Titel

Written to Dialogise:

Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*

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to my parents

to my sisters

to myself – on the 6th of February 2017

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Abstract

In the intertext of *Atonement* (2001) and *Sweet Tooth* (2012), McEwan unmasks monological writing and reading processes which destructively deny the individual subject its complexity. Empowering the individual subject to fight its ideological determination, he suggests (literary) possibilities of dialogical involvement to unbind the individual subject into critically thinking its social and historical situatedness. Writing a readerly text of writerly potential which requires the reader's active participation to become an instrument of dialogue, McEwan introduces two *acting writers*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, who are familiar with intertextual theory and share McEwan's dialogical approach to the literary text. They critically mediate Briony's and Serena's development from monological to dialogical subjectivity by personalising different stages of intertextual theory (Saussure, Bakhtin, Kristeva and Barthes) and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity within each protagonist's literary development. Allowing his readers to observe how Briony Tallis and Tom Haley meticulously write and criticise Briony and Serena, protagonists who initially author but finally write their context when they unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process in dialogising the readerly and the writerly, McEwan provides his readers with a space in which to try their critical potential: reading *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* and daring to assume the responsibility of dialogical double agency (Barthes and Genette), they might not only become aware of monological and dialogical writing and reading processes but they might join in productively exploring narrative possibilities to dialogise (their) individual subjectivity.

There had been times when her thesis had driven her to despair.

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1   Redeeming Dialogue

Despite anti-dialogical tendencies in (political) society, which are increasingly aiming at monologising the individual subject into ideological thought and action, I still trust – as Ian McEwan does – in "human possibility" (PMA[1] xi). Human possibility is easily silenced by "a total system" and its "set of instructions" (PMA xi) and rather difficult to encourage. Theoretically, higher education is a space of advancing human possibility; practically, higher education is a space of instructing instead of enabling: independent of the subject of study, students are meant to be constructed into the habitus of a discipline which denies the dissenting idea and its innovative potential. Instruction is, indeed, "the ineradicable human sickness" (PMA xi). Nevertheless, watching those who do not only focus on knowledge but combine knowledge and skill, I dare to claim for teaching what McEwan claims for writing: while it remains a site of monological and monologising approaches, it becomes a site of "expressive freedom" which opposes totalising systems if instructing is replaced by enabling (PMA xi). Of course, each lecturer is situated in historical and cultural discourse and bound within the institutionalised establishment, but human possibility will be encouraged by those who transgress their situatedness and boundary in creating awareness of restrictive and destructive norms. Only if overcoming the authoritative word of monologue in the persuasive word of dialogue, human possibility becomes human feasibility.

I, too, was culturalised into the habitus of a discipline. In my first semester of studying English literature, I was instructed never to write "I" and "I think" in a seminar or final paper – due to academic standard. While I appreciate the necessity of (academic) standard to facilitate communication, a standard which linguistically denies the individual subject behind the written word is inhibiting dialogical involvement because it taboos a language which allows the individual subject to engage with primary and secondary literature beyond plainly agreeing or disagreeing, beyond judging. "I think" – spoken or written to dialogically involve and spoken or written to offer a thought to the reader is the most authentic sentence the individual subject can phrase. Unfortunately, internalised habit, even if critically reflected, is difficult to overcome. My dissertation is the most personal and most complex text I have yet had the pleasure to write and constantly rewrite; however, reading and rereading my textual analyses I realise that it lacks the pronoun which linguistically visualises this personal complexity although each sentence, each word is thoroughly me.

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[1] McEwan, Ian. Preface. *A Move Abroad:* Or Shall We Die? *and* The Ploughman's Lunch. London: Picador, 1989. vii-xxvi. Print.

Having taught for ten years – first students, then students and lecturers, having for ten years aimed at encouraging critical thought in the teaching-learning process, I claim for teaching what McEwan claims for writing: if teaching and writing refrain from instructing, if they dare the uncertainty of dialogue, they gain "great redeeming quality" (McEwan, interv. with Gonzáles 59). Indeed, I think that McEwan is a major teacher, never instructing, always enabling. From *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) to *The Cockroach* (2019), McEwan relentlessly illustrates restrictive and destructive processes in society which arise from the craving of naturalising constructed norm. In *Atonement* (2001) and *Sweet Tooth* (2012), he raises awareness of such processes in instances of writing and reading and offers within his writing and reading characters' development the redeeming and healing process of ongoing dialogical involvement. Tellingly, his characters, proceeding from monological to dialogical thought and action, undergo the different stages of intertextual theory – from Ferdinand de Saussure to Gérard Genette. Exposing ideological structure and showing possibilities to fight ideological determination, hardly any theory has been perceived to be that threatening to norm; in consequence, hardly any theory has been met with such defiance by those whose dominant position and domineering character it threatened.

