

**ATONEMENT: An Analysis of Literary Tradition and Components of Aristotle's
Poetics**

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Abstract

McEwan designs his novel in a fictitious narrative form written by one of the This paper attempts to analyse Ian McEwan's self-reflexive and self-narrative novel "Atonement", with the theoretical apparatus which was given by the philosopher inside character itself with the name Briony Tallis who is noticed as the woman in the later part and who wishes to atone for the mistake that was done in her childhood which eventually ruined the life of her sister, Cecilia and the beloved of her sister also, Robbie. In the novel she tries to gain the sympathy of the reader by which the instrument of pity and fear arises as a result for the reader. The paper follows the efforts made by Briony to elaborate the fantasy which in turn allows her to create the exact mise-en-scene of her personal atonement. She also establishes the coordinates to her desire through her narration. And deals with the obscure truth which the writer uses as a therapy to drag the reader into the world of the story, where his symbolic expression of the emptiness which has the secret of the only secret where these is one, of which is not visibly visible throughout the story. His passion of secrets and Briony's love for secrets and story-telling will also be discussed in this paper. The dangers of imagination and catharsis and the healing of storytelling with the various forms of emotions of the reader into the story will be analysed in this paper. And also focuses on the drastic shift of the story in the last part of the novel. The 'transformative power of the art' of writing which allows her to atone for what is done by her in a realistic way.

Key Words: atonement, Briony, childhood, sympathy, art, story-telling

Introduction

Aristotle identifies tragedy as the most filtered version of poetry dealing with many lofty matters. Basically tragedy consists mainly of six components which are: plot, character, thought, diction, melody and spectacle. He mainly gives a note on the kind of emotions we get from a tragedy. The unity allows tragedy to express universal themes powerfully. He says that the best kind of tragedy has surprises which fit logically into the event of the plot. He weighs tragedy against epic poetry by determining that tragedy is

whole superior. In the taken novel Atonement this article discusses on the components of Aristotle's poetics as a tragedy.

Opening in the year 1935 against the looming of the historical background of the World War II, Ian McEwan's novel Atonement focused on the guilt which was felt by the protagonist of the story, Briony Tallis, for the consequences her sister Cecilia, and her new beloved were been accused for the reason that Robbie the beloved of Cecilia has molested their young cousin Lola. The story is being told

by the third person narration. This novel follows the act of testimony through the act of testimony. The story begins with the accusation and the extending of her accusing in the following years; she starts to rethink the reality of her witness. Each of the chapter forces the reader to imagine and think of what had happens in the backdrop, which was revealed by Briony in the end of the story by sowing the seeds of many doubts he reader is convinced to get proceeded with the story by his or her own ways of thinking.

Atonement reveals the ‘narrative imagining that it’s not static but dynamic in nature’ as skilfully manipulates the language of the story by playing the link between ethics and the knowledge. The novel demonstrates the ‘tragic results of error in the judgement.’ It leaves to ponder our own ability to test the story that was given by Briony in a very descriptive manner. The unfolding of the story goes with the great importance of the class-theme. Robbie thinks that just because of the visibility of the ladder to climb up towards the higher social class, doesn’t mean that the society based on class distinction disappears, which was noted as ‘elevation’, in the story. The villains of the under- class here the weapon used as the literature. But the literature has other impacts too. How can these other impacts be in the text?

Literature is known to be the mending force, where the mind of Robbie is being liberated with the help of literature and which enables him to gain the ‘ability of making his own decisions’ about his aspiration of his life. Literature also serves him to be a better human and more skilful in his medicinal studies. We can see that Robbie concludes that literature basically will assist him for future efforts: For this

was the point, surely: he would be a better doctor for having read the literature. What kind of deep readings his modified susceptibility might make of this human suffering, of the self-destructed folly, or sheer bad luck that driven men towards ill health!! Birth, death, and frailty in between. Rise and fall- this was the doctor’s business, and it was literature’s too. (93)

McEwan, in one of the ways in his ways he endow this fictive world with a reality by genuinely interesting himself in the ambitious path and the follies of a little girl. Briony Tallis, a prim, yearning, intelligent young girl child with a range for order and a tendency to judge before comprehending, is noted to be one of the great achievements of the novel. The writer seems to be funny about Briony’s habit of stealing complicated words from the dictionary, so her verse melodrama, ‘the trials of Arabella, opens thus:

This is the tale of spontaneous
Arabella
Who ran off with an extrinsic fellow.
It grieved her parents to see their
first born
Evanescence from her home to go to
Eastbourne
Without permission.....

