which develop over the next parts of the novel happen during the only day. Emily Tallis provides her niece, Lola, and nephews, twins Jackson and Pierrot, with a place to stay, since their parents are being divorced. Emily's daughter Briony, who aspires to be a writer, prepares a play for them and her brother Leon, who is also coming home. Meanwhile, Emily's elder daughter Cecilia deals with her unconscious love for Robbie, the son of the Tallis family's cleaning lady. In the evening the whole family, including Robbie and Leon's friend Marshall, comes together; however, what was intended to be a pleasant family reunion turns out to be a nightmare, which changes several characters' lives.

The first factor contributing to the miserable culmination of the evening is Robbie's letter to Cecilia, which includes a sexually explicit, even perverted message and which is unexpectedly read by Briony. Later, Briony discovers Cecilia engaged in a sexual act with Robbie in the library, which she mistakenly considers to be rape. As a result, when the twins run away, everybody goes to search for them and Briony finds Lola, who has supposedly been raped, as she says, Briony immediately blames Robbie, who ends up in jail. The other important digressions and situations will be mentioned later in this chapter – as important elements contributing to the analysis of irony.

The second part of the novel afterwards narrates the story of Robbie and his experiences of war, his attitude towards Briony and his relationship with Cecilia. The third and the fourth part belong to Briony; first the reader learns about her life five years after the tragic evening, and in the final part she personally comments on her life story and especially the book she has written. Moreover, in this last part the reader discovers that the book she is talking about is the same book

he has been reading, and in this sense *Atonement* is a novel within a novel, a metanarrative which in fact tells a story about the reasons why the novel came into being.

3.1.2 The complexity of the narrative: unreliable narrator and metanarrative

Above all it is important to determine the narrator and narrative perspective, since these concepts are essential for a further analysis of irony, which is feasible only if the role of the ironist is determined first.

The first part includes fourteen chapters, of which each is narrated from a different point of view: Briony's, Cecilia's, Lola's, Emily's or Robbie's. The second and the third parts are narrated from single point of view, the former from Robbie's and the latter from Briony's, as stated above. Although the story is told in the third person singular, the narrator cannot be considered to be objective, let alone omniscient. On the contrary, the narrator's perspective and therefore the amount of information he provides to reader is rather limited, owing to the fact that it is always only one character's point of view. This narrative style is called free indirect style, and is referred to in further detail in the chapter dealing with the methodology. Thus, supposing the basic concept of free indirect style has been already explained in the previous chapter, it is now appropriate to provide a number of arguments demonstrating that *Atonement* is genuinely written in this narrative style. The following examples will apply only to the first three parts of the novel, for the narrative perspective of the fourth part is different.

The most significant argument is the reader's insight into the psychology of the various characters, in which with each chapter of the first part, the reader gains an insight into each character's mind and is literally able to read it. In this case, the free indirect style serves as a guide through the character's consciousness and conscience. This is visible through the rhetorical questions or evaluative expressions, mostly negative, as demonstrated in the following examples: "Cecilia had seen them on the stairs that morning, her younger sister leading the cousins, poor things, who had arrived only yesterday, up to the nursery to rehearse the play Briony wanted to put on that evening, when Leon and his friend were expected."²⁹ This paragraph is taken from the second chapter of the first part, which is narrated through Cecilia's voice and seen through her eyes. What is important in this sentence is the apposition "poor things", which reveals Cecilia's opinion of her younger sister, Briony, who is urging their cousins to perform a play. Another example is the phrase "Leon and his terrible friends from school"³⁰, from chapter seven, where the word "terrible" must be attributed to Briony, who views Marshall in this manner. The last case is to

²⁹ Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (London: Vintage, 2002) 21.

³⁰ *Atonement* 73.

be found in the last chapter of part one: “It might have been that Mrs Tallis did not want the polluting presence to step inside her house.”³¹ The focus here is the “polluting presence”, referring to Robbie, who has been blamed for raping Lola a few moments ago, and although the sentence states that it was probably Mrs Tallis who did not want Robbie to step into her house, the words belong to Briony.

Whilst the evaluative expressions illustrate the characters’ attitude towards other characters or towards their environment, the rhetorical questions represent doubts and reflections on the issues occupying their minds. The first example shows Briony deciding on her future career as novel writer, her methods of writing a story and her choice of precisely the right words, which is practically demonstrated by the rhetorical question. “All she had to do now was discover the stories, not just the subjects, but a way of unfolding them, that would do justice to her new knowledge. Or did she mean, her wiser grasp of her own ignorance?”³² Another example is from Robbie’s point of view, in the second part of the novel, and his reflection on Briony – why she blamed him for Lola’s rape – reveals certain doubts through the device of the rhetorical question. He remembers the summer when Briony was eleven and when she told him she loved him: “He didn’t see Briony until the following April, and by then the matter was forgotten. Or was it?”³³ The last rhetorical question, provided as an example of free indirect style, is from the third part of the novel, and shows Briony’s view of her desperate situation when even years later her sister Cecilia hates her for blaming her beloved Robbie: “Her sister’s confirmation of her crime was terrible to hear.... She hadn’t intended to mislead, she hadn’t acted out of malice. But who would believe that?”³⁴

The important element in determining the narrative point of view is the style of narration. Each character has a completely different style, and as a result the reader can clearly identify Briony, since he knows that she aspires to be writer of novels. The chapters narrated from her perspective therefore include rich vocabulary, lyrical sentences, and the reader may feel as if he is reading Briony’s personal diary or a story written by her (unless he knows he is actually reading her story):

As she saw the dress make its perfect, clinging fit around her cousin and witnessed her mother’s heartless smile, Briony knew her only reasonable choice then would be to run away, to live under hedges, eat berries and speak to no one, and be found by a bearded woodsman one winter’s dawn, curled up at the base of a

³¹ *Atonement* 182.

³² *Atonement* 160.

³³ *Atonement* 232.

³⁴ See *Atonement* 336.

giant oak, beautiful and dead, and barefoot, or perhaps wearing the ballet pumps with the pink ribbon straps . . .³⁵

The most considerable argument against an objective narrator in the third person singular is posed by the fictional situations wherein a certain scene is described precisely through the eyes of a single character and the reader is not provided with any further information or circumstances concerning the scene; he does not obtain an objective description. There are two crucial scenes of such a character: the first is the library scene in which Briony finds her sister Cecilia making love with Robbie, Cecilia hears a sound and warns Robbie about someone else's presence: "She was mistaken, he was desperate for her to be mistaken and she actually was."³⁶ The last clause of this complex sentence proves that the chapter must be narrated only from Robbie's point of view, since an objective narrator would have to know that there was indeed someone else in the room. The second scene is the final scene of the first part, when Robbie comes to the Tallis family house with the twins he has found and is immediately arrested by the police:

Emily wanted her daughter well away from Robbie Turner. It was bedtime at last. Betty took a firm grip of her hand and was leading her in as her mother and brother went forward to collect the twins. Briony's last glimpse back over her shoulder as she was pulled away showed her Robbie raising two hands, as though in surrender. He lifted the boy clear of his head and placed him gently on the ground.³⁷

After this "last glimpse back over her shoulder", the narration continues by describing Briony lying in her bed and reflecting on the situation and looking out of the window at Robbie's departure. An objective or omniscient narrator cannot be limited in such a manner.

With regard to other textual references revealing free indirect speech, the following two examples are to be found: "But Cecilia, having learned modern forms of snobbery at Cambridge, considered a man with a degree in chemistry incomplete as a human being. Her very words."³⁸ The proof that chapter twelve is narrated from Emily's point of view is the reference to another narrator, Cecilia, which in fact shifts the responsibility for the negative expression "incomplete as a human being", from Emily to her; it in fact represents Emily's distance from what was said. The second

³⁵ *Atonement* 14.

³⁶ *Atonement* 138.

³⁷ *Atonement* 183.

³⁸ *Atonement* 152.

example is the apostrophe, the direct addressing of a fictional character: “All day we’ve witnessed each other’s crimes. You killed no one today? But how many did you leave to die? Down here in the cellar we’ll keep quiet about it. We’ll sleep it off, Briony.”³⁹ Moreover, the subject “we” clearly cannot comprise an objective narrator and Briony, but Briony and Robbie, from whose point of view the second part of the novel is narrated.

Finally, the very last part of the novel is written in the first person singular and is evidently narrated by Briony, i.e. by one of the main characters. This narrative perspective is highly subjective, allowing the reader to step directly into the character’s stream of consciousness and moreover, making an analysis of irony easier, since the role of ironist is already defined. For this reason it is not necessary to provide any examples or arguments referring to this part of the novel.

3.1.3 Growing up towards irony

Having identified the free indirect style in the first three parts of the novel and the first person narrative in its last part, thereby proposing the fact that the narrators as well as the ironists in this novel are fictional characters, it is now possible to begin with an analysis of the irony itself. However, since *Atonement* is a metanarrative, the analysis will be performed as if upon first reading, assuming that the reader is not yet aware of the last part of the novel which reveals Briony as the author. The reason for this procedure is that if the particular cases and examples of irony were analysed including this knowledge, it would be difficult if not impossible to determine the ironist behind the irony and in that manner to detect the irony itself. Moreover, as the reader learns in the last part of the novel, Briony suffers from vascular dementia and so would be an unreliable narrator. For this reason each part of the novel will be analysed as if written from the point of view of the supposed narrator.

The most evident or most easily detectable irony appears in the passages featuring direct speech, especially in dialogues, arguments or commentaries. In certain cases, such a kind of irony is verbal and is explicitly expressed, even if the reader can only imagine the character’s tone of voice. Below is an example of Cecilia’s dialogue with Briony in the third part of the novel when Briony comes to visit her sister to apologise for what she did five years ago: [Briony:] “‘What I did was terrible. I don’t expect you to forgive me.’ [Cecilia:] ‘Don’t worry about that,’ she said soothingly, and in the second or two during which she drew deeply on her cigarette, Briony flinched as her hopes lifted unreal. ‘Don’t worry,’ her sister resumed. ‘I won’t ever forgive you.’”⁴⁰ Cecilia’s answer “Don’t worry” is ironic, since it is immediately denied in the next sentence. The context on

³⁹ *Atonement* 261.

⁴⁰ *Atonement* 337.

the basis of which the reader is able to identify irony is the knowledge of the expression “don’t worry”, its meaning and canonical usage, as well as the reader’s ability to predict what usually follows such an expression – thus the traditionally expected sentence should include comfort or consolation for the addressee. In this manner, the context is demonstrated by the reader’s understanding of semantics and communication abilities. Moreover, since the reader probably knows this expression from his own experience, this also plays the role of context. With regard to the textual markers, in this case the marker would be represented by the contradiction between what is said and what follows despite the reader’s expectation. Additionally, the function of irony used in this case is the reflection of the ironist’s state of mind and his attitude towards the addressee, thus the bitterness arising from what Briony has done to Cecilia and her lover Robbie and its result – their parting.

Another example of clearly recognisable verbal irony is to be found in the last part of the novel and is spoken by Briony:

Poor vain and vulnerable Lola with the pearl-studded choker and the rosewater scent, who longed to throw off the last restraints of childhood, who saved herself from humiliation by falling in love, or persuading herself she had, and who could not believe her luck when Briony insisted on doing the talking and blaming. And what luck that was for Lola — barely more than a child, prised open and taken — to marry her rapist.⁴¹

This paragraph illustrates Briony’s attitude towards Lola marrying Marshall. The important information needed for complete comprehension is that Briony knows, although the reader does not know how she learnt it, that Lola was not raped but was secretly making love to Marshall, and since she was only fifteen years old it was highly convenient for her that Briony blamed Robbie. Therefore, when Briony in 1999 reflects on her life story, particularly the summer of 1935 and the years that have passed since that time, she ironically says “what luck that was for Lola to marry her rapist.” The irony here lies in the fact that a woman does not usually marry the man who raped her, and moreover, does not call it luck. The context is thus created by the reader’s common social experience and the presumption that he read the first three parts of *Atonement* – the textual context. In this case the textual marker would be the literalisation – since the combination of the words “luck” and “to marry her rapist”, meant seriously, should have had to imply the narrator’s distorted awareness of social relationships; and Briony already knows that Lola was lucky. On the other

⁴¹ *Atonement* 324.

hand, the choice of lexicon – “poor vain and vulnerable” – used to describe a hated person, implies the non-literal meaning of the utterance, the contradiction.

The previous paragraph should be supplemented with another set of examples which relate to the same issue, Briony’s relationship with Lola, and reveal the function of ironic impression in these cases: “How flagrantly, sensually, it reverberated before the altar when he said, ‘With my body I thee worship.’”⁴² The textual markers used in this case are contradiction and literalisation, in other words there is a sharp contradiction between the erotic tension in the narrator’s interpretation of the announcement of marriage and the purity and spiritual level of the announcement itself. Furthermore, the literal approach to the announcement creates a new ironic meaning and gives the word “worship” a new dimension. Regarding the context, it is textual and circumstantial; the reader should be acquainted with the act of marriage, as well as with the plot of the novel and Briony’s attitude towards Lola, and is then able to detect the irony. In addition, the simple addressing of Lola as “Lady Lola”⁴³, creates an ironic impression when the reader becomes aware of Briony’s view of Lola, which in no way is characterised by respect, rather the opposite. On this condition, this example of irony demonstrates the simplest and most common interpretation of the concept of irony – what is said is contrary to what is meant. However, this can be considered only on the basis of the fictional text itself; the reader’s feeling about it and thus the argument for irony is not completely objective. Briony’s last ironic commentary on Lola relates to Lola’s age in conflict with her appearance: “Near on eighty years old, and still wearing high heels”⁴⁴. Textual markers again include contradiction and an incongruity between what is the usual appearance of older people, depending on their health status and comfort, and the actual appearance of Lola. The context which contributes to this case of irony is the reader’s common knowledge, his life experience and again the awareness of Briony’s attitude towards Lola.

From a functional perspective, the above stated examples of Briony ironising Lola were to illustrate and even more emphasise her negative opinion of Lola and of what she has done by concealing her intimate relationship with Marshall. Accordingly, the function of irony at least in this part of *Atonement* is to highlight personal negative emotions towards someone or something.

Shifting to more complex and less evident incidents of irony in the novel, the next examples and their analyses will deal with situational ironies, which depend to a large extent on textual and circumstantial contexts. In such cases, irony is not read by means of the words used, but arises from the situation which, based on the conventional reader’s experience, takes place or culminates differently from how the character or reader expects. Such is the irony in the crucial situation of the

⁴² *Atonement* 325.

⁴³ *Atonement* 358.

⁴⁴ *Atonement* 358.

novel, in its first part, when Robbie by mistake sends Cecilia this letter: “In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long.”⁴⁵ After he learns his mistake, both he and the reader expect Cecilia to be disgusted and angry, which would also be implied by her previous distaste for Robbie well. Nevertheless, ironically and paradoxically, it is precisely due to this letter that Cecilia realises she is in love with Robbie and they become, at least for a night, lovers. The irony of the situation is emphasised by the use of implicit sexual fantasies, helping to exaggerate the entire situation and in such a manner to create a space for irony. The second situation illustrated involves Briony regretting having blamed Robbie five years after the incident: “She [Briony] spoke slowly. ‘I’m very very sorry. I’ve caused you such terrible distress.’ They continued to stare at her, and she repeated herself. ‘I’m very sorry.’ It sounded so foolish and inadequate, as though she had knocked over a favourite houseplant, or forgotten a birthday.”⁴⁶ What is the key textual marker here is the incongruity of the comparison – the narrator compares her apologising for blaming an innocent person, resulting in his imprisonment, with knocking over a houseplant or forgetting someone’s birthday. On the other hand, her apology should be rather convenient, although insufficient. Additionally, this case reveals Briony’s state of mind and the contradictory nature of her feelings.

In addition to formal categories of verbal and situational irony, a significant element appearing in the novel emphasising the important theme of childhood versus adulthood, which will be analysed later on in this chapter, is self-deprecating irony. It is the type of verbal irony that is permitted only by means of free indirect discourse, in which case the reader knows that the narrator is not a person standing outside the text, but the character himself/herself. An example of such self-criticism is provided by Cecilia preparing for the family dinner: “Above all, she wanted to look as though she had not given the matter a moment’s thought, and that would take time.”⁴⁷ She tries to look as casual as possible, however, ironically, that may take even more time than an attempt to look distinguished; the contradiction of these two facts plays an important role and reflects the generally validated everyday irony appearing in everyone’s life, i.e. the paradox that nothing is really as it seems to be.

The ability of characters to ironise themselves also relates to their ability to ironise and to interpret irony in general. *Atonement* offers two types of characters, of which one is highly ironic and uses irony against each other, while the second type does not ironise and is not yet able to grasp the irony. The first type includes adults, including Cecilia, Robbie, Emily, Leon, but also Lola, and the second type is represented only by Briony in the first part of the novel, when she is thirteen. The

⁴⁵ *Atonement* 86.

⁴⁶ *Atonement* 348.

⁴⁷ *Atonement* 97.

twins are not included, as they do not encounter any significant situation that would be useful for this analysis. Concerning the first part of the novel, the character using the device of irony most evidently and most often is Cecilia. The ironic undertone, intimating that her internal monologues should not be taken literally and seriously, is always present and reveals not only Cecilia's mocking attitude towards her family, but more generally contributes to the humorous atmosphere of the novel. An example of this undertone is provided below:

Watching him during the first several minutes of his delivery, Cecilia felt a pleasant sinking sensation in her stomach as she contemplated how deliciously self-destructive it would be, almost erotic, to be married to a man so nearly handsome, so hugely rich, so unfathomably stupid. He would fill her with his big-faced children, all of them loud, boneheaded boys with a passion for guns and football and aeroplanes. She watched him in profile as he turned his head toward Leon. A long muscle twitched above the line of his jaw as he spoke. A few thick black hairs curled free of his eyebrow, and from his earholes there sprouted the same black growth, comically kinked like pubic hair. He should instruct his barber.⁴⁸

Observing the first sentence, it initially seems that Cecilia likes Marshall, whom the reflection concerns; nevertheless, the end of the sentence is surprising and does not correspond to the previous considerations. Similarly, the next sentences are in conflict with her opinion of Marshall – she feels more distaste than anything else for him, but still she imagines their children and them being a family – although in a mocking tone. In this sense, she may be even considered to be masochistic. In the same manner, the phrase “he would fill her with his big-faced children” is so literal that it cannot be taken as a matter of fact, but rather as mockery, or the fact that will never happen. This all is furthermore concluded by the very last sentence “He should instruct his barber”, which can be felt as an ironic commentary on his account.

As it has been already indicated, the difference between adults and children is essential. In this manner Lola, although she is only two years older than her cousin Briony, uses this device against her cousin unless she grasps it.

When Briony had shown her cousins the sales booth and the collection box the evening before, the twins had fought each other for the best front-of-house roles, but Lola had crossed her arms and paid decorous, grown-up compliments

⁴⁸ *Atonement* 50.

through a half smile that was too opaque for the detection of irony. ‘How marvellous. How awfully clever of you, Briony, to think of that. Did you really make it all by yourself?’ Briony suspected that behind her older cousin’s perfect manners was a destructive intent.⁴⁹

Clearly enough, this example shows Lola’s disrespect for her cousin’s invention and attempt to be a writer, although this disrespect is hidden under an irony which Briony cannot completely understand but she can only suspect. The reason is, or could be, that already Lola considers herself to be an adult, even though she is only fifteen. Her parents are in the process of a divorce, she has to take care of her little brother, so it is easy for her to identify herself as an adult who is now carrying the full responsibility. Moreover, this approach of Lola’s is emphasised several times in the novel, though only from Briony’s perspective. On the other hand, Briony still lives in her childhood world of princesses, princes and castles, and it is exactly during the first part of the novel when Briony slowly realises that her childhood is coming towards its end: “Her childhood had ended, she decided now as she came away from the swimming pool, the moment she tore down her poster,”⁵⁰ meaning the poster promoting her play for her family.