A reader familiar with both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* will not be surprised by my approach to interlink both novels. After all, "*Sweet Tooth* revisits the metafictional concerns that are central to *Atonement*: authorial power and relationship between fiction and reality, reliability and intertextuality" (Ksiezopolska 415). Irena Ksiezopolska argues that "in *Atonement* the twist ending seems to entirely 'unwrite' the story of the lovers, thus asserting the author's right to revise reality" (415) while "*Sweet Tooth* flounces to excess the novel's intertextuality and thereby foregrounds the reader's entanglement in the textual web" (415). I will argue, however, that *both Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth try* to entangle the reader – be it Briony Tallis's reader, Tom Haley's reader and/or McEwan's reader – in the textual web; indeed, I will argue that the reader's entanglement will become both Briony's and Serena's redemption for their monological approach to the real.[2]

In his comparison of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Petr Chalupský, too, observes that intertextuality and metafictionality are linked in both novels (106-08). According to Chalupský, this link allows McEwan to show "the process of creative writing, the writer's ethical dilemma concerning one's responsibility towards the readers, characters and oneself" (107). He

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[2] I am perfectly aware that reality is an individual and/or individualised construct. When using the literary sign *real* or *reality*, I refer to the physically concrete which is monologically interpreted or dialogically analysed by the individual subject.

concludes that "if Briony functions as a metaphor of the development of a writer, Serena embodies that of a reader" (109). While Chalupský analyses the metaphorical identities of Briony and Serena, I will argue that both Briony and Serena are not only written into an intertextualised and metafictionalised frame but that both slowly proceed in becoming dialogical individual subjects in undergoing the developmental process of intertextual theory. Indeed, I will argue that *Sweet Tooth intertextually involves* with *Atonement* when Serena is understood to be Briony's reading counterpart.

In my (inter)textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* I will explore how **McEwan elucidates monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader; indeed, introducing a meta-level within his novels, McEwan writes two *acting writers*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, who elucidate monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader.** If I write "McEwan" I am perfectly aware that I construct my version of the individual subject based on a complex and partly conscious, partly unconscious dialogue between the historical and social discourses constructing and re-constructing his person, my person and any context involving us; yet, being a confident and (self)reflective reader, I dare to postulate him.[3] Indeed, I dare to postulate that McEwan, in constructing Briony Tallis and Tom Haley as *acting writers*, provides *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* with a structure that allows him to show writers at work: familiar with intertextual theory and sharing McEwan's dialogical approach to the literary text, I will explore how **McEwan's acting writers focus on their respective protagonist's development from monological to dialogical subjectivity by personalising the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity within her literary development.** And I furthermore dare to postulate that both Briony Tallis's and Tom Haley's novel is (auto)biographic and based in "reality."[4] Indeed, I shall postulate, in Charles Pastoor's wording, that "within the metafictional world of the novel, the novel itself is based on actual events which it then alters to serve the purpose of the author" (210; also Birke 187). Both acting

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[3] I refer to Alexander Nehamas's concept of the postulated author.
> Nehamas claims that it is possible to create a model of the author based on the text to serve as a hypothesis on which to test theories and criticisms. This model will be independent of facts about the historical writer. Nehamas's postulated author is less a part of the reader's imaginative experience and more a theoretical construct for critical discussion. It allows one to talk of aims and intentions without depending on the historical writer. (Harold 131-32)

[4] Of course, McEwan's *Atonement* dallies with a reading in which "both endings are fictional within the world of the novel" (Frangipane 577; also Wolf 311). And "Serena might as well not be a product of Haley's literary extrapolation, but pure invention" (Dobrogoszcz 202). Indeed, "the general ontological status" of both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* is "unstable, opalescent" (203). Hence Childs concludes for *Sweet Tooth* what needs to be concluded for *Atonement*: "the overriding message is that the reader has to choose" (Marble 140).

writers, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, alter actual events to serve their purpose of engaging their readers into dialogue by showing both monologising and dialogising tendencies in Briony respectively Serena. Confronting both dialogue and monologue in their relationships and environments, I will explore how **Briony and Serena, in comparison to those who share part of their social and historical situatedness, initially deny but gradually attempt and succeed in dialogue and dialogical subjectivity when they unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process in dialogising the readerly and the writerly.** Inviting his readers to observe Briony's and Serena's intertextual development from monologue to dialogue, McEwan, by means of his acting writers, sharpens his readers' awareness of manipulating and enabling processes in writing and reading and encourages them into dialogically approaching their existence.