We follow the furies and daydreams of Briony. From here she really starts thinking about her own sense of reality: was everyone else really alive as she was?

Adaptation in Atonement

The plot of the novel is borrowed for Romance and The Memoir from no Time of Mrs. A Radolff. In an article in Mail on Sunday Julia Langdon directly charges McEwan of plagiarism in Atonement. It was the article on the similarities between McEwan’s Atonement and Lucilia

Andrews's No Time for Romance in which Julia claims the plagiarism, but took it differently the view that she suggests it is not 'in dialogue' with Andrews' information. Rose Tremain has rightly pointed out McEwan's ability to transform the source material into something "singular and new". The debate has been giving on the phrases of Andrews echoed in Atonement, but captures the attention of the reader that how the novelist uses historical material. In Atonement, McEwan inserts Briony and her point of view, and the Part Three of the novel could not be possible without Andrews's work. It means that McEwan's novel relies on Andrews' in a different ways. His use of historical material suggests that there are not defined rules how writers echoes another text and about how much another's work can be drawn on.

Allusions in Atonement

T. S. Eliot in his seminal work Tradition and Individual Talent claims, "Writers best work often occur those who focus on the first section, in places where 'the dead poets, his [the writer's] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously'" (467). Significantly, regarding this view Ian McEwan is constantly using this view in his work and inspiring his writing with reference to the literary practices of his predecessors. The selected novel of McEwan haunted by the framed charters, ideas, techniques and themes are from the realm of earlier fictions. No doubt, the intersexual quality of Atonement is 117 by using a young girl as a writer with high imagination fascinates critics, peculiarly to it.

McEwan exemplifies a profound melody that builds details throughout the novel Atonement, the use of guilt and the quest for atonement are used with in the novel to

convey the central dynamic aspect in the novel. McEwan expresses the emotion of guilt that is being explored through the main character, Briony Tallis. The transition of a child and entering the adult world, focuses on the behavior and inspiration of the young narrator Briony. Briony writes passages that entail her endeavour to wash away her culpability as well find forgiveness for her sins. In which Briony had ruined the lives and the cheerfulness of her sister, Cecilia, and her lover Robbie. The reality of the events, attempts to achieve forgiveness for her actions. She is unable to understand the consequences of the actions as a child but grows to develop the understanding of the consequence with age. McEwan epitomizes an emotional novel that alters reality as he amplifies the creative acts of literature. In this essay I will be arguing that, the power of guilt prevents people from moving on from obstacles that hold them in the past. McEwan embodies the guilt which is illustrated throughout the novel with the element of symbolic references: "how guilt refined the methods of self-torture, threading the beads of detail into an eternal loop, a rosary to be fingered for a lifetime" (162). The literature critic, Brian Finney enunciates McEwan's, "fascination with evil behaviour that... 'projected a sense of evil in his stories... one tires to imagine the worst thing possible in order to get hold of the good'" (69). McEwan brands the orientation to a rosary, which is a religious symbol that corresponds to the novel's title, suggesting Briony may not only carry her guilt forever, but that there ...