Another irony applying to Briony and Lola and their respective childhoods or adulthoods is that each of them obtain what they wanted. The motive for this consideration, and thus the context, is purely textual. The childhood and its attendant innocence that Briony wants to free herself from is indeed disrupted at the end of the first part, for as she blames the innocent boy she becomes guilty herself, she commits a crime. On the other hand, Lola, through her intercourse with Marshall also takes on her adulthood, although this is a positive experience – at least for her. However, what is ironic about Lola’s case is that at the end of the first part Briony’s and her roles are switched, and Lola is now the child who has been raped, who is taken care of, the innocent victim. This tension between childhood and innocence on the one hand and adulthood and guilt on the other thus implies the ironic undertone of a tragicomic nature, which indicates the eternal truth of contradiction – that nothing is really as you imagine it and mostly, it is rather worse.

The last brief remark regarding this theme, childhood versus adulthood, concerns the development of the characters towards irony, or growing up towards irony. As stated above, Briony as a child is not fully able to grasp irony. Nevertheless, five years later, in the second part of the novel, Briony becomes an ironist herself. Her comment on the emptying of the hospital where she works as a nurse and the other nurses’ opinions of this matter could serve as an example: “It seemed purely chance at first, an epidemic of good health that the less intelligent of the trainees_were

⁴⁹ *Atonement* 34.

⁵⁰ *Atonement* 160.

tempted to put down to their own improving techniques.”⁵¹ This sentence implies that Briony is directly mocking her colleagues and disparaging their intellect, whilst the phrase “improving techniques” represents only Briony’s hyperbole in reaction to the other nurses’ misinterpretations. In this case, the exaggeration may help as a textual marker; the context is created by the text itself and the reader’s comprehension of the situation. Also significant is the unusual collocation “epidemic of good health”, or the careful euphemism “less intelligent of the trainees.”

The second grand theme relating to irony, in addition to childhood versus adulthood, is war. Not particularly the Second World War, which actually forms a part of the novel’s setting, but rather war in general is ironised in several ways in order to demonstrate its stupidity and absurdity. Firstly, this is performed by means of mocking Paul Marshall, whose surname even refers to a military title, in addition to which he is the only character addressed by his surname. However, the most important fact about Marshall, except for his relationship with Lola, is his large chocolate making company. And since in 1935 everybody expects that another war is looming, Marshall considers how to promote his company and gain some money. So he invents special Army Amo bars: ““There’ll be one of these inside the kitbag of every soldier in the land. Standard issue.””⁵² In this case the ironist is not the character concerned, the irony is basically felt by the reader, who realises the absurdity of chocolate playing an important role in the war, and the context behind this feeling is the reader’s general experience and knowledge. In addition, the phrase “standard issue” – meaning chocolate as absolutely standard soldier’s issue – helps this feeling. Furthermore, the name of the chocolate “Amo”, Spanish for “I love”, is completely in contradiction with the concept of war and again refers to the basic comprehension of irony as two contradictory elements standing one against the other. This issue is often mentioned by other fictional characters and is even mocked, as in the example of Briony visiting Marshall and Lola’s wedding, in the third part of the novel: “But the scratches and bruises were long healed, and all her own statements at the time were to the contrary. Nor did the bride appear to be a victim, and she had her parents’ consent. More than that, surely; a chocolate magnate, the creator of Amo.”⁵³ This exaggeration and emphasis of the importance of Marshall in the apposition, plus the usage of word “surely”, demonstrates that the whole statement is meant as irony and the interpreter needs nothing but the textual context in order to detect it.

The second method used to ironise war is to illustrate its extremity. The ironic undertone highlights most of Robbie’s passages: “Yes, the plowing would still go on and there’d be a crop,

⁵¹*Atonement* 269.

⁵²*Atonement* 61.

⁵³*Atonement* 325.

someone to reap it and mill it, others to eat it, and not everyone would be dead . . .”⁵⁴ in which the very end of the sentence is meant literally, is unexpected and is in sharp contradiction with the beginning of the sentence, implying that during war human lives do not mean much. Also ironic are the struggles among soldiers fighting on the same side. Not only is there an enemy they have to face, they also fight to each other over nothing, for example if they were not helped by the air forces they would beat one of the air forces’ soldiers, even though he is not to blame: “Everyone had suffered, and now someone was going to pay,”⁵⁵ which in fact says that anyone can pay for the mistakes of others. The two following cases are even more general. The first may be applied both to war and to Robbie’s personal condition, in which the word “bury” could be taken metaphorically as a substitution for the word “imprison”: “Let the guilty bury the innocent, and let no one change the evidence.”⁵⁶ The second part of the sentence then implies the character’s attitude towards the first part of the sentence – that he does not agree, but by means of irony says the exact opposite. The last case may be considered as a kind of cosmic irony, which is generally valid: “It was common enough, to see so much death and want a child,”⁵⁷ indicating the ironic fact that when soldiers or humans in general see so much death, they tend to feel an urge to create a new life, even though that this is endangered in the same manner as the people who have just died were.

The very last point before the conclusion of this analysis of the novel will be the mention of cosmic or tragic irony, in which the interpreter positions himself as a judge, who by means of a detached view gains the ability to evaluate the situation “from above.” Such a situation occurs in Robbie’s reflection on Briony, on how he taught her to swim and how she after jumped into the water to see if he would have saved her: “She drew herself up a little. ‘I want to thank you for saving my life. I’ll be eternally grateful to you.’”⁵⁸ Since this memory appears in the second part of the novel and the reader already knows what Briony has done to Robbie, the sentence relating to eternal gratitude may be seen as ironic – in relation to what reader knows, based on the textual context. This kind of irony refers to the unpredictability of human life or fate.

Similarly the title of the novel may be regarded as ironic due to the following facts: in the last part of the novel, the reader learns that what he is reading is supposedly Briony’s novel. For that reason, the title of the novel then indicates the reason why the novel has been written. However, the purpose has not been fulfilled, as Briony finally reveals:

⁵⁴ *Atonement* 235.

⁵⁵ *Atonement* 251.

⁵⁶ *Atonement* 262 – 263.

⁵⁷ *Atonement* 241.

⁵⁸ *Atonement* 232.

The problem these fifty-nine years has been this: how can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God? There is no one, no entity or higher form that she can appeal to, or be reconciled with, or that can forgive her. There is nothing outside her. In her imagination she has set the limits and the terms. No atonement for God, or novelists, even if they are atheists.⁵⁹

On this account, the atonement was merely an attempt which did not reach its desired goal, and the entire novel, of which, as Briony admits, she even wrote more than one version, is useless – by her own criteria. Here lies the irony in the incessant human attempt to accomplish something which is nevertheless never achieved and is based only on the textual context and the reader's life experience; additionally, the postmodern concept of irony, as described in the chapter relating to methodology, may be applied here.

3.1.4 Dramatic encounters and situations in a different light

The analysis attempts to introduce model examples illustrating the use of irony, its recognition and function: in addition to verbal, situational or cosmic irony, this analysis points to two significant themes that could be associated with the concept of irony in this novel, namely childhood versus adulthood and the development of characters towards irony, and war. The pre-eminent type of irony with respect to these themes is verbal irony.

The context needed for recognition of irony is mostly textual, circumstantial or based on the reader's common knowledge and experience, and the most frequent textual markers are contradiction, incongruity or literalisation.

Proceeding from the types of functions introduced in the methodology, *Atonement* provides various functions of irony: aggregative function (including adults using irony and excluding children who do not understand), assailing and oppositional (in cases when a character offends another character), distancing (when characters express their disapproving attitude), ludic (arising humour) and complicating (making situations and the fictional world difficult to predict or understand).

More generally, all manifestations of irony have the same or similar function: to emphasise the negative attitude of a character – ironist towards another, to highlight the mockery of one character – ironist towards another, to create a humorous atmosphere or to outline a more serious problem hidden beneath a seemingly ordinary issue. The dramatic encounters in McEwan's novel

⁵⁹ *Atonement* 371.

might be understood as a challenge for the readers. As Peter Childs says in *The Fiction of Ian McEwan*:

By concentrating the act of ethical decision making in these dramatic scenes, McEwan creates clear points of identification for his readers, who must bring their own sense of judgement to the situations. The self-consciousness of these key encounters thus extends beyond the texts themselves, as readers are induced to reflect upon the values underlying their own dealings with others.⁶⁰

Therefore, the reader's response to the ironic effect imposed by the text is essential. The ironic undertone which pervades the entire novel and may be read between the lines contributes to the atmosphere of the novel, makes serious themes lighter and causes the reader and interpreter to reflect on the story and more general issues arising from the reading.

⁶⁰ Peter Childs, and Nicolas Tredell, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)15.

3.2 The Child in Time

3.2.1 *Loss of a child and life afterwards*

The Child in Time, published in 1987, narrates the story of Stephen Lewis, a writer of children's books, and his attempt to cope with the tragic loss of his three year old daughter, Kate. At the beginning of this chapter the plot of the novel will be briefly introduced, followed by an analysis of the novel in terms of irony.

The main character, Stephen Lewis, accidentally became a writer of children's books when he published his first book entitled *Lemonade*, originally meant to be literature for adults. He is also a member of the Official Commission on Child Care and is married to Julie. The breaking point in Stephen's life comes when his young daughter Kate is kidnapped in the supermarket while waiting for her father to pay for the shopping. The novel then describes the events almost three years after this incident, the disintegration of the Lewis family, the story of Stephen's parents, Charles Darke, Stephen's good friend and former colleague from the Commission, and his wife Thelma.

The novel is divided into nine chapters, of which each is introduced by a quotation from the fictional text, *The Authorised Childcare Handbook*, supposedly published by HMSO (Her / His Majesty's Stationery Office).

3.2.2 *The world through Stephen Lewis's eyes*

Although the novel is narrated in the third person singular, the narration should not be considered to be objective. Similarly as in the case of *Atonement*, McEwan uses the method of free indirect speech to provide the reader with a direct insight into the character's mind and by this method builds a closer character – reader relationship. Due to the fact that the only point of view presented in the novel is Stephen's and that the previous chapters of this diploma thesis have already dealt comprehensively with free indirect speech, only three arguments will be provided to support the type of narrative perspective in this novel.

The first argument is based on the scene in which Stephen believes he saw Kate in the playground in front of the school. He decides to find her, asks the headmaster about her family and other information; in any case, the girl is not Kate. In this situation the little girl is firstly referred to by the narrator as "Kate,"⁶¹ but later on, as his doubts grow, only as "the girl"⁶². Therefore, the situation cannot be seen as from the point of view of an objective narrator, since if he wanted to remain objective he either would have already known and would not have changed the manner of

⁶¹ Ian McEwan, *The Child in Time* (London: Vintage, 1992) 148.

⁶² *The Child in Time* 152.

addressing, or he would not have called her Kate at all. This situation must then be narrated from Stephen's point of view.

The second example demonstrating the usage of free indirect speech concerns the situation in which Stephen visits Julie in her house: "It was a house such as a child might draw."⁶³ This brief sentence implies that the idea presumably belongs to Stephen, who is not only surrounded by the presence or absence of children, thanks to his work as well as his private life, but who is also obsessed by it. For this reason it is logical and expected that he easily sees anything relating to children anywhere.

The third and last example again describes the narrator's point of view overlapping with the main character's point of view. "The boy steadied himself against the tree while he lifted a leg and scratched above his ankle with the tip of his scuffed shoe. 'I dunno. Jus' waiting.'"⁶⁴ "The boy" here refers to Charles Darke, who is definitely not a boy anymore, and thus indicates Stephen's view of the situation. An objective narrator could not call a grown man "the boy". The manner of addressing more likely reflects Stephen's attitude towards his old friend, how he should accept him now that his friend feels like a child and longs for his long lost childhood.

Free indirect speech is moreover mixed together with the passages including indirect speech, as in the following example: "If he could only live in the present he might breathe freely. But I don't like the present, he thought, and picked up his things."⁶⁵ There are, of course, more such examples using indirect speech, nevertheless, they do not contradict the role of the narrator representing the main character's point of view.

To conclude, within the issue of narrative perspective important for the purpose of the following analysis of irony, the role of ironist is played by the main character of the novel, Stephen Lewis, and the role of interpreter by the reader.

3.2.3 *Man versus Universe*

The first element relating to the theme of this diploma thesis, irony, is the title itself. It is not clearly evident to whom, which character and his/her life story the title relates to, or whether it relates to more characters at once or even to all of them. As expected, the first target character entering the reader's mind is the main protagonist and his lost child, Kate, who represented only a short segment in Stephen's life, since she was kidnapped when she was less than three years old. However, Kate becomes an inner part of time, the element determining how fast or slowly time runs: "Kate's

⁶³ *The Child in Time* 66.

⁶⁴ *The Child in Time* 106 – 107.

⁶⁵ *The Child in Time* 103.

growing up had become the essence of time itself... He was father of an invisible child. “⁶⁶ Therefore, Kate might be the first candidate for the interpretation of the title.

The next candidate is the second Stephen and Julie’s child. Subsequently, and by virtue of the loss, there is a long period of time during which Stephen and his wife Julie are separated, live alone, until finally, at the end of the novel, they end up having another child together, who is conceived during the time of their separation. This new child, who joins them together as a family again, comes exactly at the right time that is demonstrated by Julie’s saying:

“I had to wait, I had to have time. When I first found out, last July, I was furious with myself, and with you. I felt cheated. It seemed so unfair. I came out here for solitude, I wanted to make myself stronger. This seemed exactly the wrong time, and I was thinking seriously about an abortion. But all that was just a moment of adjustment, two or three weeks. Being alone by choice can make you very clear-headed. I knew I couldn't really face another loss. And the more I thought about it, it did seem extraordinary, the ease with which it happened. Remember how long it took us to have Kate? I realised that what I meant by the wrong time was really the inconvenient time. I began to think of this as a gift. There had to be a deeper patterning to time, its wrong and right moments can't be that limited. ”⁶⁷

The irony here is connected with the concept of time and the paradoxes it brings. The lost child once divided the family, because her absence was unbearable and the family, incomplete as a result, could not function anymore: “Their loss had set them on separate paths... Being together heightened their sense of loss.”⁶⁸ However, in the course of time the irreplaceable child is in a way replaced by a new one which brings the family together again – at the right time – and in that manner becomes the next character that could represent the key to the title. The irony inserted in between the lines here only highlights natural human behaviour, developing and changing emotions, acceptance of complicated life situation and tragic experience. It indicates that paradox is an inevitable part of human life in this absurd world. Concerning the formal analysis, this irony is based on the reader’s knowledge of the text, his capacity for empathy, but mainly the contradictory character of the beginning of the novel and its end – a primary inability and unwillingness to

⁶⁶ See *The Child in Time* 8.

⁶⁷ *The Child in Time* 213.

⁶⁸ See *The Child in Time* 52 – 23.

continue within incomplete family without its beloved member and a final recovery from this situation with the help of a new child, replacing this member.

This concept of development may be linked to one more case of irony: “Any five-year-old girl – through boys would do – gave substance to her continued existence.”⁶⁹ Similarly as in the previous paragraph, immediately after the loss the parents are naturally obsessed with the image of their unique daughter, or child in general. Yet as the time and despair of parents, or in this particular case Stephen, go, simply any child would suffice to fill or rather relieve the absence of the missing one, even a child of a different sex. The irony here is again based on the paradoxes and contradictions, which increase with the flow of time and belong to the natural development of human coping with tragic loss.

Returning to the ambiguity of the title, the second level on which it is to be understood is Stephen’s own childhood. During the course of the novel, the reader learns that his own existence was threatened, since his mother considered an abortion because of his father’s attitude. He was a child at an inconvenient time. This part of the novel is influenced by magical realism, as Ian McEwan admits in his other novel *Saturday*⁷⁰, when Stephen’s mother, Claire, regards her unborn baby in the restaurant window: “I just knew that I was looking at my own child. If you like, I was looking at you... It was at the window now, a complete self, begging her for its existence...”⁷¹ This gives the impression of Stephen’s alter ego saving his own life in some kind of timeless space outside of reality. The irony regarding this event is again cosmic or tragic, and consists in the fact that Stephen and Julie could not have changed the destiny of their daughter, they could not have prevented her kidnapping and have lost her; they did not have any choice. On the other hand, another couple thought about abortion of their unborn child and was given the choice and even though they decided to have a baby, the fact that some can choose and decide upon the voluntary loss of their child and others cannot, might be called an irony of fate.

Moreover, also the contradiction between Stephen’s childhood and the childhood of his daughter, thus no childhood, at least any childhood which would be known to the main protagonist, provides space for cosmic irony. Stephen’s childhood was seemingly perfect and precisely ordered: “It was a secure and ordered world, hierarchical and caring.”⁷² This illusion continues into Stephen’s adulthood, and thus paradoxically after the kidnapping Stephen escapes from his

⁶⁹ *The Child in Time* 8.

⁷⁰ In Ian McEwan’s novel *Saturday* [Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005) 67.] the main protagonist Henry Perowne comments on magical realist literature by quoting the scene where the unborn Stephen watches his mother through the window of the pub and thus influences her decision not to undergo the abortion.

⁷¹ See *The Child in Time* 175.

⁷² *The Child in Time* 73.

daughter's childhood into his own long past one – by means of memories and frequently visiting his parents; they provide him a surrogate home, seemingly the only safe place in the world where nothing bad can ever happen and where memories of Kate do not exist, which is the unspoken rule. As Claire says about her garden but may as well be understood in connection with Kate: “I know”, she said. ‘But I like to see things grow. I don’t like to see them die.’”⁷³ In this manner, the escape from childhood into another childhood seems to be rather hypocritical, and the irony here is based primarily on the reader’s feeling of the contradiction, specifically the escape to nowhere. The basis for such a feeling is the text itself.

Another child in time from the title of the novel is Charles Darke, Stephen’s former colleague from the Commission. In this case, what is ironic is the fact that it is not enough that everything in Stephen’s life relates to children, but even his best friend due to his mental illness changes into a child – in his own appropriate time – which the main character regards as a betrayal:

Stephen had felt that he was the one who had been betrayed. The loss was all his. And he padded himself with sensible objections: Charles's fake boyhood, and Thelma's encouragement of it, was a private, marital business. They needed Stephen, much as some couples need an observer to heighten their sexual pleasure, or dramatise and validate their rows. He was being used.⁷⁴

The context of this irony is the content of the book. It is furthermore supported by the verbal irony supposedly expressing Stephen’s attitude to the whole situation: “Once a businessman and politician, now he was a successful pre-pubescent.”⁷⁵ Concerning the textual markers, the collocation “successful pre-pubescent” is purely ironic, since it only implies that Charles really behaves like a child, a little boy, that he has completely lost his mind. On the other hand, it presumably does not imply that Charles is “successful pre-pubescent” because he has managed to build a tree-house. This irony is based on the sharp and bitter contradiction, exaggeration and the textual and circumstantial context. Another such example of verbal irony having the same function of expressing the main protagonist’s attitude and also contributing to a relieved tone while dealing with serious themes is the following sentence: “He could no longer bear to humour the forty-nine-year-old schoolboy, nor did he dare upset him.”⁷⁶ This commentary again bitterly reacts to Charles’ mental illness by linking

⁷³ *The Child in Time* 87.

⁷⁴ *The Child in Time* 183.

⁷⁵ *The Child in Time* 109.

⁷⁶ *The Child in Time* 113.

his age of forty-nine with the word schoolboy, indicating the sharp contrast between the physical and mental condition of a grown man feeling like a little boy. The textual marker helping to reveal the irony in this case, as well as in the previous one, is lexical – a collocation which cannot be understood literally. The context is thus the text and the reader’s common knowledge concerning the age of schoolboys.

An example of situational irony relating to Charles Darke is the fallout of the advice of Thelma Charles’ wife’s – she told him to take responsibility for his own life: “And that is exactly what he did.”⁷⁷ Meaning he took the advice literally, or more precisely letting himself die by freezing outside near his tree-house, he became fully responsible for his life by ending it, which moreover only contributed to the number of losses in Stephen’s life. In this manner, Charles also becomes responsible for his death. The textual marker here is literalisation.