The theses which have only briefly been presented in this introduction will be developed in detail in chapter **2 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality** which is divided into chapter 2.1 Method of Research and chapter 2.2 State of Research. The method of research includes three subchapters: an introduction into Bakhtinian dialogue and Barthesian myth (2.1.1 Dialogue), into monological and dialogical subjectivity (2.1.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity) and into the basic concepts of intertextual theory and its vocabulary (2.1.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality). Indicated by the title of each subchapter, the concepts of dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality, as applied in the textual analysis of this dissertation, are thoroughly interlinked. The state of research includes an introduction to McEwan's dialogical approach to writing and reading (2.2.1 Dialogue), into subjectivity (2.2.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity) and intertextuality (2.2.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality) as discussed in secondary literature on McEwan. At the end, the reader will know the theoretical and the academical from which my textual analysis develops.

Since each stage of intertextual theory is critically and dialogically involving with previous stages and this engagement is included in Briony's and Serena's personal development, I have chosen to explore the various stages of development within Briony and Serena in chronological order. The textual analysis of chapter **3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*** is thus divided into five chapters: chapter 3.1 Saussure's Value, chapter 3.2 Bakhtin's Word, chapter 3.3 Kristeva's Text, chapter 3.4 Barthes's Intertext and chapter 3.5 Genette's Paratext and Metatext. While the first four chapters focus on the characters and acting writers of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the last chapter focuses on *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* in the context of spy fiction and reads McEwan's *Sweet Tooth* to be a commentary on (the reception of) McEwan's *Atonement*.

Working with Genette's concept of paratextuality, I decided not to precede each chapter by a contentual heading which might interfere with the reader's critical involvement by guiding the reader's reading into a specific direction; however, hoping that my textual analysis will encourage exciting discussion, I chose a structure which allows for sufficient orientation and thus facilitates communication.

In chapter 3.1 Saussure's Value, I will explore how Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, interlink the Saussurean concept of the linguistic sign and its gap and value with Briony's and Serena's approach to fiction and reality. Although Briony and Serena try hard to avoid dialogical participation in literature, Saussure's theory of the (linguistic) sign and its consequences for the writing and the reading subject are implied within Briony and Serena by Briony Tallis and Tom Haley to subvert Briony's and Serena's attempts to silence dialogue. In the first subchapter (3.1.1 Briony), I will analyse how the instability of the constructed and valued (linguistic) sign furthers ambivalence in meaning which Briony tries to control in the transcendental signified of author and narrator in personal union. In consequence, Briony's approach to writing assumes a reader who seeks the orderly non-contradiction of the readerly text and ignores the reader who seeks dialogical involvement. In the second subchapter (3.1.2 Serena), I will analyse how Serena, who equally fears the disorder of dialogue, focuses on the signified and is thus to be read as Briony's ideal reader: she seeks the orderly non-contradiction of the readerly text. However, introducing Saussurean linguistics and mediating Saussure's insights within Briony and Serena, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley imply that Briony's and Serena's attempt at monologising reality by reading and writing is eventually meant to fail.

In chapter 3.2 Bakhtin's Word, I will explore how Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise Briony and Serena within the Bakhtinian theory of the word. They imply Bakhtinian anti-ideological ideas in order to criticise their protagonists' monological (reading and writing) structures which Briony and Serena (fatally) apply to those in their acquaintance. In the first subchapter (3.2.1 Briony), I will analyse how Briony simplifies the individual utterance in disregarding both its reciprocal purpose and its social and historical context. In the second subchapter (3.2.2 Emily, Cecilia and Robbie), I will analyse how Briony Tallis contextualises Emily, Cecilia and Robbie within Bakhtinian theory of monologue and dialogue in order to explain and challenge Briony's authoritative thoughts and actions. While the authoritative word of monologue prevents dialogue in Emily, Cecilia is exposed to the authoritative discourse of two major ideologies but unable to enter them into dialogue; Robbie, however, succeeds in dialogising the monological approaches he encountered

at university. In the third subchapter (3.2.3 Serena), I will analyse Serena's focus and dependence on the authoritative word of ideological discourse which makes her vulnerable to authority figures explaining the world. Briony Tallis and Tom Haley thus illustrate and sharply criticise the devastating consequences of monological and monologising processes.