Representing Trauma:

The text demonstrates how the traumatic episodes disrupt the attachment between the self and others, by challenging the

fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships in a complex, postmodern world. The adult remembers her past, she lives through the trauma that it has caused her as attempts to work through the guilt by seeking forgiveness for herself. Her atonement through fiction, most importantly, she relives and acts out with the imaginative scenarios that consequently caused her the actions to perform. She blends herself against with anguish and the pain for war by creating an extendible traumatic historical context in shaping a logical series of violent scenarios in her story. Giving life for her sister and Robbie in the novel is a real stand against “oblivion and despair” and her closest attempt at achieving atonement. And an interesting point is to consider in terms of Ruth Ley’s theories is whether the response and reaction to trauma by the protagonist in *Atonement* is driven by guilt or shame. From guilt to shame, Ley develops a discussion which shows that the emotions of guilt and shame should not be considered totally exclusive with shame perceived as a variant of guilt.

The Defence of Briony Tallis

Leaving aside the richness of naming a thirteen old, the villain of the story that has the child rapist among the characters, this doesn’t make sense for many readers. Were we are meant to believe that Briony did what she did out of malice and ignorance? The best kind of tragedy isn’t the one where everyone’s plans are thwarted by some version of Sindely Whiplash; it’s the one where everyone is doing the best they can, but their plans go pear shaped anyway. It’s attractive in some context, correct- to think of our lives as stories we tell ourselves. We take only what seems so interesting and perfect for us and arrange it so it makes sense to us and

tune to the rest, which is basically called as storytelling. In real life it’s called as conjecture. This is the lesson that Briony learns and does.

Atonement makes one more ironic literary implication to an even earlier English novel, Richardson’s *Clarissa*. The Trials of *Arabella*’ within a literary convention of sentimentality and sensationalism, while inevitably lacking the psychological complexity of the original text. Cecilia is spending the vacation after graduating at Cambridge by reading *Clarissa*, which Robbie considers as psychologically subtle and she boring. Their disagreement over this text helps to determine the reader’s response to the rape, which takes place later on the same day. And also which is pounced on the reader with not an iota of the lengthy preparation that ‘Richardson’ provides. This instance of intertextuality appears to incorporate both in terms that Kristeva uses to define intertextual productivity of rereading and displacement. As seen in the perspective of the novel as a whole, Lola’s rape, unlike that of *Clarissa*, which leads her to death and Lovelace’s damnation, and is the prelude to a long and socially successful marriage in fact cemented by Lola’s and Marshall’s determination to keep the identity of the rapist a secret while either of them is alive. Lola’s worldly manipulation of the advantage the rape has given her over her rapist acts as a form of social intertextuality, anticipating the later sexual morality of the later twentieth century. An additional effect as ironic references to other literary texts have in McEwan’s novel is to act as a continuous reminder that the entire book is the final literary art of Briony.

Atonement ends with a devastating twist, the information we get in first that changes

our sense of everything which we have read before. It's convincing enough that the reader is made to feel a bunch of emotions which usually create pity on the protagonist instead of hating. We can see that Tallis is afraid of influence. Where Robbie is fear of his psychiatrist, who was also their censor, they could never be sensual or even emotional. The craving for guilt and forgiveness in the novel serves to be more poetic in nature. With the childhood stories Briony never writes her past but she continues to write as a reader in her mind where she acts both as a reader and a writer. The title of the book itself makes the reader think of what actually the story line is all about.

Conclusion

Atonement is a novel in which the writer and the main character, Briony tells a story about the lives she affected with her imaginative stories. The reader follows her from the childhood one in turn she goes to 60 years, as she is been the same. This

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story explains the dangers of sinking too deep into one's own imaginary existence. When it comes to Aristotle's poetics its really different as there he said that the tragic hero shouldn't be of the female character, but here Briony becomes the true heroine of the story who partially being led by other characters. She actually learns to understand the literature and she compiles it with her fatal mistake. Her attempt to atone for her fatal mistaken in turn convinces the reader and forms the effect of various emotions, as pity was aroused when she tries to forgive herself by giving the story an account of fear of psychiatry. Maybe by letting our outside voice challenge our inner voice can probably start a reassessment of our perceptions and that perception creates a dialogue within ourselves. McEwan doesn't make a back step for exploring the ease of the world, not even his own world, and he does the same for a reader by inviting.