The final level on which the title may be understood is the relationship between Thelma and science: “Science was Thelma’s child (Charles was another)...”⁷⁸ The verbal irony in this case refers to Charles’ illness, not meaning what it literally says – based on the presumption that the reader knows the text. Moreover, Thelma’s great issue is the concept of time, and thus via her the reader is provided with supposedly scientific notions concerning time. Not only does she claim that “time is variable,”⁷⁹ she also mentions the concept of time in connection with childhood – in this manner referring to the title itself:

“Think how humanised and approachable scientists would be if they could join in the really important conversations about time, and without thinking they had the final word – the mystic’s experience of timelessness, the chaotic unfolding of time in dreams, the Christian moment of fulfillment and redemption, the annihilated time of deep sleep, the elaborate time schemes of novelists, poets, daydreamers, the infinite, unchanging time of childhood.”

This statement by Thelma in fact covers the entire novel and various concepts and approaches to time appearing therein.

The last brief point concerning the title of the novel is not relevant to the theme of this diploma thesis but might be mentioned only as a matter of interest and to complete the issue of title. Imagining the title as an ellipse, several different adjectives could be filled in on the background of the previous paragraphs: the child at the right or convenient time in case of Stephen’s and Julie’s

⁷⁷ *The Child in Time* 203.

⁷⁸ See *The Child in Time* 34.

⁷⁹ *The Child in Time* 117.

new-born child (even though there was a time when even the time for this child was inconvenient), in the case of Charles who becomes a child in his individually convenient time, and the child at the wrong or inconvenient time as in the example of the unborn Stephen. The categorisation of Kate's or Thelma's cause would be too constrictive and as a result shall be omitted.

In addition to the title, the other important issue relating to the theme of this diploma thesis is the introduction to each chapter. This is provided by brief quotations from *The Authorised Childcare Handbook*, supposedly written by HMSO (Her / His Majesty's Stationery Office), as mentioned above. Moreover, this fictional book is considered to be a work of the Official Commission on Child Care, for whom Stephen Lewis works. These short introductions thus represent part of his job and are entirely relevant. The irony with regard to these introductions is based on the fact that they provide suggestions on how to educate children properly and what the relationship parent – child should look like, whilst paradoxically, in Stephen's life there is no more child to be educated, but only the painful absence of the child, which occupies Stephen's entire private life and may be considered his obsession. From this point of view, these introductions are purely ironic and indicate that Stephen's job and his private life are in such a contrast and connected at the same time – he is interested in childcare and suffers from the loss of his own child – that the irony based on this recognition is to this extent tragic or, in other words, cosmic. This irony depends on the reader's knowledge relating to the plot of the novel in connection with the subject of the introductions. Reading the introductions, the reader may even ask: "What are those introductions good for if the main topic of the book is the loss of the child?"

Moreover, focusing on the particular introductions in more detail, some are ironic by themselves. Immediately the first extract says: "... and for those parents, for too many years misguided by the pallid relativism of self-appointed childcare experts ..."⁸⁰ Criticising the childcare experts may in this case, when the authors of this extract should be those same experts, seem like irony – from the point of view of the reader who does not blindly believe in the self-promotion of *The Authorised Childcare Handbook's* authors. On the other hand, some introductions are ironic with respect to the content of the book and may even appear to be discreetly pointing to the particular parts of the plot. This is the case of the introduction to chapter eight: "On these occasions the hard-pressed parent may find some solace in the time-honoured analogy between childhood and disease – a physically and mentally incapacitating condition, distorting emotions, perceptions and reason, from which growing up is the slow and difficult recovery."⁸¹ This extract could relate to Charles Darke, who due to the pressure of work and other circumstances in his private life

⁸⁰ *The Child in Time* 7.

⁸¹ *The Child in Time* 179.

eventually loses his mind and mentally returns to his childhood. Thus childhood and disease in his case is not only an analogy but a simple fact. The irony in this introduction consists in the inconspicuous notice in relation to the “real” situation in the novel. Additionally, the parent’s solace may refer to Thelma, Darke’s wife, who is desperate due to her husband’s condition and paradoxically, it is evident that her husband cannot grow out of his disease, from his childhood, since it is precisely this childhood – disease into which he has grown. The only possibility of further growth is death.

Another theme which may be analysed in terms of irony is the celebration of the daughter’s birthday when she is long gone, disappeared, and especially in the case when this celebration proceeds as if she was present – with cake, presents, singing happy birthday: “The thought was laughable. It presented a parody of bereavement. The willful pathos of it made him groan out loud. It would be play-acting, a pretense to a madness he did not really feel. But the thought grew... It was folly, it was weakness, it would cause him needless pain.”⁸² The irony here lies in the contradiction between what the main protagonist, or a human being in general, wants and what he thinks he should do in order to reconcile himself with the Universe which took away his daughter. Nevertheless, what Stephen really wants is to feel normal again, to erase or, in other words, forget his loss – not his daughter; however, and again paradoxically, his daughter and his loss are the same thing. Stephen even regards the entire situation as “an offering to fate, or a challenge – Look, I’ve brought the present, now you bring back the girl.”⁸³ In this part of the novel, the main character resembles a child who innocently and naively believes in those secret contracts with the Universe. Moreover, the birthday presents for Kate are all connected with magic or witches, as if this should help to even strengthen a magic force and bring her back home.

The situation around Kate’s birthday is so sad that the irony underlying Stephen’s behaviour helps to make it rather tragicomic. Stephen knows very well that his behaviour is irrational, however and on the other hand, this irrationality is the important factor enabling him to return into his normal life, the rational one: “To buy a toy would undo two years of adjustment, it would be irrational, indulgent, self-destructive; and weak, above all, weak. It was the weak who failed to maintain the line between the world as it was and the world as they wanted it to be. Don’t be weak, he told himself, try to survive.”⁸⁴ The argument for the irrationality leading to its exact opposite is subsequently demonstrated in the following extract: “Stephen came to feel that if he had not exorcised his obsession, he had blunted it. He was beginning to face the difficult truth that Kate was no longer a living presence; she was not an invisible girl at his side whom he knew

⁸² See *The Child in Time* 125.

⁸³ See *The Child in Time* 126.

⁸⁴ *The Child in Time* 126.

intimately... He had been mad, now he felt purged.”⁸⁵ In this manner, irrational behaviour unchains Stephen’s constricted emotions, now he can be sure that there is nothing more he could do for his lost daughter, he has already tried everything – even the impossible. Moreover, this action contributes to the continuation of his illusion relating to the existence of Kate: “Before all else, it would be an act of faith in his daughter’s continued existence.”⁸⁶ The irony here is based on the circumstantial and textual environment and may be recognised by means of numerous contradictions, such as the effort to remain rational and wise versus the effort to do at least something more, try anything, and consequently the effort to reduce irrational behaviour, to make it seem less irrational: “Now the pile (of toys) mocked him for weak-headedness. It was a pathetic abundance. He heaped the parcels on to the table, packing them close to make them seem fewer.”⁸⁷ This triple contradiction is further supported by the exaggeration in Stephen’s action and repetition reflected through his stream of consciousness, revealed by means of free indirect speech. Except for the function already mentioned above – tragicomic effect and euphemism of the situation – the ironic undertone could also provide the reader with an insight into the character’s difficult position and with a space for consideration.

Another occurrence of irony in *The Child in Time* relates to repetition and the fact of how the events paradoxically repeat in the course of time; additionally, the repetition is one of the textual markers highlighting irony. There are two similar situations communicating the same point, namely the loneliness of a person who is not alone at the given moment. The first situation takes place at the very beginning of the novel, when Kate is kidnapped and the people in the supermarket try to find her: “The lost child was everyone’s property. But Stephen was alone.”⁸⁸ Besides the implication that even though everyone is helpful and Stephen is not alone in his search, there is an additional meaning which renders the sentence ambiguous: “the lost child was everyone’s property” might be taken literally and mean that everyone and anyone could have stolen the girl. Therefore, two textual markers indicate the presence of irony – the contradiction between what reality looks like and what it feels like, and literalisation. The second situation occurs at the very end of the novel, when Julie is giving birth to their child: “He called out to her, ‘Julie, Julie, I’m here with you.’ But she was alone.”⁸⁹ This is exactly the same case: the contradiction between the physical appearance of the situation and personal experience, communicating that even though a million people may be trying to help, sometimes the feeling of loneliness prevails and cannot be helped. Paradoxically, the first

⁸⁵ *The Child in Time* 153.

⁸⁶ *The Child in Time* 126.

⁸⁷ *The Child in Time* 130.

⁸⁸ *The Child in Time* 18.

⁸⁹ *The Child in Time* 218.

and the second situations are connected in one more aspect relating to contradiction – in the first situation a child is lost, figuratively dies, whilst in the second situation a new child is born.

The next example of repetition concerns an imaginary circle comprising two generations coming back to the same place to make an important decision: “He decided on the tree where his mother had schemed his own termination... It was then that he understood that his experience there had not only been reciprocal with his parents’, it had been a continuation, a kind of repetition.”⁹⁰ The irony in this case is cosmic and applies to the supernatural force, or fate, which links people’s paths on different levels of time. The function of such irony is to raise the storyline to a higher, mystical level, allowing the reader to comprehend and interpret it within a wider scope and context.

Besides cosmic irony, there are also examples of situational irony irrespective to any of the above-mentioned issues, and these also deserve to be quoted. The first extract illustrates the monologue of Stephen’s tennis coach concerning Stephen’s game: ““You are passive. You are mentally enfeebled. You wait for things to happen, you stand there hoping they’re going to go your way... You’re inert, spineless, you’re half asleep, you don’t like yourself... You’re not all here...”⁹¹ What is ironic about this monologue is its additional meaning, as the coach’s speech may refer not only to Stephen’s tennis style but his entire attitude towards life. In this manner the monologue should be taken literally, and the reader needs only the textual context, the content of the novel, to reveal the irony. The second and the last example is from the beginning of the novel and takes place after Kate is kidnapped, not found, and Stephen is supposed to take his shopping and go home: “He remembered that he had not paid. The salmon and tin foil were free gifts, compensation.”⁹² The salmon and tin foil as compensation for the lost child clearly cannot be meant literally, besides the loss of the child cannot be compensated at all, as it is the conventional approach and common sense. Presuming that the word “compensation” is not directly pronounced by the manager of the supermarket who attempts to resolve the situation, the ironist is the main protagonist himself (recognised by means of free indirect speech), bitterly commenting on his tragic situation. Thus the situational irony may be understood as well as verbal. The textual marker in this case is the incongruity consisting in the notion of compensation for the lost child, and even worse the compensation by means of the salmon and tin foil. The context required is circumstantial and textual.

⁹⁰ *The Child in Time* 210 – 211.

⁹¹ *The Child in Time* 157.

⁹² *The Child in Time* 20.

3.2.4 Contemplation of tragedy and tragicomedy

The novel has been analysed in terms of several great issues: the title bringing out the relation to several different levels of interpretation, the meaningful introductions to the chapters, the cosmic irony applying to supernatural versus rational, repetition, or the notion of circularity inside the novel, and the examples of situational and verbal irony. Speaking in more general terms, what prevails in *The Child in Time* is the cosmic or tragic irony corresponding to the subtle mood of the novel and the indefinite concept of time pervading through every tiny digression therein.

The context essential for an analysis of irony in this novel is mostly textual, and the textual markers indicating the presence of irony are in particular those of contradiction, incongruity and literalisation.

With regard to the function of irony, the most distinctive is the aggregative function connecting the main protagonists and the reader, who is drawn in this manner into the tragic situation and can consider the various patterns of behaviour, including his own, which may be applied when a parent loses his/her child. The effect is a challenge to the reader's contemplation. The next important function is distancing – providing the necessary distance for an evaluation of the situation and allowing the discussion of serious themes in a less than serious manner. The ludic function cannot be missing, since even McEwan's more serious novels still do not dispense with comic and tragicomic situations. A complicating function may be observed in the above quoted extracts dealing with ambiguity, and the last function, reinforcing, highlights the important passages of the novel while at the same time challenging the reader's consideration.

Peter Childs comments on the main protagonist's psychological development over the course of the novel as follows: "His journey of discovery is facilitated by the text's unusual generic composition, which mixes the gritty realism of the city with magical passages in which time is experienced in alternative ways"⁹³. In this manner, mixing the magical and coarsely realistic settings of the serious theme contributes to the occasionally thrilling mood of the novel. In fact, such a serious theme as the one presented by Ian McEwan in this novel may be a source of high tragicomedy only thanks to the author's delicate handling of the theme with irony and an ironic undertone, which not only prevents the novel from being unpleasant reading, but also raises it to a higher level – ensuring that the experience of reading has a lasting and profound effect on its readers.

⁹³ Childs and Tredell 18.

3.3 The Innocent

3.3.1 The unexpected adventures of the innocent

The plot of Ian McEwan's novel from 1990, *The Innocent*, takes place at the beginning of the Cold War in Berlin, to where the main character, Leonard Marnham, comes from London to help with an operation concerning the building of a tunnel from the American to the Russian sector in order to tap the wires of the Soviet High Command.

Leonard Marnham is a British Post Office engineer in charge of repairing the tape recorders used in the tunnel. Besides the illustration of complicated British-American relationships, in terms of the operation, the characteristics of the British-German relationship are revealed when Leonard falls in love with Maria Eckdorf. Maria is five years older and teaches Leonard not only to love. The couple are even about to get married when Maria's ex-husband, the violent alcoholic Otto, appears and the two of them kill him in self-defence. And since Otto was friendly with every policeman in Berlin and nobody would believe their story, Maria decides to cut up and hide the body. Desperate, Leonard steals American equipment from the tunnel – the cases – in which he tries to get rid of the pieces of Maria's ex-husband. Unfortunately, these cases end up in the tunnel and Leonard, in order to be saved, betrays the operation, tunnel is discovered by Russians, and the cases are forgotten.

In 1987, more than thirty years after the incident and after Leonard leaves Berlin and Maria, everything is explained in Maria's letter. Leonard learns that it was not he who revealed the tunnel to Russians, the Russians had known about the tunnel from the very beginning. He also learns that he was saved only by Bob Glass, his tunnel supervisor and Maria's future husband, who was the cause of Leonard's jealousy. At the very end, Leonard expresses his wish to meet Maria again.

3.3.2 The single point of view

The narrative perspective of *The Innocent* is, again, free indirect discourse. The whole story is supposedly narrated from the point of view of the main protagonist, Leonard, which frequently leads to ambiguity – as in the case of Maria, whose thoughts for this reason cannot be taken as reliable information provided to reader. The following example should help to illustrate the narrative situation: “Her fear of being physically abused had receded. He would not be obliged to do anything she did not want. She was free, they both were free, to invent their own terms. They could be partners in invention. And she really had discovered for herself this shy Englishman with the steady gaze and the long lashes, she had him first, she would have him all to herself. These

thoughts she formulated later in solitude.”⁹⁴ Based on the view that the narrator’s perspective is equal to Leonard’s perspective, as the following paragraphs should demonstrate, the example above may be understood to represent Leonard’s reflections on Maria’s attitude towards their relationship, or, in other words, to be purely his imagination. The only other possible explanation would be an immediate change of narrative perspective which, however, does not occur anywhere else in the text and is therefore improbable.

The fact that the story is narrated from Leonard’s point of view might be demonstrated by several arguments. The first of them relates to stylistics: the text is reminiscent of the spoken word and includes fillers, implying that the narrator is thinking about what he is saying: “It was, it had been, quite a triumph.”⁹⁵ In this example, “it had been” suggests the development in the narrator’s train of thought and testifies to the immediateness of the statement, a spontaneity which would not be present in an objective narrator’s perspective. The same train of thought and subjectivity of narration is illustrated by the following example: “It was just this combination of abandonment and loving attention that was too good to be looked at, too perfect for him, and he had to avert his eyes, or close them, and think of... of, yes, a circuit diagram, a particularly intricate and lovely one he had committed to memory during the fitting of signal activation units to the Ampex machines.”⁹⁶ Not only does the section “and think of... of, yes,…” indicate the narrator’s contemplation or even dreaming of the subject, but also this example presents his stream of consciousness, which can be expressed exactly by means of free indirect speech.

Another argument in favour of free indirect speech as the narrative perspective of *The Innocent* is based on expressiveness and the use of a specific register. One of the major themes in the novel is the apparent fight between the Americans, British, Russians and Germans during the Cold War. This is not a battle between nations, but between individuals who, although they are supposed to be cooperating, do not always act in this manner (this theme will be analysed further later in this chapter). As a result, after Leonard’s arrival to Berlin, Germans are referred to as “Nazis,”⁹⁷ whereas after his meeting and falling in love with Maria, they suddenly “were no longer ex-Nazis, they were Maria’s compatriots.”⁹⁸ Similarly, Leonard’s co-worker Glass, who is American, is not referred to by his name but only as “the American.”⁹⁹ These examples demonstrate clearly enough the projection of a personal view and its relation to the person or nationality into a seemingly neutral narrative in the third person singular. The example concerning “Nazis” moreover

⁹⁴ Ian McEwan, *The Innocent* (New York: Bantam, 1991) 72 – 73.

⁹⁵ *The Innocent* 119.

⁹⁶ *The Innocent* 78.

⁹⁷ See *The Innocent* 21.

⁹⁸ See *The Innocent* 85.

⁹⁹ See *The Innocent* 29.

reflects the narrator's attitude, modified by his new personal experience and the influence of this experience on his point of view.

To conclude the narrative perspective section, it is necessary to revisit the introductory consideration relating to ambiguity of free indirect speech in Maria's passages. Pursuant the previous arguments and examples, it is now evident that the narrator's point of view is not absolutely reliable, that the whole story presented to the reader is highly subjective and that the only information the reader obtains from Maria is included in her letter inserted in the second part of the novel (taking place in 1987), which explains the course of events that Leonard had misunderstood years ago.

3.3.3 The versions of innocence and virginity

The main issue relating to the occurrence of irony in the novel is highlighted by the title: *The Innocent*. During the course of the novel, this term is used variously and applies particularly to the main character, Leonard. Nevertheless, since the theme of Leonard's innocence, its successive modification and development are a rather complex matter, the analysis of irony will first deal with another theme linked with innocence – the clash of nationalities represented by the individuals fighting their own prejudices.

This clash might be observed on several levels, not meant hierarchically. The first level is occupied by British-American competition rather than mutual cooperation. The operation undertaking the building of the tunnel is an American project and the reason why British are invited to help is purely political, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

[Glass:] "I'll tell you. It's all political. You think we couldn't lay those taps ourselves? You think we don't have amplifiers of our own? It's for politics that we're letting you in on this. We're supposed to have a special relationship with you guys, that's why..." [Leonard:] The effort of being polite was stifling, and aggression was, for him, emotionally impossible. He said, "It's very kind of you, Bob. Thank you." The irony fell dead.¹⁰⁰

As the example indicates, the irony present in the American-British relationship is evident. Firstly, the statement "it's for politics that we're letting you in on this" and primarily the verb chosen implies the pointlessness of Leonard's presence in Berlin and the American attitude to British, who are not as competent as their overseas superiors in the tunnel. The last sentence "the irony fell

¹⁰⁰ See *The Innocent* 28.

dead”, means that, from Leonard’s point of view, Glass did not understand his irony and took it literally. This might be, however, taken as irony itself, since it could also mean that Glass is not intelligent enough to grasp the irony. The other example of ironising Americans may be seen in the description of the food in the canteen, where French fries are served all the time. In comparison to this American stereotype, the narrator expresses the nostalgia for typically British food: “Suddenly he missed his daily steak and chips.”¹⁰¹ In this manner, both nationalities’ stereotypes are mocked.

On the other hand, the Americans ironise British incompetence in their work and their stereotypical gentility, or snobbery: “The British. It’s hard to make those guys at the stadium take anything seriously. They’re so busy being gentlemen. They don’t do their jobs.”¹⁰² The collocation of “busy” and “gentlemen” here reveals the exaggeration, and evokes humour cloaked in irony.