In chapter <u>3.3 Kristeva's Text</u>, I will explore how Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, practice poetic language and personalise Julia Kristeva's development of Bakhtinian dialogue into intertextuality within their protagonists. In the first subchapter (3.3.1 Briony, Cecilia and Robbie), I will analyse how Briony recognises Mikhail Bakhtin's and Kristeva's denotative and objectified discourse, mediating the authority of monological forces in society, as restrictive to her individual subjectivity, and how Briony focuses on Bakhtin's and Kristeva's ambivalent discourse to protect her individual subjectivity and to guide her readers into dialogically involving with her literary text. I will, therefore, focus on Briony Tallis's leitmotif *Come back.* in which she explains intertextual processes when Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's readings and contexts are absorbed, levelled and transformed. In the second subchapter (3.3.2 Serena and Tom), I will analyse how Tom Haley constructs that Serena, involved in an unwelcome signifying process, first realises the difficulty to define the author and authorial intention based on the author's narrative. While both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley think intertextual theory a means of liberating the individual subject from ideological determination, it is not uncommon to link intertextual theory with existential fear. Hence in the third and fourth subchapter (3.3.3 Robbie / 3.3.4 Tom), I will analyse how the anxieties linked with intertextual processes are personalised within Robbie and Tom, and that the individual subject requires social and historical situatedness to consciously use intertextual theory in its fight against ideological determination.

In chapter <u>3.4 Barthes's Intertext</u>, I will explore how Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their protagonists and further characters within Barthesian intertextual theory to mediate the dialogical possibilities the individual subject can introduce and embrace in its historical and social situatedness. In the first subchapter (3.4.1 Briony and Emily, Cecilia and Robbie), I will analyse how Briony Tallis exemplifies the Barthesian theory of work and Text by means of the library and its monological restrictions (Briony and Emily) and dialogical and intertextual possibilities (Cecilia and Robbie). In the second subchapter (3.4.2 Serena and Tom), I will analyse how Serena finally accepts Tom's / Tom Haley's Barthesian invitation of rewriting. In the third subchapter (3.4.3 I love you), Roland Barthes's lover's discourse will be rewritten in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* when the highly intertextual phrase *I love you* is processed to be the individual

subject's confinement when it is spoken monologically *and* the individual subject's liberation when it is spoken dialogically.

The meta-fictional twist of each novel (Chapter 22 of *Sweet Tooth* and "London, 1999" of *Atonement*) allows valuable insight into the thoughts and actions of Briony Tallis and Tom Haley. Hence in the fourth subchapter (3.4.4 Briony Tallis and Tom Haley), I will analyse that in both twists, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley contemplate processes of writing and reading and are revealed to be Barthesian *paper authors* who are discursively inscribed in their narratives to be rewritten and who choose different strategies to encourage their readers' dialogical involvement with their novels and their reality.

In chapter 3.5 Genette's Paratext and Metatext, I will propose that McEwan's autographic peritexts to *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* – the quote from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and the quote from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* – introduce the subject of spying into a rereading of *Atonement* in the context of *Sweet Tooth* (3.5.1 McEwan's Paratextuality). Furthermore, I will read *Sweet Tooth* to be a metatext – a commentary – on monological reading approaches to *Atonement* (3.5.2 McEwan's Metatextuality).

Analysing *Sweet Tooth*, Naomi Booth argues that McEwan aims at illustrating that "narrative perspective is never clean" (874) but "decidedly dirty" (874) – involved in ideological and tendentious politics (874). Indeed, it is undeniable that a writer is situated in social and historical discourse; however, if a writer is aware of a situatedness in a discursively constructed society and if this writer wants to fight ideological determination, the dirt of narrative perspective becomes decidedly nutritious in the ambivalent word of dialogue. The individual (writing) subject can monologically instruct and dialogically enable the individual (reading) subject's critical involvement with a restrictive and destructive norm. Allowing his readers to observe Briony's and Serena's development from monological into dialogical thought and allowing his readers to observe Briony Tallis's and Tom Haley's dialogical writing processes, McEwan enables and empowers his readers in turning the literary text, potentially dirty in monological instruction, into the rich soil of redeeming dialogue.