Back to the title of the novel, the Americans are those referred to as the innocents. There are two occurrences in the novel where this proposition is to be found. The first is the ironical view of the Americans as grown men playing outside the operation site, listening to music, drinking chocolate milk and “taking it easy” while undertaking a secret operation during the Cold War: “Americans thought of ‘Heartbreak Hotel’ and ‘Tutti Frutti’ and playing catch on the rough ground outside, grown men with chocolate-milk moustaches playing ball. They were the innocent.”¹⁰³ The second reference is not ironic; it is simply the statement of Russell, Leonard’s co-worker, who when criticising the Russians, says: “We gave way, we were the innocents.”¹⁰⁴

The next relationship, briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Americans versus the Russians, is the source of situational irony: Leonard, Russell and Glass are sitting in the bar drinking vodka whilst sharply criticising the Soviet Union. The irony in this situation resides in drinking the famous product of the arch enemy, whilst swearing at him at the same time. The context on which the irony is based is therefore circumstantial and textual.

Besides the American-British and American-Russian relationships, the latter of which in principle creates the entire setting and intrigue of the novel, the greatest part of the plot concerns the British-German relationship – either in more general terms, as far as the rivalry during the Second World War, or taken word for word, as in case of the relationship between Leonard and Maria. The development of their relationship, influenced by political situation, has been already foreshadowed in the narrative perspective and will be analysed in the following paragraphs in terms of irony. The content and scope of application of the novel’s title and its modification relates precisely to this intimate relationship.

¹⁰¹ *The Innocent* 63.

¹⁰² *The Innocent* 11.

¹⁰³ *The Innocent* 206.

¹⁰⁴ *The Innocent* 42.

Primarily, it is necessary to take into account the denotation and connotations of the word innocent. The online Oxford Dictionary defines innocent (as a noun) as “a pure, guileless, or naive person or a person involved by chance in a situation, especially a victim of crime or war”¹⁰⁵. After substituting the noun innocent for Leonard, both definitions may be applied ironically to describe his personality, whilst a non-ironical and literal meaning of the word is valid only at the very beginning of the novel. An analysis of irony in connection with the gradual transformation of the attribute “innocent” leading to its opposite, “guilty”, “informed” or “wicked”, will be conducted step by step in the following paragraphs.

After arriving in Berlin, Leonard seems to be innocent in that sense that he has never experienced any physical relationship with a woman, or in other words, he is a virgin. The argument in favour of this notion might be demonstrated not only by Maria’s questioning him on these matters, but also by an excerpt from the situation taking place shortly after their first sexual encounter: “She was not the first young woman he had kissed, but she was the first who seemed to like it... The line that divided innocence from knowledge was vague, and rapturously so.”¹⁰⁶ On the condition that the novel is considered to be narrated retrospectively, the meeting of Leonard and Maria is accompanied by a situational irony relating to Leonard’s future initiation into the physical aspect of interpersonal relationships – by Maria; on a second reading the reader might notice the paradox resulting from the situation when Leonard and Maria are first about to meet each other in the bar – after Maria sends him the note asking him to ask her to dance: “The mermaid was singing, ‘Don’t sit under zuh apple tree viz anyone else but me, anyone else but me.’ He thought, correctly as it turned out, that his life was about to change. When he was ten feet away she smiled. He arrived just as the band finished the song.”¹⁰⁷ “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else but Me)”, a popular song made famous by Glenn Miller and by the Andrews Sisters during the Second World War, interprets the story of two young lovers, one of whom serves in the war. Transplanted into the situation of Leonard and Maria, the reference to “the Apple Tree” may apply to Bible and Original sin, on the basis of which Adam and Eve progressed from purely spiritual love to recognition of physicality – as Leonard did. The situational irony here consists in the reader’s knowledge of the events that are only to come in the fictional world; therefore, the context required is textual, circumstantial and intertextual (assuming knowledge of Bible), and a second reading and the presumption that the novel is narrated retrospectively are necessary.

¹⁰⁵ “Innocent,” *Oxford Dictionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ See *The Innocent* 75.

¹⁰⁷ *The Innocent* 48.

Despite the maturity Leonard gains through his relationship with Maria, she still continues to call him “Mein Dummerchen, my little innocent.”¹⁰⁸ In this sense, Leonard is not innocent anymore, he is now informed in the field of sexuality and ironically enough, he begins to associate his sexual fantasies with the violence manifested in the British-German relationship during the World War II. He identifies himself with a soldier who is supposed to punish his mortal enemy: “They soon grew inseparable from his desire... Now they [fantasies] were striding toward the centre, toward him. They were all versions of himself... He looked down at Maria, whose eyes were closed, and remembered she was a German... German. Enemy. Mortal enemy. Defeated enemy.”¹⁰⁹ After Leonard’s rape attempt and violence towards Maria, the attribute “innocent”, within the meaning of not harmful, becomes ironic with respect to Leonard, since at this moment “wicked” would be a more suitable attribute to describe a violator who imagines his lover as a political and military enemy.

Even more paradoxically, after the lovers’ reconciliation, Leonard does not cease to be called the innocent and does not cease to think of himself as the innocent: “She had come slowly to the decision that Leonard was not malicious or brutal, and that it was an innocent stupidity that had made him behave the way he had.”¹¹⁰ By virtue of the facts concerning the free indirect speech stated above in the narrative perspective section, this utterance cannot be taken to be reliable, but should rather be taken as Leonard’s opinion of what Maria thinks. Accordingly, irony in this case lies in the association of “innocent stupidity” and feelings of violent hatred towards one’s lover, whilst “innocent stupidity” serves as a textual marker implying the incongruity of the collocation with the fictional situation. The context is conditioned by the use of free indirect speech, which reveals the main protagonist’s mentality and allows the reader to compare the explanation of Leonard’s act and his true motivation objectively.

The situation in which Leonard and Maria are about to become reconciled is also ironic. They meet in front of his apartment, Maria screams, because she is terrified when the lights are switched off, and Leonard’s neighbour comes out of his apartment to observe the situation:

Blake said, “Women generally scream like that when they think they’re about to be raped.” The ludicrous knowingness of the remark called for an elegant rebuttal. Leonard thought hard for several seconds. What impeded him was that he

¹⁰⁸ *The Innocent* 98.

¹⁰⁹ See *The Innocent* 103.

¹¹⁰ See *The Innocent* 138.

was being mistaken for a rapist when in fact he had almost been one. In the end he said, “Not in this case.”¹¹¹

Firstly it is Blake’s accuracy with respect to previous events which makes the situation ironic, and secondly it is the fact that at that very moment Leonard is about to apologise for the act which Blake accuses him of. The irony here hereby occurs on two levels and is revealed in the last but one sentence by the cluster of words – “mistaken for a rapist.”

The argument that Leonard is still considered to be innocent even after everything that has happened also needs to be demonstrated. When Maria and Leonard celebrate their engagement with a group of friends and Leonard exclaims his unfamiliarity with the manner in which women choose their men and then let the men think it is them who choose, he says: “‘Why am I so ignorant?’ ‘Not ignorant. Innocent. And now you marry the first and only woman you ever knew. Perfect! It’s women who should marry the virgins, not men.’... Maria raised her glass. He had never seen her so beautiful. ‘To innocence.’”¹¹² Not only does Leonard, despite having lost his virginity remain a virgin for Maria, but at the moment Maria drinks “to innocence” another incident corrupting his innocence is about to happen, as outlined below. However, before proceeding to this incident, there is one more situational irony taking place at the party. It relates to Glass’s speech comparing the lover’s engagement and future marriage to the connection of two previously antagonistic nations, and Maria’s subsequent reaction: “‘It was a terrible speech,’ Maria said, although from her look he thought she did not really mean it. ‘Does he think I’m the Third Reich? Is that what he thinks you are marrying? Does he really think that people represent countries?’”¹¹³ Based on the textual context and especially upon Leonard’s motivation for his attempted rape, the implication of this situation is ironic. What Glass said and meant only figuratively has in fact played a fundamental role in Leonard’s attitude towards Maria in the recent past. Maria’s question regarding people representing countries only highlights the paradoxical truth of what she considers to be absurd and what was so influential in her relationship with Leonard that it almost became the reason for their breaking up.

Afterwards, the incident already mentioned above, which destroys the remains of Leonard’s innocence or at least the last possible connotation of the word innocent with which he could be associated, is the murder of Otto, Maria’s ex-husband. Preceding this incident is Otto’s unexpected emergence in Maria’s wardrobe, which brings about a confusing situation containing situational and verbal irony: “‘He’s sitting on my dresses. He’s going to piss on them.’ This had not occurred to Leonard, but now she had spoken it appeared the most pressing problem. How were they to prevent

¹¹¹ *The Innocent* 136.

¹¹² See *The Innocent* 173.

¹¹³ *The Innocent* 174.

this further violation? Lift him out, carry him to the toilet?”¹¹⁴ The verbal irony consists in the presumption of free indirect speech narrative – the narrator is equal to Leonard, who by means of the posed questions mocks and ironises the seriousness of the plight, in which pissing on the dresses does not seem to be such a big problem as an aggressive and drunk ex-husband in the wardrobe. The irony, although unpronounced, represents the instrument of protagonist’s disagreement, and the rhetorical questions which do not appear to be meant seriously serve as a textual marker. The reason why they do not appear to be meant seriously is the exaggeration of the minor problem and the neglect of the major one. Furthermore, the carrying of the sleeping drunkard to the toilet in order to save personal belongings from his pissing is not an adequate solution to the given situation and rather evokes a comical effect, which only contributes to the situational irony.

Another ironic aspect of this part of the novel – Maria and Leonard dealing with Otto – is revealed in Maria’s relationship towards men. At the beginning, Maria expresses her desire to finally be with a kind man, unlike her ex-husband. She also appears to be frightened by violence and aggression. Nevertheless, when it comes to dealing with Otto in her wardrobe, she suddenly gets angry with Leonard – because he is not angry: “‘You’re the one who should be shouting at me,’ she said. ‘It’s my husband, isn’t it? Aren’t you angry, just one little bit?’”¹¹⁵ Therefore, instead of being glad that Leonard is calm and attempting to resolve the solution, she, ironically, wants him to shout at her. However, when Leonard finally gets angry Maria protests: “‘Don’t be angry with me.’ ‘I thought that’s what you wanted.’ She looked up, surprised. ‘You are angry. Come and sit down. Tell me why.’”¹¹⁶ The absurdity of the conversation dramatically underlines the irony based on Maria’s incoherent utterances and her contradictory behaviour – both facts recognisable by means of the textual context. The next example, only completing the previous consideration, further supports the theory regarding Maria’s relationship towards men: “‘I don’t believe this. He’s jealous.’ Then to Leonard. ‘You too? Just like Otto? You want to go home now and leave me with this man? You want to be at home and think about Otto and me, and perhaps you’ll lie on the bed and think about us...’”¹¹⁷ On that account, Maria’s relationship towards men may be defined in terms of her inner desire for angry men – she in fact “creates Ottos.” In this manner, any man she ever chooses is bound to be aggressive because she wants him to be so. Leonard contemplates the issue: “Maria had actually chosen this man as her husband... She might say she hated him, but she had chosen him. And she had also chosen Leonard. The same taste exercised.”¹¹⁸ The irony here lies in the

¹¹⁴ *The Innocent* 181.

¹¹⁵ *The Innocent* 183.

¹¹⁶ *The Innocent* 186.

¹¹⁷ *The Innocent* 186.

¹¹⁸ See *The Innocent* 185.

contradictory character of what Maria wants, her desire, its further development and the final outcome. The context required is based on the fictional text.

Otto's murder is the third turning point contradicting the description of Leonard's personality as "the innocent": the first being the loss of virginity and the second his rape attempt. From this moment on, Leonard is truly guilty, even though he and Maria killed Otto together – by means of the cobbler – and in self-defence: "The cobbler's last still protruded his head, and the whole city was quiet."¹¹⁹ The situational irony contained in the scene lies in the juxtaposition of two incongruous images: the cadaver and the tranquillity of the city, in other words, Otto is dead and nobody even noticed.

Maria then decides that they should hide the body, as her ex-husband was connected with every policeman in Berlin and they would undoubtedly end up in a German prison. The plan is therefore to cut the body into pieces and dispose of it by means of cases – the tunnel equipment. The scene in which Maria and Leonard cut Otto into pieces is again accompanied by situational irony: "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. She was wrapping the head now. She was a good woman, resourceful, kind."¹²⁰ The notion of "maternal care" and the last sentence in the example imply an incongruous calmness and familiarity, which are rather in discrepancy with the action – wrapping up parts of a dead body. Thus the atmosphere evoked by the narrator does not correspond to the course of events. The same case is illustrated by the following example: "[Leonard:] 'We'll squeeze it in. Wrap it up and we'll squeeze it in.' [Maria:] 'It won't go. It's a shoulder bone here, and the other end is thick. You have to cut it in half.' It was her husband, and she knew."¹²¹ In this case, additionally, the common sense demonstrated by Maria's pointing out the size of the bones is misrepresented by the narrator's point of view: Leonard ironically associates the previous relationship between Maria and her husband with her knowledge of how to cut Otto's bones in the right manner.

The last but one comment made on Otto's death concerns Leonard's consequent fear of the police and German jail. "The world that had never much cared for Otto Eckdorf was about to explode with concern at his death,"¹²² indicates a verbal irony based on the insignificance of someone's life in comparison with the interest evoked by his violent death – particularly the interest of law. The textual marker in this case is the collocation "explode with concern" – an exaggeration; and the context is, again, textual.

¹¹⁹ *The Innocent* 196.

¹²⁰ *The Innocent* 223.

¹²¹ *The Innocent* 224 – 225.

¹²² *The Innocent* 252.

To conclude the story of Otto's murder and begin a new theme dealing with Leonard's work in tunnel, it is necessary to mention the impact of the incident on Maria and Leonard's relationship. Paradoxically, by getting rid of the only obstacle standing between them – Otto – the lovers become distant from one another, the corpse of the dead man hangs between them: "If he [Leonard] was disposing of Otto, in a sense he was disposing of Maria too."¹²³ The irony of the situation in which the action leads to the very opposite of what was intended is based on the textual context, Leonard's train of thought revealed by free indirect speech and the outcome of the situation – Leonard's leaving Berlin and not returning until thirty-one years later.

Leonard's work in the tunnel and betrayal of it in order to save his own life, or at least his life outside a jail, is the source of the last transformation of the attribute innocent into its opposite. Leonard decides to betray the operation in order to divert attention from his crime. Thus he hides the cases containing Otto's corpse in the tunnel and walks into the Russian sector to sell, or simply give away, the map of the operation site. The fact that the Russians knew about the project from the very beginning does not play any role, since what is important is Leonard's decision to collaborate with the enemy rather than admit his personal guilt. The situation in which Glass asks him what was in the cases Leonard put in the tunnel and Leonard answers truthfully is ironic owing to the fact that the truth is taken to be ironic, which it is not, and thus the situational irony is based on misunderstood literalisation: "'The cases, Leonard. The cases!'" "Right. It was the body of a man I hacked into pieces." "You asshole. I don't have much time."¹²⁴ The context needed is textual, arising from the knowledge of previous events in the novel.

Apart from the above-mentioned international relationships, there is not much irony with respect to the work on the tunnel. However, there is an example of verbal irony: "It was a piece of tunnel equipment he [Leonard] held in his hands, a fruit of war."¹²⁵ Here the "piece of tunnel equipment" refers to the pen Leonard received as a Christmas present from Glass. What is ironic is firstly the apposition "a fruit of war", describing the pen, and secondly the collocation constructing the apposition. For the majority of people involved, war brings about only destruction, not fruit in the sense of a beneficial product or result of an effort/action (except for political power or new territory conquered). On the other hand, the pen can be hardly considered a product of war merely due to the fact that it is manufactured and imported to the tunnel. Accordingly, the irony depends on the lexical level and the textual marker is demonstrated by the connection of words or phrases which are not usually associated, and their association has the effect of incongruity.

¹²³ *The Innocent* 231.

¹²⁴ *The Innocent* 263.

¹²⁵ *The Innocent* 156.

At the very end of the first part of the novel, before Leonard returns to London, he tries to defend his innocence by means of posing and answering the rhetorical questions:

And what was the essence of his crime? To have killed Otto? But that was self-defense. Otto had broken into the bedroom, he had attacked. Not to have reported the death? But that was only sensible, given that no one would have believed them. To have cut up the body? But it was already dead then, so what difference could it make? To have concealed the body? A perfectly logical step. To have deceived Glass, the sentries, the duty officer and Macationamee? But only to protect them from unpleasant facts that did not concern them. To have betrayed the tunnel? A sad necessity, given everything else that had gone before. Besides, Glass, Macationamee and everyone else were saying that it had always been bound to happen. It could not have gone on forever. They had had almost a year's run at it. He was innocent, that he knew.¹²⁶

Except for the loss of his virginity and his rape attempt, Leonard logically and rationally explains every act which furthermore contributed to the transformation of his innocence into maturity and guilt. As a result, the significance of the title should not be taken only as an attribute ascribed to the main protagonist by the reader or external circumstances, it should be rather understood as his own vision of himself – in his mind Leonard is innocent from the very beginning until the very end, regardless of everything that has happened. Nothing can alter his conviction of his own innocence, even murder or treason. The last example of this chapter, describing the scene at the airport, proves the theory: “What all these passengers had in common was their innocence. He was innocent too, but it would take some explaining.”¹²⁷ Thereof, there are two possibilities with respect to the ironic nature of the title: provided that all the considerations relating to Leonard's innocence are taken into account, the title might be ironic if read from the reader's point of view, or non-ironic if perceived from the main protagonist's point of view.

3.3.4 *Innocence in question*

With regard to the above illustrated and commented examples of irony occurring in *The Innocent*, the predominant type of irony in *The Innocent* is situational irony arising from the contradictory or incongruous character of the situations. These scenes are accompanied by an ironic undertone which makes light of their severity, as for example in the case of cutting up Otto's corpse. Verbal

¹²⁶ *The Innocent* 269.

¹²⁷ *The Innocent* 279.

irony appears rarely in dialogues and is connected particularly with the issue of international relations. This issue and all other themes creating the linking element of the analysis are connected with the title of the novel and its implication – ironic and non-ironic. In terms of irony, it represents the development of the main character’s personality from innocence into maturity, harmfulness and guilt.

The context conditioning the occurrence of irony is particularly textual, circumstantial and in one case intertextual. In addition, the reader’s knowledge concerning the political situation in Europe in the 20th century is important, nevertheless, most of the information necessary to reveal the irony is indicated by the text. The textual markers aiding the analysis of irony are various, yet incongruity and contradiction are the most frequent. Beside literalisation and exaggeration, lexical field is also important – as in the case of change of register or special, unusual connection of words and phrases.

The essential function of irony in the novel is distancing – providing the reader with the possibility of an objective perspective and enabling him to form his own opinion, since the irony contained in situations narrated in free indirect speech makes those situations questionable and polemical. Another function is, of course, ludic, creating comic effect. The complicating function contributing to the complexity and thoroughness of the novel and the reinforcing function underlying the substantial issues of the novel should not be omitted.

Although, as David Impastato states, Ian McEwan’s “authorial voice is genial, direct, and refreshingly free of postmodern irony”¹²⁸, it does not apply to his plots: “Irony, while mostly absent from his tone and characterizations, is abundant in his plots. They teem with suspense, surprise, and twists of fate. To create narrative tension, McEwan often deploys a violent incident or a threat of violence. His earliest writing earned him the nickname ‘Ian Macabre.’”¹²⁹ The description of a “violent incident or a threat of violence” might undoubtedly be linked with the scenes appearing in *The Innocent*, whereas “suspense, surprise, and twists of fate” should be taken into account as the principal functions of irony in this novel and, simultaneously, the effects irony has on the readers.

To sum up, the ironic nature of the novel not only challenges its title and poses the question: who is “The Innocent” and “Is he”? The irony occurring in various situations and various forms can be read between the lines and transforms the plain narrative into an obscure and imaginative tale of personal tragedy which the narrator attempts to turn into a political catastrophe.

¹²⁸ Impastato 14.

¹²⁹ Impastato 14.

3.4 Amsterdam

3.4.1 The suicidal contract

Amsterdam, a novel published in 1998, is a story of two friends who, terrified by the brain disease and subsequent death of their common former lover, form a pact: if one of them should go mad and die in a similar manner as their lover, Molly, did, the other is obliged to end his friend's suffering and kill him.

The novel begins with the funeral of Molly Lane, where her former lovers meet: Clive Linley, a famous composer who is about to finish his *Millennial Symphony* (implicitly stated, the story takes place in 1996), and Vernon Halliday, the editor of the popular broadsheet *Judge*. In addition to these two men, other minor characters and Molly's former lovers, attend the funeral – Julian Garmony, foreign secretary and eventually the future Prime minister, and George Lane, Molly's widowed husband.

The intrigue is based on Clive and Vernon's different attitudes and approaches to certain issues occurring in their lives. Vernon desires to destroy Julian Garmony politically by publishing scandalous photos of him originally taken by Molly. Clive, who is completely absorbed in his composition, does not agree with his friend. Moreover, when he becomes the witness to an unsuccessful rape and refuses to call the police to identify the rapist, Vernon and Clive declare their pure hatred towards one another.

Vernon blames Clive for his failure in the campaign against Garmony and the subsequent loss of his job, and Clive blames Vernon for disrupting him in his great and significant work on his symphony and loss of inspiration. At the end, both friends decide that the other must have gone mad and deserves to be killed – by means of euthanasia in Amsterdam. The story ends with their mutual murder, Garmony's loss of his position, George's total victory over the former lovers of his dead wife and his eventual planning of the memorial service which had not been organised after Molly's funeral precisely due to the presence of her former lovers.

3.4.2 The multitude of perspectives

The structure of the novel is divided into five parts, each of which contains a different number of chapters – from two to six, and all the chapters are narrated in free indirect speech. In terms of this narrative technique, the first three chapters might be considered to be homogeneous, since all the chapters included are narrated from a single perspective: Clive is the narrator of the first and third part, the second part is narrated from Vernon's point of view. The fourth and fifth parts are mixed:

the former is narrated by Rose Garmony, Julian Garmony's wife, Vernon and an objective narrator, the narrators of the latter are Clive, Vernon, George and an objective observer.

The following paragraphs provide excerpts from the text which demonstrate that the style of narration is the free indirect speech. The first example illustrates the stream of consciousness – Clive reflects on his friendship with Vernon:

And perhaps that was typical of a certain...imbalance in their friendship that had always been there and that Clive had been aware of somewhere in his heart and had always pushed away, disliking himself for unworthy thoughts. Until now. Yes, a certain lopsidedness in their friendship, which, if he cared to consider, made last night's confrontation less surprising.¹³⁰

The reader can clearly identify that the thoughts presented are those of Clive on the basis of two indicators. The first of them is the nature of the thoughts – an objective narrator would be impartial, whereas a narrator whose point of view is proposed to the reader suggests Clive. Secondly, the course of thoughts is indicated by the ellipsis (“...”), meaning that the narrator decides on which word to choose; the interjection (“Yes...”), confirming that what the narrator just thought about is valid; or the phrase “until now” which marks the natural progression of the thinking process, the spontaneous reaction.

The expressive character of the text, including vulgarisms, rhetorical questions or exclamations, is the next argument in favour of free indirect speech: “The outrage! The police! Poor Molly! Sanctimonious bastard! Call that a moral position? Up to his neck in shit! The outrage! And what about Molly?”¹³¹ Despite the absence of quotation marks and a quotative framework, the author of the previous monologue is evidently Clive – swearing at Vernon, who threatens to call the police and tell them that Clive is a witness in the case of the Lake District rapist and should identify the suspect (see the next paragraph). The inner monologue has the effect of direct speech and its expressiveness indicates the use of free indirect speech in the novel.

Another example arguing for Clive's point of view is from the situation in which Clive is about to identify the rapist he saw threaten a woman in the Lake District: “They seemed to *like* him [Clive], these policemen, and Clive wondered if there were not certain qualities he had never known he possessed – a level manner, quiet charm, authority perhaps.”¹³² In this case, the verb “seemed”

¹³⁰ Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam* (New York: RosettaBooks LLC, 2003) 59.

¹³¹ *Amsterdam* 118.

¹³² *Amsterdam* 131.

implies that the consideration relating to Clive's qualities of enchanting the policemen is a product of Clive's personal impression, and not the opinion of an objective narrator.

A similar case – excluding the possibility of an objective narrator – is the scene in which Vernon visits Clive, who offers him wine and notices that Vernon has been drinking before he came: “Vernon groaned. He was beginning to behave like a drunk. He must have had a few before arriving.”¹³³ An objective narrator should know whether the protagonist has drunk or not, there is no reason why he should not have known. On the other hand, the speculation “he must have had a few before arriving” signifies that the narrator does not know the information for sure and therefore it should be taken to be from Clive's limited point of view.

To demonstrate also other characters' narrative perspective, there follows an example of a passage narrated by Vernon: “Vernon realized that he had had nothing to eat since a cheese and lettuce sandwich at lunchtime. Why else would George's pretentious construction have made him feel so irritable? And what was George doing wearing a silk dressing gown over his day clothes? The man was simply preposterous.”¹³⁴ The argument for free indirect speech in this example lies in the use of rhetorical questions the protagonist poses to himself, as well as the subjective evaluation of George as “preposterous.” Similarly, the subjective evaluation, arising uniquely from the protagonist's point of view, appears in the utterance: “The place was exactly as she [Molly] had left it the day she finally consented to move to a bedroom in the main house, to be imprisoned and nursed by George,”¹³⁵ meaning that Vernon finds Molly's relationship with George pathetic and forced by George – Molly's prisoner. Moreover, the adverb “finally” implies the final phase of Molly's disease, when she was no longer able to make her own decisions.

The last example, this time illustrating the narration from Rose Garmony's perspective, again contains an amount of expressiveness, the subjective attitude of one character towards another and indirect speech in the function of direct speech: “Then he had pulled out all Molly Lane's letters, the ones that stupidly indulged his grotesque cravings. Thank God that episode was over, thank God the woman was dead.”¹³⁶ The evaluative nature of the clause “that stupidly indulged his grotesque craving” reveals Rose's opinion of her husband's fondness for cross-dressing, whereas the last utterance discloses her hatred for Molly.

Towards the end of the novel, the objective narrator, with an unbiased point of view, comments on the conflict between Vernon and Clive and explains the misunderstanding of the note sent by Clive:

¹³³ *Amsterdam* 66.

¹³⁴ *Amsterdam* 49.

¹³⁵ *Amsterdam* 51.

¹³⁶ *Amsterdam* 83 – 84.

In a language as idiomatically stressed as English, opportunities for misreadings are bound to arise. By a mere backward movement of stress, a verb can become a noun, an act a thing. To refuse, to insist on saying no to what you believe is wrong, becomes at a stroke refuse, an insurmountable pile of garbage. As with words, so with sentences. What Clive had intended on Thursday and posted on Friday was, You deserve to be *sacked*. What Vernon was bound to understand on Tuesday in the aftermath of his dismissal was, You *deserve* to be sacked. Had the card arrived on Monday, he might have read it differently. This was the comic nature of their fate; a first-class stamp would have served both men well. On the other hand, perhaps no other outcomes were available to them, and this was the nature of their tragedy.¹³⁷

The narrator mentions both protagonists, is impartial and rationally describes and explains the situation as from an omniscient perspective – he is informed and not provided with only fractional information, as are the narrators in previous examples in this chapter. However, suddenly in the middle of the paragraph the narrative perspective again changes to Vernon’s point of view. The paragraph continues as follows: “If so, Vernon was bound to consolidate his bitterness as the day wore on and to reflect, rather opportunistically, on the pact the two men had made not so long ago and the awesome responsibilities it laid upon him. For clearly Clive had lost his reason and something had to be done.”¹³⁸ The return to the original point of view, i.e. Vernon’s, is demonstrated by the collocation “awesome responsibilities” referring to the plan to kill his friend and by the last sentence of the paragraph beginning with “for clearly” – indicating Vernon’s perspective, which is clear, and ending with “something had to be done” – implying the same; here the necessity of killing his friend is expressed by a euphemism.

With respect to the number of narrators whose points of view are proposed to the reader, each example used for the following analysis of irony will be related to the particular ironist, and the fictional situation concerned will be properly described.

3.4.3 The paradox of parallelism

The initial point of the plot and the basis for the most important theme of the novel – the mutual murder under the pretence of a good deed – is Molly’s death. The pact made by Vernon and Clive is already mentioned in the introduction to the novel at the beginning of this chapter. And it is exactly

¹³⁷ *Amsterdam* 126 – 127.

¹³⁸ *Amsterdam* 127.

this pact, combined with the developing antipathies of the two protagonists, which leads to the tragic outcome of their story, the outcome which is highly ironic with respect to its cause, the original purpose intended by the protagonists. Nevertheless, first the development of the protagonists' relationship and other relevant factors will be discussed in terms of irony, before the analysis of the tragic climax where the irony culminates.

The initial point, namely Molly's death, is the reason why Clive and Vernon begin to focus on their health, particularly their mental health, in more detail. Subsequently, the irony connected with death, or the protagonist's awareness of its presence arising from the death of a close friend, is most evident in Clive's parts of the novel. The first excerpt is from the funeral: "So many faces Clive had never seen by daylight, and looking terrible, like cadavers jerked upright to welcome the newly dead."¹³⁹ This play of Clive's imagination ironically compares his "fellow mourners"¹⁴⁰ to zombies, living dead, who do not come to the funeral to mourn dead Molly, but to welcome her into their society. The situational irony thus consists in the contradictory nature of the utterance, and is based on the textual context.

The next example relating to issue of death includes cosmic irony, narrowly linked to the theory of the absurd: "Molly was ashes. He would work through the night and sleep until lunch. There wasn't really much else to do. Make something, and die."¹⁴¹ The last sentence reveals the irony of the human condition, in which for all their lives people try to achieve something, even though in the end they die and disappear. In this light, every achievement or goal equals vanity.

The last remark on the issue of death will be verbal irony, revealing Clive's attitude to George – which is hatred: "Now she was fine ash in an alabaster urn for George to keep on top of his wardrobe."¹⁴² This comment on Molly's posthumous transformation into an article "to keep on top of the wardrobe" is only a pathetic description of what happens after the funeral. What makes the utterance ironic is the object "for George" which suggests that now, after her death, Molly finally belongs to George without reserve. To clarify the situation, Clive and Vernon believe that Molly never really liked George and that she stayed with him only because she fell ill. As a result, and based on the textual context, the ironic undertone has the expressive function, helps to enlighten the protagonist's opinion or attitude towards someone/something in the fictional world.

After the shock of Molly's death is overcome, the gradual development of Clive and Vernon's personalities begins, and in both cases it culminates in extremely egoistical behaviour and the conviction of the protagonist's own perfection. The development might be observed only by

¹³⁹ *Amsterdam 14.*

¹⁴⁰ *Amsterdam 14.*

¹⁴¹ *Amsterdam 23.*

¹⁴² *Amsterdam 23.*

virtue of free indirect speech, revealing the protagonists' innermost feelings. As for Clive, he is aware of his exceptionality from the beginning of the novel. Still, he at least tries not to appear arrogant:

These types—novelists were by far the worst—managed to convince friends and families that not only their working hours but every nap and stroll, every fit of silence, depression, or drunkenness, bore the exculpatory ticket of high intent. A mask for mediocrity, was Clive's view. He didn't doubt that the calling was high, but bad behaviour was not a part of it.¹⁴³

“These types”, indicating Clive's friends who “played the genius card when it suited”¹⁴⁴, are observed as not only inferior but also delinquent from Clive's perspective. As it ironically transpires slightly later in the novel, Clive is the one who views himself as the most, if not only, important living creature in the Universe and behaves correspondingly. Therefore, the previous example might be considered to represent situational irony based on the textual and circumstantial context and on the condition that the reader has either already read the novel before, or suspects the further progression of Clive's ego. Moreover, the key to this progression is foreshadowed by the second sentence of the excerpt, where the mention of a “mask for mediocrity” in fact betrays Clive's aim and his arrogance is discovered – by then at least by the reader.

In the fictional world, Clive's arrogance is fully discovered through the episode in the Lake District, where Clive comes to find inspiration and finish his symphony. However, his inspiration is disturbed by the aforementioned rapist and his victim: “Then whatever was happening here was bound to take its course. Their fate, his fate. The jewel, the melody. Its momentousness pressed upon him. So much depended on it—the symphony, the celebration, his reputation, the lamented century's ode to joy.”¹⁴⁵ This example demonstrates the earlier argument relating to Clive's growing arrogance. In addition, what is also ironic about the situation in which Clive prefers his work to helping a lady in distress is the fact that he pretends to compose his symphony for people – since he does not care about these people at all. The contradictory nature of his commitment with respect to his interest together with Clive's previous reflection on the bad behaviour of talented people is what contributes to the ironic undertone of this passage.

The novel includes an amount of verbal irony contained in quarrels, and one of these might be provided as an example to complete the information on the relationship between Clive and

¹⁴³ *Amsterdam* 57.

¹⁴⁴ *Amsterdam* 56.

¹⁴⁵ *Amsterdam* 78.

people. This is the argument between him and Vernon regarding Clive's inactivity in the Lake District: "[Vernon:] 'There are certain things more important than symphonies. They're called people.' [Clive:] 'And are these people as important as circulation figures, Vernon?'"¹⁴⁶ Vernon's irony is based on the seeming novelty of the information proposed to Clive and the connection of "certain things" with "people." The entire utterance is declared as if addressed to a small child or extra-terrestrial visitor who does not know that there is such a thing as people, and this incongruity of formulation and its true purpose creates a so called third ironic meaning, namely that Clive is ignorant to everybody but himself. On the other hand, Clive goes back the attack with reference to Vernon's publishing of the controversial transvestite photos of Julian Garmony. Through his question, Clive uses the same offensive device as Vernon—irony. For Clive, the posed question is obviously already answered and by asking he merely states his opinion, which represents the third meaning (the first literal, the second that people are more important): for Vernon the circulation numbers are more important than people. The context on the basis of which the reader is able to recognise irony is textual – from the previous pages of the novel and by means of free indirect speech, the reader knows what the main protagonists think about each other.

Leaving the theme of people and returning once more to the situation in the Lake District, there is one more example of irony worth presenting. This is irony based on the contrast between the reader's expectation and the actual outcome:

She [the victim] made a sudden pleading whimpering sound, and Clive knew exactly what it was he had to do. Even as he was easing himself back down the slope, he understood that his hesitation had been a sham. He had decided at the very moment he was interrupted. On level ground he hurried back along the way he had come and then dropped down along the western side of the ridge in a long arc of detour.¹⁴⁷

With regard to the first three sentences of the example, it might seem that "Clive knew exactly what it was he had to do" means that Clive stopped hesitating and ran to save the woman. Accordingly, the last sentence describing Clive's escape is surprising, and explodes the reader's mistaken presumption. This is irony focused on the reader, playing with his expectation which logically emerges the textual and circumstantial context, as well as common sense. Besides surprise, another function of such irony is comic effect.

¹⁴⁶ *Amsterdam* 104.

¹⁴⁷ *Amsterdam* 78.

Although Vernon ends up very similarly as Clive, with his ego overgrown, at the beginning he could be viewed rather as a more self-deprecating character. Particularly in relation to his work in newspapers, he finds himself unimportant: “He was widely known as a man without edges, without faults or virtues, as a man who did not fully exist. Within his profession Vernon was revered as a nonentity.”¹⁴⁸ By virtue of the narrative technique of free indirect speech, the utterance should be seen to be from Vernon’s point of view. For this reason the last sentence in the example represents a case of verbal self-deprecating irony recognised on grounds of the first sentence and textual context. The textual marker is the incongruous character of the phrase “revered as a nonentity”; a nonentity does not usually have any reason to be revered, since it does not exist.

Vernon’s initial insecurity regarding his own work and significance in general might be at least partially the cause of his future egoism, as a result of which he is convinced that instead of offending Molly’s former lover, he in fact saves Great Britain: “He was about to shape the destiny of his country and he could bear the responsibility. More than bear—he needed this weight, his gifts needed the weight that no one else could shoulder.”¹⁴⁹ This example is proposed only in order to highlight the fact that Clive and Vernon at this moment are like the two sides of the same coin, i.e. madness; full of evil and venom arising from unlimited self-confidence and an inability to accept the mere possibility of an alternative truth. This uniformity of minds is the reason why the protagonists cannot see the faults of one another, since those faults are also their own, and this paradox is the origin of the essential conflict between them. The conflict is accompanied by verbal irony, with an assailing, oppositional or self-protective function. Besides the example introduced previously in this chapter (relating to the protagonists and their attitude towards people), the following example best illustrates this phenomenon: “‘You’re being used, Vernon, and I’m surprised you can’t see through it... If he [George] had something on me or you, he’d use that too.’ Then Clive added, ‘Perhaps he has. Did she take any [photos] of you? In the frogman’s suit? Or was it the tutu? The people must be told.’”¹⁵⁰ The excerpt represents the situation in which Clive reproaches Vernon for his alliance with George (who gave Vernon the photos of Julian Garmony) and the inability to recognise George’s real intentions. Here the irony consists in the second part of the delivery, where Clive first mocks Vernon by means of a series of questions and afterwards adds that “the people must be told”, by which he parodies his friend. The very last sentence is ironic because it refers to Garmony’s photos, which in Clive’s opinion are private and should not be published and on that account, similarly Vernon’s potential photos in a frogman suit should not be published. By saying the opposite in the form of a parable, Clive expresses his opinion. This

¹⁴⁸ *Amsterdam* 31.

¹⁴⁹ See *Amsterdam* 88.

¹⁵⁰ See *Amsterdam* 67 – 68.

analysis is based on a textual context and could not be valid if Clive's parts of the novel were not so explicit in terms of this issue.

Before proceeding to the respective outcome of the principal conflict, it is necessary to complete the list of the novel's themes and issues by reference to Vernon's work, since Clive's work and his incident in the Lake District have also been mentioned. By publishing the controversial photos, Vernon expects an increase in the circulation of his newspaper, the public humiliation and deposition of Julian Garmony and gratitude for saving the country. Concerning the first expectation, increased circulation, there is an example of irony marked by literalisation and simplification: "What was needed for the circulation to stop going down was for the circulation to go up," says Vernon to himself when George tries to advise him on the editorial job.¹⁵¹ The ironic undertone here reflects Vernon's initial hatred towards George (before he obtains the photos), and is based purely on the text itself and the triviality of the juxtaposition which indicates that the literal, first, meaning is improbable.

Besides the famous photos, the *Judge* needs, of course, other themes and articles to publish. One of the themes deals with industrial pollution and its effect, which greatly suits Vernon and his verbal, but unpronounced, ironic remark: "... Lettice O'Hara in features was at last ready to run her piece on the Dutch medical scandal, and also—to honour the occasion—was offering a feature on how industrial pollution was turning male fish into females."¹⁵² The parenthesis "to honour the occasion" clearly applies to Julian Garmony's transsexual orientation and the ironic nature of this lies in the incongruous and highly exaggerated relationship between a man who likes to be dressed up like a woman, who possibly feels like a woman, and fish which are hybridised owing to toxic material discharged into rivers. The nature of the irony is offensive, aggressive and implies Vernon's strong antipathy towards Julian. The context of the irony is, again, textual.

Unfortunately for Vernon, Julian Garmony and his wife are quick and smart, and publicise the photos themselves by means of a broadcasted press conference. Consequently, the public takes Garmony's side, sympathising with his faults, and Vernon is dismissed. At this moment, both Vernon and Clive are looking for someone to blame: Vernon for his failure and Clive for his difficulties in finishing the symphony. And they immediately find who they are looking for – each other.

Clive describes the symptoms convicting Vernon of madness in the following manner: "unpredictable, bizarre, and extremely antisocial behaviour, a complete loss of reason. Destructive

¹⁵¹ *Amsterdam* 50.

¹⁵² See *Amsterdam* 98.

tendencies, delusions of omnipotence.”¹⁵³ Paradoxically, these symptoms are applicable to both protagonists. For that reason, and by their own criteria, they deserve to die, and it is the obligation of each of them to allow the other to die. The irony of this situation consists in the suggested contradiction between the intention of a seemingly good deed and the sincere truth, which lies in personal failure and the ensuing hatred towards one another. As expected, the protagonists try to persuade the reader, and possibly themselves as well, that the planned murder is a matter of higher purpose: “He [Clive] could tell himself now, in all tortuous sincerity that in making his various arrangements on Vernon’s behalf, he, Clive, was doing no more than honoring his word.”¹⁵⁴ In this case, the comparison of “honoring the word” and the intention to commit murder creates an impression of an ironic undertone mocking an otherwise serious situation, in which two friends want to kill each other and associate the act with honour.

The murder is about to be committed in Amsterdam (in this sense the title of the novel points towards its end), owing to the opportunity offered there: upon request certain doctors perform euthanasia to relieve the pain of elderly people. Under the pretext of symphony rehearsals and reconciliation, Clive schemes to invite Vernon to Amsterdam. Nevertheless, since they both have the same designs, Vernon proposes the voyage to Amsterdam first: “That Vernon should want a reconciliation and should therefore want to come to Amsterdam was surely more than a coincidence or a neat convenience. Somewhere in his blackened, unbalanced heart he had accepted his fate. He was delivering himself up to Clive.”¹⁵⁵ With respect to murder, Clive goes even further than the sheer reference to honour. In this continuation of the previous excerpt he poses himself as the ultimate judge on other people’s fate, not far from god. The situation is again ironic in the aspect that the friends are delivering themselves to one another, and towards certain death. In this their common fate is the source of a cosmic irony based on the textual and circumstantial context and ensuing from their common decision, by which they, metaphorically speaking, decide also about their own death.

The measure most clearly determining the extent to which the end of the novel is ironic is the scene in which both Clive and Vernon plan to offer each other the glass of champagne containing a sleeping drug and neither of them thinks of the possibility that the act he intends to commit might also be happening to him. The part of this scene is the example of verbal irony based on a semantic play with words: “Then he [Clive] stood and took a glass in each hand. Vernon’s in the right, his own in the left. Important to remember that. Vernon was right. Even though he was

¹⁵³ See *Amsterdam* 133.

¹⁵⁴ *Amsterdam* 132.

¹⁵⁵ *Amsterdam* 132.

wrong.”¹⁵⁶ The meaning of “right” is transferred from denoting a position or side to “right” meaning correct, being in possession of the truth. Afterwards, the antonym of the transferred meaning is used to evoke an ironic effect, revealing Clive’s disagreement with his friend’s conduct. The reader is able to recognise the irony with regard to the textual context and the fictional situation.

The scene reaches its climax when Clive and Vernon glimpse the glass in each other’s hand: “Unfortunately, he [Vernon] had two full glasses of his own. ‘Look,’ Clive said. ‘I had a drink all ready for you.’ ‘And I got one for you.’”¹⁵⁷ They exchange the glasses, go each to their own rooms, after which the doctor and nurse arrive, who inject them the deadly liquid. In the mutual murder they find their revenge and satisfaction, which, ironically, they cannot enjoy since they do not survive it.

The last chapter of the novel, concluding the principal conflict, is highly cynical. It is narrated from George Lane’s point of view. George Lane and Julian Garmony meet while travelling to Amsterdam to transport the coffins of Clive and Vernon back to England. In the course of this chapter, the reader learns that despite his public popularity, Julian Garmony’s prospect of becoming Prime Minister has been destroyed: “In the country at large the politics of emotion may have bestowed forgiveness, or at least tolerance, but politicians do not favor such vulnerability in a would-be leader. His fate was the very obscurity the editor of the *Judge* had wished on him.”¹⁵⁸ The irony in this case lies in the principles and functioning of a political system wherein the pretence that people are the utmost priority masks the reality that the people’s interest is neglected. The textual marker unfolding the irony is the incongruity of “politics” and “politicians”, thus theory and practice, as the example illustrates. In addition, at the very end Vernon nevertheless achieves his intended goal and thus in his own opinion, he posthumously saves the country. On the other hand, after his death Clive’s failure is confirmed: his symphony is denounced for plagiarism, copying of Beethoven.

Consequently, and regarding the disastrous end of Clive, Vernon and Julian, the sole victor is George. Paradoxically, he is the person who figures only in the background of the story; he does not exert an influence on the action directly, although he provides the initial impulse: passing on the photos of Julian Garmony to Vernon. After Clive and Vernon die and Julian is politically discredited, George celebrates and plans to visit (and possibly seduce) Vernon’s wife Mandy and to organise the memorial service for Molly – since after her funeral there had been none:

¹⁵⁶ *Amsterdam* 138.

¹⁵⁷ *Amsterdam* 139.

¹⁵⁸ See *Amsterdam* 148.

All in all, things hadn't turned out so badly on the former-lovers front. This surely would be a good time to start thinking about a memorial service for Molly... Yes, a memorial service... No former lovers exchanging glances. He smiled, and as he raised his hand to touch the doorbell, his mind was already settling luxuriously on the fascinating matter of the guest list.¹⁵⁹

The reference to the “former-lovers front” indicates that what was happening between the four men was a war in which George is the winner: not only did he stay with Molly until her death, but he is the survivor – with his reputation intact. Therefore, this climax of the novel is ironic with respect to the following paradox: the longstanding friends killed one another and simultaneously themselves due to their own egoism and under the pretext of keeping the word they gave to one another, while their common enemy, who did not have to do anything at all (beside observe), triumphed. On the basis of the textual context and the development of the storyline supported by the frame structure – George is the central point at the beginning of the novel, at the funeral, and subsequently at its end – there arises the essence of the irony underlying the intrigue of the novel: the minimum effort brings the maximum reward.

3.4.4 Extremities in practice

According to David Malcolm, the author of *Understanding Ian McEwan*, the novel *Amsterdam* may be considered to be partly a psychological novel and partly a social satire.¹⁶⁰ He moreover adds: “It is also, in part, a moral fable. *Amsterdam* has the briefness, the relatively simple characters, the clear moral and social dilemmas that are associated with the genre.”¹⁶¹ Pursuant to this consideration, the verbal irony appearing in the novel primarily contributes to the protagonists’ dialogues or rather arguments based on their mutual hatred, and these protagonists always belong to a different social class (or at least professional group): “The social range of characters depicted is narrow. It is limited to the great and the good, the ‘chatter-ing classes,’ well-heeled politicians, publishers, artists, and journalists. But these are important members of any society, and McEwan’s satire of them is biting.”¹⁶² On this basis the verbal irony may serve as an instrument of authorial satire.

However, the novel comprises various types of irony, from verbal through situational to comic. The situational irony underlines the paradoxical nature of the protagonists’ behaviour and

¹⁵⁹ See *Amsterdam* 151.

¹⁶⁰ See David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002) 192 – 193.

¹⁶¹ Malcolm 194.

¹⁶² Malcolm 193.

the cosmic irony relates to the issue of death and the absurd. The clearly prevailing textual marker is incongruity; the others are contradiction, literalisation or simplification. The context owing to which the irony may be revealed is always textual, and in certain cases circumstantial.

The function of irony in *Amsterdam* is as complex as its occurrence. Apart from the comic effect which supports an otherwise serious and cynical theme relating to the extremes people are able to go to when their interests are at stake, other functions of irony contribute to the atmosphere of the novel: an assailing oppositional and self-protective function, which apply to Clive's and Vernon's conflict, complicating – challenging the reader's reflection on interpersonal relationships, and reinforcing which of course highlights the most important issues of the novel, and without which the novel would be merely a record of psychotic, pathologic relationships and their impacts. That, or a criminal record.

Amsterdam is, in general terms, the most ironic novel analysed so far, not taking into account *Solar*, which will be examined in the next chapter. The ironic nature of this novel, based on the conflicts, situations and particularly its result, is what makes the inconceivable plot of the novel simultaneously insofar plausible, and fascinates reader by its obscurity which, however, does not cease to be human.

3.5 Solar

3.5.1 *Nine years in the life of a Nobel Prize Laureate*

Ian McEwan's novel from 2010, *Solar*, is a satire narrating the story of Michael Beard, a physicist and Nobel Prize winner, who on the basis of documents written by his dead junior colleague and love rival pursues a solution for global warming by means of solar energy.

Michael Beard, the main protagonist of the novel, is an incorrigible womaniser. His story begins in 2000 (the first part of the novel) – he is fifty-three years old, his fifth marriage falls apart and he and his wife are constantly cheating on one another. To escape from the distress, Michael departs on a journey to the North Pole– dealing with the issue of global warming in terms of science and art. After his arrival home, Michael learns that his wife Patrice is no longer cheating on him with the rude builder, but rather his junior colleague from the National Centre for Renewable Energy, Tom Aldous. Moreover, at the moment Tom is about to run to beg Michael on his knees not to kick him out of the centre, Tom slips off the polar bear rug, hits his head on the glass table and he dies. In a panic, and afraid of becoming a suspect, Michael arranges everything so it looks as if it was the builder, Patrice's former lover Tarpin, who killed Tom Aldous. Tarpin ends up in jail.

In the second part of the novel, five years after the incident, Michael is happily divorced, dating thirty-nine year old Melissa and is interested in global warming, particularly the document Tom Aldous left him, on the basis of which Michael works on inventing a new source of energy derived from sun. Everything is complicated when Melissa becomes pregnant intentionally and without his knowledge.

The third part of the novel is set in 2009, Michael is sixty-two years old, has a beautiful three year old daughter Catriona, still dates her mother Melissa, but simultaneously keeps other relationships – in New Mexico, where he comes to realise the solar energy project, he dates Darlene, who plans to marry him. Thus, at the end of the novel, Melissa and Catriona come to New Mexico to discuss their future with Michael, while Darlene desires the same. Besides, and in addition, Michael's grand project falls apart due to his being accused of plagiarism (copying and appropriation of Tom Aldous's work) and he suffers from developing skin melanoma. The end of the novel is left open; however, the reader suspects that Michael Beard fails in both his private and professional life.

3.5.2 *The narrator*

Solar is divided into three parts, each of which is narrated from the point of view of its main protagonist, Michael Beard, by means of the narrative technique of free indirect speech. The consequent arguments and examples from the text should provide the grounds on which this consideration is based.

Primarily, the amount of information relating to solar energy and physics in general is transmitted to the reader only through the eyes of Michael Beard, excluding the passages in which Tom Aldous explains his own ideas through the medium of direct speech. Besides scientific information, the reader has access to Michael's innermost feelings and thoughts – in the form of a stream of consciousness: “Now, human blubber draped his efforts. How could he possibly keep hold of a young woman as beautiful as she was? Had he honestly thought that status was enough, that his Nobel Prize would keep her in his bed? Naked, he was a disgrace, an idiot, a weakling. Even eight consecutive press-ups were beyond him.”¹⁶³ The series of rhetorical questions in combination with a critical and self-deprecating evaluation reveals the legitimate proprietor of the narrative perspective – Michael. The particular passages are even constructed in such a manner that they are reminiscent of direct speech: “Yes, yes, he had been a lying womaniser, he had it coming, but now that it had arrived, what was he supposed to do, beyond taking his punishment? To which god was he to offer his apologies? He had had enough.”¹⁶⁴ “Yes, yes” from this example, followed by the confession in third person singular, imitates the spontaneity of direct speech in an informal style. Additionally, the subsequent questions, having the function of self-defence, are a reaction to protagonist's confession and only confirm the form of narrative perspective.

The next argument in favour of free indirect speech applies to the negation of an objective narrator. The lack of the potential objective narrator's knowledge is evident in the situation when Michael's wife, Patrice, dates his colleague Tom Aldous, who he mistakes for Tarpin upon his arrival home: “Someone – Tarpin, surely, that constant creature of the bathroom – had stepped carelessly from the shower, and was treating the place [Michael's house] like his own.”¹⁶⁵ The erroneous judgement of the situation, moreover accompanied by the adverb “surely”, proves that the point of view from which the story is narrated belongs to Michael Beard. The same situation: Michael Beard arriving home and discovering Tom Aldous on his sofa: “There may have been a very brief moment when he thought that Beard's form in the doorway was an apparition, the paranoid consequence of an overproductive mind. Now he knew it was not. He may, in this short

¹⁶³ Ian McEwan, *Solar* (London: Vintage Books, 2011) 7.

¹⁶⁴ *Solar* 30.

¹⁶⁵ *Solar* 115.

interlude, before either man spoke, have seen before him another more persuasive apparition – his career prospects in shreds.”¹⁶⁶ With regard to this extract, the first sentence describes what Michael thinks Tom must have thought, indicated by the verb “may.” The last sentence subsequently comments ironically on Michael’s intentions – to dismiss Tom Aldous from the centre, to destroy his eventual career. The comment functions on two levels: firstly it is Michael’s presumption of what Aldous may think, and secondly it is his plan.

Another example demonstrates the limitations of the narrator’s point of view, similarly as the example relating to Michael’s ignorance of his wife’s affairs, and it also concerns Tarpin: “How could he continue to love a woman who wanted a man like that? Why punish herself so thoroughly just to insult her husband?”¹⁶⁷ Michael asks himself after the confrontation with Tarpin, even before Patrice starts dating Tom. This example illustrates the narrator’s interpretation of another character’s intentions. The second question of the excerpt implies that the protagonist, Michael Beard, is highly biased in terms of his evaluation of his wife’s actions and for this reason, the narrative perspective cannot be taken as an objective narrator’s point of view, since he should remain unbiased and neutral.

The last argument excluding an objective narrative perspective and confirming the narrative technique of free indirect speech apparently reveals the extent to which the narrative perspective is limited by means of the narrator’s point of view. The argument relates to the first part of the novel, the legal proceedings with Tarpin, when “as a witness, Beard was not permitted to be in court to hear his wife’s testimony, and could only read the press reports.”¹⁶⁸ Subsequently, the reader learns what Patrice said and how she said it, whereas the source of the narrator’s information is already ensured and indicated. An objective narrator would not have any reason to explain the manner in which he obtained the information proposed to the reader.

With respect to the previous arguments and the fact that there is a single narrative perspective in the novel, the following analysis of irony will be performed on the assumption that the ironist is one and the same as the main protagonist, Michael Beard.

3.5.3 Analysis of irony: physics, love and the Universe

With respect to the scope the novel covers, as far as the time scale is concerned, the analysis of irony will be conducted following the storyline, i.e. the first, then second and finally the third part of the novel will be dealt with. Proceeding in this manner, two crucial turning points dividing the

¹⁶⁶ *Solar* 116.

¹⁶⁷ *Solar* 64.

¹⁶⁸ See *Solar* 140 – 141.

first from the second and the second from the third part will be observed and subsequently related to the theme of this diploma thesis – irony. Moreover, the irony occurring in the novel will be considered on two levels – regarding Michael Beard’s private and professional, or scientific, life and the intersections of these two.

The most important issue introduced in the first part of the novel, relating to Michael’s private life, is cuckoldry. Although Michael is married, for the fifth time, his private life should not be marked as familial since the family is an institution he does not take seriously, as he reveals later in the novel. As a consequence, his fifth marriage also falls apart and paradoxically, he realises he loves his wife only after she admits she is also cheating on him: “No woman had ever looked or sounded so desirable as the wife he suddenly could not have.”¹⁶⁹ This paradox in fact demonstrates the everlasting truth that the forbidden fruit tastes the sweetest, and this is a case of comic irony, or the irony of human fate – a human being is never satisfied unless he achieves what he/she wants, and once the goal is achieved, the satisfaction vanishes. In terms of *Solar*, the irony of this example may also be understood as situational, as Michael realises he is married only after his wife takes her revenge on him. The context on which this irony is based is textual and is supported by a textual marker in form of the emphasis contained in the example cited. Here the word “suddenly” only intensifies the meaning of the utterance. The same situation is accompanied by one more example of bitter irony, once again cosmic and situational: “Beard was surprised to find how complicated it was to be the cuckold. Misery was not simple. Let no one say that this late in life he was immune to fresh experience.”¹⁷⁰ To grasp the irony concealed in this example, the reader needs only the previous pages of the novel and he understands that the main protagonist is suddenly surprised to be in the situation into which he has placed many women before. Moreover, given the fact that he is an inveterate womaniser, the reference to “fresh experience” – meaning being cheated on – from Michael’s mouth even highlights the irony.

The manner in which Michael interprets the revelation of Patrice’s affair and the following comments may be regarded as ironic with respect to the narrative technique of free indirect speech:

She said she did not mind what he did. This was what she was doing – and this was when she revealed the identity of her lover, the builder with the sinister name of Rodney Tarpin, seven inches taller and twenty years younger than the cuckold, whose sole reading, according to his boast, back when he was humbly

¹⁶⁹ *Solar* 5.

¹⁷⁰ *Solar* 4.

grouting and bevelling for the Beards, was the sports section of a tabloid newspaper.¹⁷¹

The second sentence of the extract describes Rodney Tarpin in relation to Michael Beard, in which Michael is first referred to as old and deplorable (“cuckold”), however, subsequently Tarpin is represented as dull for his ability to read nothing more than the “sports section of a tabloid newspaper.” Accordingly, the ironist firstly ironises himself by means of the “cuckold” reference and immediately ironises his enemy in love in terms of his low intelligence quotient. The incongruity of information presented in the course of a single sentence, plus the assumption that the narrator is the main protagonist, serve as a textual marker revealing irony together with the textual context. The self-deprecating nature of the irony occurring in this example (e.g. referring to oneself in a negative, derogatory manner) indicates the tendency of the main protagonist to mock himself. Michael Beard as a self-deprecator, although only in matters of his private life, is illustrated by following example: “What engines of self-persuasion had let him think for so many years that looking like this was seductive? That foolish thatch of earlobe-level hair that buttressed his baldness, the new curtain-swig of fat that hung below his armpits, the innocent stupidity of swelling in gut and rear.”¹⁷² The irony consists in the first sentence, which reflects on Michael’s astonishment over his physical appearance. The subsequent list of his defects, provided with great amount of exaggeration, underlines Michael’s ironic view of his physique. However, in the first part of the novel, it is not only his physique he is sceptical about, but is his current job and his entire existence: “Coming away from his life in remote Belsize Park to this lifeless wilderness had confronted him with the idiocy of his existence. Patrice, Tarpin, the Centre and all the other pseudo-work he did to mask his irrelevance.”¹⁷³ Similarly as in the previous example, the critical or even nihilistic perspective with which Michael returns from his North Pole journey reveals his self-deprecating view of his own life.

The North Pole journey, resulting from Michael’s crisis in both the personal and professional sphere, contains an amount of ironic situations, of which the two most important and representative will be depicted. The first situation concerns the main protagonist’s unfortunate idea to urinate at a temperature of minus twenty-six degrees Celsius, which results in his penis becoming stuck frozen to his overall. He manages to save this part of his body, however, before doing so, he reflects on his potential life without a penis:

¹⁷¹ *Solar 6 – 7.*

¹⁷² *Solar 7.*

¹⁷³ *Solar 93.*

Nonsense, of course he would survive. But this was it, a life without a penis. How his ex-wives, especially Patrice, would enjoy themselves. But he would tell no one. He would live quietly with his secret. He would live in a monastery, do good works, visit the poor. As he stood dithering, he wondered for the first time in his adult life whether there might be purposeful design in human lives, and entities like Greek gods, imposing ironies, extracting revenge, imposing their rough justice.¹⁷⁴

The last sentence of the extract directly refers to the concept of cosmic irony. In this particular case, the irony of his lost penis would lie in the contradictory character of Michael's life before and after the potential loss: the former womaniser devoid of the crucial element operating his private life. Moreover, the loss, as indicated, might be seen as revenge for all the women he ever cheated on. The irony related to this incident is the source of bitter comedy, or tragicomedy, resulting from various life incidents supposedly linked to one another.

The second situation examined applies to the group of artists – Michael's company on the North Pole journey. The group discusses the severity of global warming and the urgency to save the world with great eagerness, whereas they are not able to perform tasks much smaller than the one discussed. The artists are not able to keep the boot room, where all the equipment for tours outside is stored, in an orderly state, and they even steal each other's equipment when they cannot find their own: "No one, he thought, admiring his own generosity, had behaved badly, everyone, in the immediate circumstances, wanting to get out on the ice, had been entirely rational in 'discovering' their missing balaclava or glove in an unexpected spot."¹⁷⁵ This example clearly illustrates Michael's ironic view of his companions, emphasised by several factors: the attribute "entirely rational", the usage of quotations marks with the word "discovering" and the collocation "unexpected spot." These factors point out that what the narrator really means is completely different from what is said, it is the third ironic meaning of the utterance: his companions simply steal each other's equipment if they cannot find their own. This consideration is furthermore demonstrated by the rhetorical question: "How were they to save the earth – assuming it needed saving, which he doubted – when it was so much larger than the boot room?"¹⁷⁶ The paradox relying on the comparison of the small boot room and the enormous earth underlines the ironic undertone of the utterance and proposes a comic view of a human race imposing great goals on itself whilst being unable to achieve small ones.

¹⁷⁴ *Solar* 82.

¹⁷⁵ *Solar* 108.

¹⁷⁶ *Solar* 109.

The main protagonist's private and professional life meet at the point when Tom Aldous accidentally dies. Tom Aldous, the post-doc and "one of the ponytails"¹⁷⁷ (as the post-docs are called due to their hairstyles) is not Michael's friend or favourite junior colleague; on the contrary, Michael dislikes Tom's enthusiasm for saving the world. From the very beginning, he ironises his Norfolk accent: "The rural Norfolk accent, it seemed then, was well adapted to a special kind of pleading. In such tones the tenantry might once have begged their manorial lord for lower rents in hard times,"¹⁷⁸ and in this manner Michael compares Tom's pleading when caught red handed in his house to a serf pleading with his landlord – which implies that Michael considers Tom as much less than his inferior.

The scene before and after Tom's death is a source of various types of irony. The example is the dialogue between Michael and Tom, who is trying to explain the affair with Patrice: "[Tom:] 'Oh now look, Professor Beard. You're taking this too far. Let's go back to the central point. Rationality . . . 'Deeply irrational,' Beard said, 'to make love to the boss's wife.'"¹⁷⁹ Michael's answer is purely ironic and is based on the contradictory character between what is said and what is meant – that it is irrational to make love to the boss's wife. This case of verbal irony reveals Michael as an ironist, not in terms of narrative technique, but in terms of the fictional character's nature and temper. The next example, applying to Aldous's death and simultaneously the last example appearing in the first part of the novel, refers both to the polar bear rug which Tom Aldous slips off and the polar bear which Michael encountered at the North Pole (and which seemed to be dangerous): "The bear's hard, glassy eyes each captured a warped parallelogram of the sitting-room windows and looked murderous. It was the dead polar bears you had to watch."¹⁸⁰ The irony in the second sentence lies in the incongruity of its content – a dead polar bear is more dangerous than a live one, which is usually the opposite. Nevertheless, Michael survives the encounter with polar bear at the North Pole, whereas his colleague dies in an encounter with a polar bear rug. The context on which the irony is based is textual and circumstantial.

This turning point, Tom Aldous's death, closes the first part of the novel and represents a significant change in the main protagonist's life. He gets divorced and founds the future of his scientific career on Tom Aldous's documents relating to artificial photosynthesis as a source of solar energy. At this point, the attention shifts from Michael's private life to his career.

In the second part of the novel, Michael Beard suddenly becomes interested in the issue of global warming, which he despised earlier in the novel. Without referring to Tom Aldous's original

¹⁷⁷ *Solar* 123.

¹⁷⁸ *Solar* 117.

¹⁷⁹ *Solar* 119.

¹⁸⁰ *Solar* 127.

idea, Michael builds his own career and fame on his junior colleague's death and the fact that he regards even this plagiarism with irony is demonstrated in the following example: "For what could precedence or originality mean to the dead? And details of surnames were hardly relevant when the issue was so urgent. In the only sense that mattered, the essence of Aldous would endure."¹⁸¹ Suddenly, and paradoxically enough, Michael realises the urgency to save the world, which is more pressing than the fact that he is illegally copying someone else's work. The irony in the example resides in the cynical comment on the dead author's lack of concern with the world of the living. Given Michael's own lack of concern with the issues Tom dealt with, plus this sudden change of heart on global warming and the necessity to discover new sources of energy, it might be claimed that for Michael Aldous's death was in fact highly convenient.

Based on the textual context, the next example of irony refers to the main protagonist's media scandal, when after a lecture on the topic of women in science at Imperial College in London, Michael is accused of prejudice against women by his female colleague. Afterwards, his love life is publicly revealed and Beard is called as "'Nobel love-rat' or 'neo-Nazi Professor'."¹⁸² Beard indirectly, by means of free indirect speech, comments on the situation: "There were references to the Aldous murder case, but Beard's earlier incarnation as the harmless, dreamy cuckold, the innocent fool, the dupe of a flighty wife, was conveniently forgotten. Now he was a loathed figure, seducing women even as he drove them out of science."¹⁸³ The textual marker that helps to reveal the irony in this extract is the contradiction between past references to Michael, in course of the legal proceedings with Tarpin, and the present references. The adverb "inconveniently" consequently indicates that the media already has their story and the factual information is conveniently adjusted to it. The adverbial clause of time "as he drove them out of science" is pure irony based on textual context – the previous pages of the novel contain the lecture Michael Beard gave, and the reader already knows that there was not a word against women. And since the free indirect speech determines Beard as the sole narrator, the last sentence in the example may be considered to represent verbal irony and Beard's comment on the situation.

Proceeding from science to his love life again, the second part of the novel describes the main protagonist's relationship with Melissa, a thirty-nine year old keeper of dance shops, who deliberately chooses older men. As far as Michael's privacy is concerned, "love life" may be a misleading label, since Michael's relationships should not be regarded as love stories. His relationships with women rather work by means of inertia – women love him and he does not care, he simply stays. Melissa seems to be perfect:

¹⁸¹ *Solar* 259.

¹⁸² See *Solar* 189.

¹⁸³ *Solar* 189.

She was beautiful, she was interesting, she was good (she was truly a good person), so what was wrong with Melissa Browne? It took him more than a year to find out. There was a flaw in her character, like a trapped bubble in a window pane, that warped her view of Michael Beard, and made her believe that he could plausibly fit the part of a good husband and father.¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, she has a flaw. Regarding the quoted extract, Melissa's mistake is her naïve trust in Michael's scale of values. Here the irony lies in the fact that what Michael calls "a flaw in character" is his lover's positive opinion of him as being able to be good husband and father. The function of this particular irony is to emphasise the main protagonist's real desire: he does not want to be anyone's husband anymore, he does not want a child either, and for this reason he does not want anybody to regard him as a good husband and father.

However, finally he is to become a father: "His cell door had been open for months, years, and he could have walked free. Too late. While his back was turned one of his own sperm, as brave and cunning as Odysseus, had made the long journey, breached the city wall and buried its identity in her egg. Now he was expected to do the same."¹⁸⁵ When Melissa announces she is pregnant, Michael is terrified. Following the example, he firstly ironically describes how Melissa became pregnant – by means of exaggeration, in which he compares his sperm to Odysseus, and afterwards he suggests that he will have to bury his identity in his family with Melissa. Therefore, the irony is discovered on the basis of exaggeration as a textual marker and textual plus intertextual context; without the knowledge of Odysseus, the reader cannot fully grasp the extent of exaggeration, and thus the effect of the irony is weaker. Michael's distress is confirmed also by another example: "The situation was grave, indeed gravid."¹⁸⁶ By means of a play with language, two words derived from the same root are juxtaposed to create a comic effect, underlined by an ironic undertone. The last reference to the second part of the novel is inspired by the bed scene following Melissa's announcement. This scene may be viewed as situational irony, since in order to enjoy sexual intercourse with Melissa, Michael has to imagine another woman or women. After he comes back to reality, Melissa says: "You're my darling. Thank you. I love you. Michael, I love you. You dear, dear man."¹⁸⁷ The contrast between Melissa's experience and feelings and the facts known to the reader due to the narrative perspective is the source of situational irony – the reader knows more than the character involved in the situation, and his knowledge contradicts the character's

¹⁸⁴ *Solar* 220.

¹⁸⁵ *Solar* 239.

¹⁸⁶ *Solar* 241.

¹⁸⁷ *Solar* 254.

perception of the situation. Therefore, the contradiction in connection with the textual and circumstantial context is again the basis of the irony.

The second crucial turning point in the novel is Melissa's pregnancy and subsequently the new-born child, introduced in the third part of the novel. At the beginning of this part, the main protagonist recalls his family and his first marriage to Maisie. Although the history of their marriage is accompanied by irony, with regard to the extent of the novel (as indicated at the beginning of this subchapter) only the essential and interesting examples will be depicted. Such is the utterance which closes the story of Michael's first marriage: "Perhaps it was the ease of their parting in the old rectory that made him so incautious about marrying again, and again."¹⁸⁸ In other words, Michael married a further four times more only with the prospect of being divorced again, which in fact is not the prospect with which people get married. On the contrary. The irony is readable on account of the textual context.

After Michael's and Melissa's child, Catriona, is born, nothing in their relationship changes. She is now three years old and loves her father, who is working hard to save the world. Michael feels guilty, since as he says, "he had done all he decently could to suppress her existence. But here she was, Catriona Beard, as irrepressible as a banned book."¹⁸⁹ The comparison of his unwanted daughter to a book, or in other words, the simile of a human being as a censored book is not traditional and evokes the ironic undertone hidden between the lines. Its recognition is supported by the lexical field and literary figure.

Beard is now sixty-two years old and still a womaniser. Moreover, he believes in double standards in terms of his relationships – he, of course, can cheat on Melissa, but she should not cheat on him, because she is the mother of their child. Accordingly, when he asks Melissa if she is seeing someone and her ironical answer is "aren't you? Michael, of course I am,"¹⁹⁰ he tells himself: "Oh yes, that. The tired old argument from equivalence. The level playing field. Rationality gone nuts, feminism's last stupid gasp."¹⁹¹ In this case, the "rationality" he is referring to might mean that he in fact does not consider women to have the same rights as men, as it appears in the second part of the novel where he merely comments on the genetic determinism of men and women. At the very least, he does not believe women should cheat on him even though he cheats on them. The ironic aspect of this attitude is evident: Michael expects respect which he does not pay to Melissa. In addition, Michael has a lover in Lordsburg, New Mexico, where the project of artificial photosynthesis is to be introduced. This lover, Darlene, is planning their wedding, which he

¹⁸⁸ *Solar* 288.

¹⁸⁹ See *Solar* 300.

¹⁹⁰ *Solar* 313.

¹⁹¹ *Solar* 313.

promised once during their sexual intercourse. The irony related to Darlene and their relationship, or rather Michael's attitude towards their relationship, will be illustrated by the following example: the lovers are about to meet in Darlene's trail to make love. However, Michael decides he should go to his hotel room and have a rest so that he can better concentrate on his project: "Sometimes a man had to make sacrifices, for science, for the well-being of future generations."¹⁹² Even though the "sacrifices" means sexual intercourse, the utterance is not as ironic as after reader learns what happens next – Darlene appears, calls Michael's name and suddenly: "They would go straight to his motel room. The decision was out of his hands."¹⁹³ With respect to previous paragraph and the course of Michael's thoughts, the situational irony is disclosed. Paradoxically and in terms of the main protagonist's approach, the future generations will have to wait.

Moreover, it is not exactly the future generation Michael Beard cares about. Towards the end of the novel, the dialogue with Toby Hammer, Michael's manager, reveals that his chief interest is money and fame. Hammer worries about recent news reporting that the earth is not getting hotter, rather the contrary. Michael comforts him:

"Here's the good news. The UN estimates that already a third of a million people a year are dying from climate change. Bangladesh is going down because the oceans are warming and expanding and rising. There's drought in the Amazonian rainforest. Methane is pouring out of the Siberian permafrost. There's a meltdown under the Greenland ice sheet that no one really wants to talk about.... The future has arrived, Toby."¹⁹⁴

The implication of the extract is clear. The contradiction between "good news" and the following content of the news is ironic and indicates Michael's real intentions, which are not to save the world, but to profit from its downfall. This contradiction is supported by the second part of the novel and the earlier presumption that Beard is preoccupied by the welfare of future generations, of the welfare of his daughter.

The paradoxical climax of his career comes when he is accused of plagiarism and is asked to halt the project. However, Beard, who is enthusiastic about the great show in which his source of solar energy is to light up whole of Lordsburg, refuses to admit any guilt. He is completely deluded and until the very end of the novel does not acknowledge his failure, which is moreover multiplied by the arrival of Tarpin, who is convinced that Tom Aldous was killed by Patrice. Beard is so

¹⁹² *Solar* 361.

¹⁹³ *Solar* 361.

¹⁹⁴ *Solar* 298.

cynical that he refuses to find him a job at the project site and cruelly sends him away under the threat of calling patrolmen to check Tarpin's visa. In this case, it is not as much situational irony as a manifestation of Beard's pride, since although he deliberately sent Tarpin, an innocent man, to jail, he considers him to be guilty – he slept with his wife. Therefore, the irony applying to this issue is of a polemical nature and depends on the subjective evaluation of the reader.

Nevertheless, the irony appearing after everything falls apart is unambiguous. After his refusal, Tarpin helps to destroy the project site – on the request of a lawyer acting on behalf of Braby, Michael's former employer in the research centre (which is claiming its rights to Tom Aldous's work). Tony Hammer then announces what has happened, what debts Michael has and declares his own distance from the project: “[Michael] ‘Anything else?’ [Hammer:] ‘Only this. You deserve almost everything that's coming to you. So go fuck yourself’”¹⁹⁵ Given the list of catastrophes awaiting Michael, his reaction “anything else” seems inadequate. The same applies to Hammer's answer “only this.” Assuming that the incongruity is the textual marker and the context refers to the list of problems, the verbal irony may be clearly recognised.

At the very end of the novel, Michael Beard sits in his favourite restaurant in Lordsburg and drinks alcohol from his flask. His project is ashes, his three women, including the small one, are coming to discuss their future life with him and the melanoma on his hand is growing. The circle closes when the waitress with the ponytail – a possible reference to the post-docs and Tom Aldous – comes and mentions that drinking alcohol in the restaurant is forbidden: “This time he did not conceal the flask as he shook it over his glass. Two drops fell out.”¹⁹⁶ At the moment, the “two drops” may be understood as the last drops, in other words, the final knock-down. Everything in Michael's life collapses, he cannot even drink away his tragedy, which has resulted from the first turning point in the story – the death of Tom Aldous. However, at that moment his two lovers arrive, together with his daughter: “As Beard rose to greet her [Catriona], he felt in his heart an unfamiliar, swelling sensation, but he doubted as he opened his arms to her that anyone would ever believe him now if he tried to pass it off as love.”¹⁹⁷ In this way, the second turning point in the novel, represented by the birth of Catriona, represents Michael's last resort: his unwanted daughter is ironically the only one who wants him as he is, her father, and she loves him in spite of everything. This is the irony of fate, or cosmic irony, viewed by the reader due to the textual context and the view from above enabled by the narrative technique. The reader can see the paradox in the main protagonist developing a relationship with his child.

¹⁹⁵ *Solar* 382.

¹⁹⁶ *Solar* 383.

¹⁹⁷ *Solar* 384.

To conclude the issue of turning points and to clarify their mention in the analysis, the relation between these points in the novel is also ironic. The first of them refers to death and is the initial impulse leading the main protagonist to destruction, whereas the second one represents the last and only real thing in his life, the sole purpose of his life. Moreover, their contradictory nature, death versus life (birth) contributes to the cosmic irony which concludes the novel.

The last part of the novel, standing outside the main text, is the appendix: “Presentation Speech by Professor Nils Palsternacka of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences”¹⁹⁸. The appendix presents a fictional speech by professor Palsternack before he hands the Nobel Prize to Michael Beard. The insertion of the appendix at the very end of the novel, after Michael Beard’s scientific career has disintegrated, may be regarded as irony on the part of the author, Ian McEwan’s. However, since authorial intentions are not the subject of this diploma thesis, this issue will be left open.

3.5.4 Biting comic

On the grounds of the scope and complexity of *Solar*, only the most representative and interesting examples relating to irony in the opinion of the author of this diploma thesis were chosen for analysis. The time scale dividing the novel into three parts and the main protagonist’s duplex lifestyle – women and science – simultaneously with the turning points changing Beard’s life either in a positive or negative sense, or a mixture of both, serves as a guideline in course of the analysis.

The novel contains various types of irony: verbal included in arguments and dialogues, situational which is very frequent and relates both to Beard’s private and professional life, and cosmic which is most prominent at the end of the novel. The context on the basis of which various kinds of irony could be recognised is primarily textual, but also circumstantial and intertextual. In the majority of cases the textual markers are contradiction, incongruity and exaggeration, although lexical devices also play a role.

The function of irony in *Solar* is a complex issue. Primarily, it is the comic effect produced by means of the narrator’s comments on situations and situations as such. Secondary, the aggregative function which refers to Beard’s elitist attitude towards his colleagues or even his lovers is also evident. Provided that the novel is regarded as satiric novel, the assailing function – attacking the proposed views and approaches of the novel’s protagonists, should also be mentioned. Moreover, the self-protective function accompanying verbal irony, the distancing function applying to reader’s response, the complicating function which throws different light on proposed themes and

¹⁹⁸ *Solar* 385.

topics and the reinforcing function, underlying the tragicomic elements in the novel, must be present. *Solar* is a novel in which irony functions on various different levels.

It is not especially daring to suggest that *Solar* is the most comic and simultaneously the most ironic novel analysed in this diploma thesis. Despite the disastrous outfall of the story, Michael Beard is the narrator, the ironist, who comments on his storyline with humour and an ironic unworldliness until the very end. By virtue of the abundant occurrence of irony in the novel, *Solar* is not as serious as the previous novels analysed and its disturbing narrative about an ageing physicist – womaniser makes the reader smile, or laugh. Moreover, as Thomas Jones in his review says, “the incongruous elements of farce make the story darker”¹⁹⁹ and within that sense, the effect of novel’s dark comic underlined by bitter irony is a powerful device appealing to reader.

The very last point which is necessary to mention is that according Thomas Jones, “there is some pathos in the irony of a novel about climate change pointing out the fruitlessness of attempts to tackle climate change through art.”²⁰⁰ This suggests that the author may in a certain sense be ironising his own literary work by means of the self-mockery included in the text.

¹⁹⁹ See Thomas Jones, “Oh, the Irony,” *London Review of Books* 32.6 (2010): 6.

²⁰⁰ Jones 4.

Conclusion

The focus of this diploma thesis has been the concept of irony in selected literary works by Ian McEwan, which were thoroughly analysed with respect to this theme. After the basic and necessary methodological proceedings and principals were stated, the content of this thesis consisted of particular analyses of the selected novels: *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Amsterdam* and *Solar*. The analysis of each novel was composed of singular examples and occurrences of irony revealed in the novel, and these examples were later carefully reflected and commented upon in terms of the narrative perspective, types of irony, the context and textual markers necessary for recognition of irony and eventually the function of irony. However, the function of irony and its effect on reader were pre-eminently presented at the end of the analysis of each novel in the form of a summary. This conclusion should synthesise all the particular findings relating to the particular analyses and deduce a definite general commentary on the consideration that Ian McEwan's literary works are ironic.

With regard to the types of irony appearing in the novels, the generally approved division was weighted and accordingly, each novel analysed might be observed as including a predominant type of irony. However, the first novel analysed, *Atonement* is not a representative example, since its complexity, multitude of narrative perspectives and characteristic of metanarrative predict the occurrence of various types of irony. Nevertheless, the most prominent type is verbal irony, which reflects on the protagonists' interpersonal relationships, their attitudes towards each other. The analysis of irony in *Atonement* is moreover linked with the concept of growing up towards irony – relating to verbal irony, or also the ability of the protagonists to express and grasp irony. Similar to *Atonement*, *Amsterdam* also illustrates the complex narrative perspective, since the reader observes the course of events from various characters' point of view. In this case, the situational irony based on the protagonists' action and the parallelism of their contemplation is the most remarkable. Additionally, as the climax of the novel inclines towards the absurd, the importance of cosmic irony, or irony of fate, by means of which the reader observes the course of events with an amount of extra knowledge denied to the main protagonists, is not negligible. The cosmic irony is the prevailing type of irony in another novel, *The Child in Time*. Here the cyclical nature of the plot, the omnipresent references to time and the tense opposition of rational and supernatural again provides the reader with a privileged view from above, allowing an evaluation of the involution from a distance. On the other hand, the dominant type of irony in *The Innocent* is the situational irony arising from the unexpected evolution of the plot. Unlike *Amsterdam*, the situations in *The Innocent* are highly surprising, unpredictable, shocking and violent. Finally *Solar*, similarly to *Atonement*,

proposes all kinds of irony within the widest scope: *Solar*, due to its extent and satirical nature, is the most ironic novel analysed, comprising verbal, situational and comic irony presumptively in a balanced proportion.

In the course of the irony analyses, the issue of the novel's title in terms of irony aroused. Except for the title of *Solar*, which relates to the main protagonist's chief preoccupation, every title analysed could be connected with the concept of irony. In the case of *Atonement*, the title refers to the presumed purpose for which the main protagonist wrote the novel currently being read. However, at the end of the novel the reader learns that this purpose may be considered fruitless, failing to achieve its desired effect, and as a result the title refers to a frustrated aim – indicating the cosmic irony from the reader's point of view. Similarly in *The Child in Time*, the child from the title is either lost or unknown, there are several candidates and this issue represents the linking element of the analysis of irony performed in this diploma thesis. In terms of cosmic irony, the title of *Amsterdam*, from the very beginning of the novel, from its title page, figuratively points towards its very end – death in Amsterdam. And in comparison with *The Child in Time*, also the title of *The Innocent* is the crucial element traversing the analysis of irony of the novel and indicating that the novel might be understood as ironic, based on the reader's response, or non-ironic from the main protagonist's point of view.

The recognition of irony in the fictional texts is based on several factors, the first of which is the presumption that the ironist is equal to the narrator, one of the protagonists. This presumption was although facilitated and supported by the fact that all novels analysed are written in free indirect narrative style. Secondly, the role of context and textual markers is fundamental. The context conditioning the recognition of irony is predominantly textual and circumstantial in the case of situational irony. In certain instances the reader needs additional information, which might in the majority be regarded as part of common sense. The presence of intertextual context is rare, at least in relation to the analyses in this diploma thesis and the examples depicted. The textual markers are various; however, the most apparent device alerting reader is contradiction. With respect to cosmic irony, the contradiction lies between the reader's view from above and the fictional world's awareness. Similarly frequent is incongruity, warning the reader that the situation taking place is not according to a traditionally expected scenario, as a result of which and the reader is astonished. The description of a situation or course of events is also often either simplified or, on the contrary, exaggerated. A popular marker appearing in every novel is literalisation: understanding the utterance literally evokes a ironic third meaning.

Apart from these textual markers identified in the analyses of the selected novels, stylistic devices such as unusual collocations or connections of words and phrases, as well as the lexical

field, are also eminent signals of irony. With regard to changes in the lexical field, the technical passages exactly describing physical issues in *Solar*, the tunnel in *The Innocent* or classical music in *Amsterdam* are never ironic. Nevertheless, the other passages involved do contain changes of register or a special choice of vocabulary which signals irony.

The last point of this conclusion as well as this diploma thesis is the function of irony in the analysed literary works and the projection in the reader's reception from a general perspective. The majority of functions are common to all the novels analysed. The most frequent and most evident is the ludic function of irony, ensuring a comic effect and evoking humour. Undoubtedly, even the more serious novels by Ian McEwan are to a certain extent comic. As far as his satirical novels, *Amsterdam* or *Solar*, are concerned, the assailing, oppositional and self-protective functions of irony are more apparent than in his other analysed literary works, although *Atonement* also contains these types of irony functions, since they result from complicated interpersonal relationships and critical attitudes between the protagonists. The distancing function of irony allows the reader to observe even tragic, unpleasant or violent situations in the novels with relieved concern, as in *The Child in Time* or *The Innocent*. On the other hand, the complicating function of irony forces the reader to become more involved. The reinforcing function indicates that in each novel the irony readable in between the lines or operating in the form of an ironic undertone underlines the essential themes and issues proposed to the reader for contemplation and reflection.

The effect on the reader is profound and lasting. The irony revealed in the fictional world of Ian McEwan's literary works contributes substantially to the overall atmosphere of the novels. In terms of aesthetic categories, irony constructs the transitional line between comic and tragic, transferring the most serious and bitter issues into tragicomic enigmas, provoking reader to smile about a situation, although the ensuing one is not at all humorous. Simultaneously, the irony in McEwan's fiction poses questions, which challenge the reader to answer, to create his own interpretation, intensifying the reader's integration into the fictional world; since irony will not provide any responses. Irony is always polemical.

Resumé

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo představit vybraná literární díla současného britského spisovatele Iana McEwana ve spojitosti s ironií, která se v nich často a v různých podobách vyskytuje. Bylo vybráno pět delších či kratších románů, jež byly následně analyzovány v rámci tématu této diplomové práce. Jedná se o díla: *Atonement* (Pokání), *The Child in Time* (Dítě v pravý čas), *The Innocent* (Nevinný), *Amsterdam* (Amsterdam) a *Solar* (Solar), přičemž názvy v závorkách představují tituly románů v českém překladu. Tato díla byla vybrána na základě dvou kritérií: množství vyskytujících se příkladů ironie a jejich poutavost, zajímavost.

Po úvodní kapitole, stručně představující autora vybraných literárních děl, je zařazena kapitola týkající se metodologických postupů a zásad, jež vedly k vypracování jednotlivých analýz. Kromě vyloučení jakéhokoliv ohledu na autorský záměr při analýzách jednotlivých románů, se tato metodologie zabývá otázkou vypravěče a vypravěčské perspektivy, která je nezbytnou součástí analýzy, jelikož pomáhá určit autora ironického sdělení v textu. Dalšími prvky podstatnými pro analýzu jsou: dělení typů ironie, určení kontextu, na základě kterého je ironie rozpoznatelná, či textové znaky a signály napovídající, že konkrétní část textu je ironická. Výsledný efekt ve smyslu působení na čtenáře a funkce ironie v románu nesmí být opomenuty. Závěr kapitoly zabývající se metodologií rovněž uvádí, že obecný přístup této diplomové práce k pojetí ironie je shodný s postmoderním pojetím, jež klade důraz na polemizující charakter ironie.

Analýzy jednotlivých románů byly strukturovány do třech částí, přičemž účelem první části je uvést čtenáře do děje, představit mu hlavní dějovou zápletku a postavy v románu vystupující. Druhá část pak zkoumá a objasňuje roli vypravěče coby autora ironie vyplývající z textu. Tato role je u všech analyzovaných románů stejná, jelikož Ian McEwan používá volnou nepřímou řeč – takový vypravěčský styl, který umožňuje vyprávění ve třetí osobě jednotného čísla, avšak z pohledu jedné či více postav románu. Třetí a poslední částí kapitoly analyzující určitý román je analýza samotná. Je založena na selekci a následném komentování nejdůležitějších a nejreprezentativnějších příkladů z toho určitého románu a postupuje na základě metodologické části této diplomové práce. Závěr kapitoly pak obecně shrnuje nejdůležitější poznatky z analýzy.

Syntéza jednotlivých analýz přinesla srovnání románů vyplývajících z použité metodologie. Ve všech analyzovaných románech se vyskytují všechny typy ironie: slovní, situační i tzv. kosmická, neboli-ironie osudu. O některých románech by se však dalo říci, že v nich jeden typ ironie převládá nad ostatními a formuje tak charakter díla. V románu *Atonement*, jenž díky svému komplexnímu rázu, množství vypravěčských úhlů pohledu a metanarativní povaze obsahuje všechny typy ironie ve velkém množství, je převládajícím typem slovní ironie, i když často ne

verbalizovaná, ale rozpoznatelná díky vypravěčské perspektivě. Tento typ ironie zde odráží problematiku mezilidských vztahů a to, jakým způsobem k sobě románové postavy vzájemně přistupují. Tato otázka mezilidských vztahů se pojí také s jedním z hlavních témat románu, analyzovaném ve spojitosti s ironií, a to je dospívání k ironii, kdy děti ještě nejsou schopny ironii použít ani zachytit, na rozdíl od jejich o něco málo starších kamarádů nebo dospělých. Podobně komplikovaná vypravěčská perspektiva jako v románu *Atonement* se objevuje také v románu *Amsterdam*. Dominantním typem ironie v tomto díle je však situační ironie, vyplývající ze vztahu a jednání dvou hlavních protagonistů, kteří na základě vzájemné dohody a paralelismu v jejich myšlení a povahách nakonec zavraždí jeden druhého, a tak i sami sebe. Vyústění románu tak může být považováno za absurdní a naznačuje přítomnost ironie osudu. Tento typ ironie převládá také v románu *The Child in Time*. Čtenáři je dovoleno sledovat děj s odstupem tzv. pohledem shora. Cyklická povaha děje, všudypřítomné odkazy k pojetí času a časoprostoru a napětí mezi racionálním uvažováním hlavního hrdiny přerůstajícím v iracionální náhled na svět odkazují právě k ironii osudu. V románu *The Innocent* naopak dominuje ironie situační, která se však liší od té, objevující se v románu *Amsterdam*. Situační ironie zde totiž vyrůstá z neočekávaných rozuzlení děje, momentu překvapení či násilných scén. Nejironičtějším analyzovaným románem je však *Solar*. Toto dílo nabízí všechny typy ironie v podobně vyváženém množství. To je dané i tím, že je román považován za satiru.

Během jednotlivých analýz vzrostla otázka vztahu mezi titulem románu a ironií v románu obsaženou. Kromě románu *Solar*, kde nebyl zjištěno žádné zvláštní propojení, byl tento vztah ve všech případech zkoumán a popsán. V případě díla *Atonement* se ironie vztahuje k rozporu mezi předpokládaným účelem, za kterým byl román, jenž je vlastně příběhem popisujícím vznik příběhu, napsán a výsledným efektem. Hlavní hrdinka, která je vlastně autorkou románu vyprávěnému čtenáři, totiž na jeho konci přiznává, že napsání románu nepřineslo kýžené vykoupení její viny. Z toho důvodu lze říci, že její snaha byla marná a to implikuje opět ironii osudu – čtenář si právě přečetl příběh, jenž nesplnil podstatu svého vzniku. *The Child in Time* nabízí podobný úhel pohledu. Dítě zmíněné v názvu románu je ztracené, protože bylo uneseno, nebo se přesně neví, o které dítě jde, je zde totiž více možných kandidátů a právě vzhledem k tomuto vztahu mezi titulem a možnými kandidáty a ironií z toho vyplývající byla analýza prováděna. Tak tomu bylo i v případě *The Innocent*, kde název románu lze chápat buďto jako ironický, z pohledu čtenáře, nebo neironický, z pohledu hlavního hrdiny příběhu, a to vše v několika rovinách. Titul posledního románu, *Amsterdam*, se opět pojí s ironií osudu, protože už samotný název románu uvedený na titulní straně knihy, popřípadě na přebalu, směřuje k závěru knihy – ke smrti k níž dojde ve městě Amsterdam.

Jak již bylo výše v tomto shrnutí uvedeno, kontext a textové signály jsou pro analýzu ironie zásadní. Z analýz tedy vyplynulo, že kontext, na jehož základě je ironie v románech Iana McEwana nejčastěji rozpoznatelná, je kontext textový – tedy text sám. V některých případech je aplikovatelný také kontext vycházející z okolností v ději, především když se jedná o ironii situační. Mnohdy je zapotřebí čtenářova všeobecného rozhledu, všeobecných znalostí týkajících se okolního světa. Naopak málokdy je kontext potřebný k rozeznání ironie intertextový, tzn. založený na znalosti dalších textů mimo román samotný. Z textových znaků je nejrozšířenější tradiční kontradikce, neboli rozpor mezi tím, co je řečeno, a co je ve skutečnosti myšleno. To se může odrážet jak v interpretaci sdělení, tak v rozporuplné povaze dvou vedle sebe stojících sdělení, například v rámci jedné věty. Dalším příkladem kontradikce je rozporuplnost mezi tím, co bylo řečeno nebo se odehrálo dříve v textu a co se zde odehrává nyní. Nakonec i podstata ironie osudu je založená na kontradikci, kdy čtenář ví víc než románová postava či postavy a jeho znalost se často liší od znalosti těchto postav. Podobně častým textovým signálem je i nesourodost vytvářející napětí mezi sdělením textu a čtenářovým očekáváním nebo tradičně očekávaným vyústěním dané situace. Situace jsou také záměrně popisovány velmi zjednodušeně či naopak velmi zveličeně, což vede k zamyšlení, zdali se nejedná o ironii. Oblíbeným textovým signálem je i doslovné pochopení sdělení vedoucí k ironickému tzv. třetímu významu, tedy něčím, co vyplývá z rozporu mezi sdělením a jeho opakem. Dalšími signály jsou i speciální větné konstrukce nebo zvláštní, neobvyklé spojení slov a frází, a změny v rámci lexikálního pole. Odborné popisy objevující se v románech, jako například popisy fyzikálních procesů v románu *Solar* nebo popisy částí tunelu a telekomunikačních zařízení v románu *The Innocent*, nejsou nikdy ironické, což ovšem neplatí o všech ostatních částech románů. Změny ve slovní zásobě nebo na úrovni stylistiky signalizující výskyt ironie lze v románech nalézt.

V neposlední řadě je třeba přiblížit funkci ironie ve výše zmíněných literárních dílech Iana McEwana a výsledný efekt na čtenáře. Většina funkcí ironie, tak, jak jsou tradičně dělené a uvedené v kapitole o metodologii, se objevují ve všech analyzovaných dílech. Nejčastější a pravděpodobně nejviditelnější je funkce zajišťující, že ironický text působí humorně a nutí čtenáře, když ne k smíchu, tak alespoň k pousmání. Je totiž pravdou, že i ty nejzávažnější romány Iana McEwana jsou do jisté míry komické, přinejmenším některé jejich části. Pokud jde o satirické romány, jakými jsou *Solar* nebo *Amsterdam*, funkce ironie je a měla by být útočná, vyjadřující protikladné postoje a názory, ale i používaná k sebeobraně. Tragické, smutné, nepříjemné nebo násilné situace jsou nadlehčovány díky distanční funkci ironie, jež umožňuje čtenáři pozorovat a hodnotit děj příběhu s odstupem a nadsázkou. Naopak v mnoha případech ironie obsažená v textu děj ještě komplikuje a nutí čtenáře k hlubšímu zamyšlení. K tomu přispívá i poslední zmiňovaná funkce ironie, kterou je

zdůraznění podstatných témat a problematik předkládaných příběhem románu. Takto je možné číst ironii skrytou mezi řádky a protkávající dílo v podobně ironického podtónu.

Závěrem lze tedy tvrdit, že účinek ironie formující texty literárních děl Iana McEwana je pronikavý a trvajícím, poskytující čtenáři dlouhodobý dojem z právě přečteného díla. Ironie totiž nejen přispívá k celkové atmosféře románu, ale zároveň působí na poli estetických kategorií. V tomto smyslu totiž vytváří přechodnou linii mezi komickým a tragickým módem, kdy i ta nejzávažnější témata řešená románem mohou být vnímána spíše coby tragikomické zápletky, přičemž je čtenáři dovoleno pousmát se nad jednou situací, i když ta následující není k smíchu vůbec. Současně ironie klade čtenáři otázky, na něž ovšem neodpovídá, a je tedy pouze na čtenáři, aby si odpověděl a vytvořil svoji vlastní interpretaci. Tím jsou na čtenáře kladeny větší nároky a jeho zapojení do fiktivního světa literárního díla je intenzivnější.

Annex I: Bibliography of Ian McEwan

- Novels:** *The Cement Garden* (1978)
The Comfort of Strangers (1981)
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)
Sweet Tooth (2012)
- Short story collections:** *First Love, Last Rites* (1975)
In Between the Sheets (1978)
The Short Stories (1995)
- Children's fiction:** *Rose Blanche* (1985)
The Daydreamer (1994)
- Screenplays:** *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983)
Sour Sweet (1988)
The Good Son (1993)
- Plays for television:** *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* (1976)
Solid Geometry (1979)
The Imitation Game (1980)
The Imitation Game (collection of all three TV plays) (1981)
- Oratorio:** *Or Shall We Die?* (1983)
- Libretto:** *For You: A Libretto* (2008)

Bibliography

“Ian McEwan.” *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6Th Edition* (2013): 1. [ASC. Vědecká knihovna, Olomouc, CZ. 16 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.ebscohost.com>>.]

“Innocent.” *Oxford Dictionaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxforddictionaries.com*. Web. 01 March 2013.

Booth, Wayne C. *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Childs, Peter and Nicolas Tredell. *The Fiction of Ian McEwan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Colebrook, Claire. *Irony: The New Critical Idiom*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Impastato, David. “Secular Sabbath.” *Commonweal* 136.18 (2009): 14-19. [ASC. Vědecká knihovna, Olomouc, CZ. 16 Mar 2013 <<http://www.ebscohost.com>>.]

Jones, Thomas. “Oh, the Irony.” *London Review of Books* 32.6 (2010): 19-20. [ASC. Vědecká knihovna, Olomouc, CZ. 16 Mar 2013 <<http://www.ebscohost.com>>.]

Keizer, Evelien. “The Interpersonal Level In English: Reported Speech.” *Linguistics* 47.4 (2009): 845-866. [ASC. Vědecká knihovna, Olomouc, CZ. 31 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.ebscohost.com>>.]

Malcolm, David. *Understanding Ian McEwan*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002.

McEwan, Ian. *Amsterdam*. New York: RosettaBooks LLC, 2003.

McEwan, Ian. *Atonement*. London: Vintage, 2002.

McEwan, Ian. *Black Dogs*. London: Vintage, 1992.

McEwan, Ian. *Enduring Love*. London: Vintage, 1998.

- McEwan, Ian. *On Chesil Beach*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2007.
- McEwan, Ian. *Saturday*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.
- McEwan, Ian. *Solar*. London: Vintage Books, 2011.
- McEwan, Ian. *Sweet Tooth*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2012.
- McEwan, Ian. *The Cement Garden*. London: Picador, 1983.
- McEwan, Ian. *The Child in Time*. London: Vintage, 1992.
- McEwan, Ian. *The Comfort of Strangers*. London: Vintage, 1997.
- McEwan, Ian. *The Innocent*. New York: Bantam, 1991.
- Muecke, Douglas Colin. *The Compass of Irony*. London: Methuen, 1969.

Annotation

The theme of this diploma thesis is the concept of irony in the selected literary works by Ian McEwan. The selected works, including *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Amsterdam* and *Solar* are analysed in terms of narrative perspective determining the ironist and interpreter, the types of irony occurring in the particular novels, the context and textual markers framing the signals pointing to irony, the function of irony and its projection into reader's reception. The novels are analysed on the basis of the assigned methodology and without the respect to authorial intentions for irony analysed arises exclusively from the fictional world, its protagonists and the narrative perspective. The implication of this diploma thesis is the comparison of irony occurrence in the analysed literary works with respect to the theme and the effect irony has on reader.

Key words: Ian McEwan, irony, narrative perspective, types of irony, context, textual markers, function of irony

Anotace

Tématem této diplomové práce je pojetí ironie ve vybraných literárních dílech spisovatele Iana McEwana. Vybraná literární díla, zahrnující *Atonement*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Amsterdam* a *Solar* jsou analyzována s ohledem na vypravěčskou perspektivu určující autora ironického sdělení a interpreta, typy ironie vyskytující se v jednotlivých románech, kontext a textové znaky signalizující ironii v textu, funkci ironie a její rozhodující vliv na čtenáře. Analýza románů probíhá na základě stanovené metodologie a bez přihlídnutí k autorským záměrům; vyplývá totiž výhradně ze světa popsaného v románu, jeho postav a vypravěčské perspektivy. Výsledkem této diplomové práce je souhrnné porovnání analyzovaných literárních děl vzhledem k tématu a s ohledem na efekt, jaký má ironie na čtenáře.

Klíčová slova: Ian McEwan, ironie, vypravěčská perspektiva, typy ironie, kontext, textové signály, funkce ironie