2   Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality

In this chapter, the theoretical and contextual background to understand the development of this dissertation's theses will be presented. In chapter 2.1 Method of Research, the theoretical background will focus on theories and terminologies of dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality. In chapter 2.2 State of Research, the contextual background will examine research on McEwan's writing in which reading and writing processes and those processes' relevance to dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality are investigated.

2.1   Method of Research

Considering the varying approaches to dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality, it is necessary to introduce those theories and terminologies which are relevant to the textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*. Hence in the first subchapter (2.1.1 Dialogue), Barthes's and Bakhtin's definitions of monological ideology and anti-ideological dialogue will be briefly summarised; in the second subchapter (2.1.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity), the concept of monological (ideological) and dialogical subjectivity will be introduced; and in the third subchapter (2.1.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality), this concept will be linked with the concept of intertextuality.

2.1.1   Dialogue

In his preface to *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes argues that ideology comes into being when history is naturalised (AP[5] 565). Elucidating Barthes's approach to ideology, Graham Allen summarises that ideology "is the process whereby what is historical and created by specific cultures is presented as if it were timeless, universal and thus natural" (*Barthes* 34-35); in the moment in which culture is perceived as nature, culture – something which is created by a specific group of human beings at a specific time in history and which is thus contestable – becomes indisputable and applicable to all human beings (*Barthes* 34). Ideology aims at manipulating and determining (a specific group in a specific) society into specific thought (Barthes, M[6] 690); in order to succeed, ideology must not be perceived in its manipulating

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[5] Barthes, Roland. "Avant-propos." 1957. *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 1: 1942-1965. Paris: Seuil, 1993. 565-66. Print.
[6] Barthes, Roland. "Le Mythe, aujourd'hui." 1956. *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 1: 1942-1965. Paris: Seuil, 1993. 681-719. Print.

intention and is thus disguised as nature (M 690). Myth, which Barthes scrutinises in *Mythologies*, is a major manifestation of ideology and "presents itself as natural and even timeless" (Allen, *Barthes* 34), when it is "in fact, an expression of a historically specific ideological vision of the world" (*Barthes* 34).[7] Consequently, an ideological system is a fiction: "chaque fiction est soutenue par un parler social, un sociolecte, auquel elle s'identifie: la fiction, c'est ce degré de consistance où atteint un langage lorsqu'il a exceptionnellement *pris* et trouve une classe sacerdotale (prêtres, intellectuels, artistes) pour le parler communément et le diffuser" (Barthes, PT[8] 1508).

Barthes's concept of ideology, the misperception of nature and history, is already broached by Bakhtin when he dismantles the authoritative word/discourse and its influence on society and the individual subject.[9] The authoritative word is "the word of the fathers" (DI[10] n.pag.). It does not engage the discourse of the present moment; instead, "the authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, *organically* connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher" (DI n.pag.; emphasis added) – its authority has *evolved* and is perceived as a natural aspect of human existence which is universally valid. Since the authority of the authoritative word is "already *acknowledged* in the past" (DI n.pag.), this word is hardly contestable and denies any form of dialogue (DI n.pag.). The authoritative word "demands our unconditional allegiance" (DI n.pag.) and "that we make it our own" when "it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally" (DI n.pag.). Furthermore, originating in the past but timeless in its application, it is unapproachable, indeed, *mythical*. The authoritative word is given "in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact" and "its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language" (DI n.pag.).[11]

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[7] Barthes's definition of *myth* does not only include the major (creation) myths of humankind; in *Mythologies* (1957), he particularly analyses myths of everyday life, for example those present in advertisements. In his essay "Le Mythe, aujourd'hui" (1956), which is included in *Mythologies*, Barthes describes meticulously the difficulties of criticising ideology and a method of disclosing and scrutinising myth and hence ideology based on Saussurean linguistics.

[8] Barthes, Roland. *Le plaisir du texte*. 1973. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 1493-1532. Print.

[9] Bakhtin mentions religious dogma and scientific truth as examples for authoritative discourse (DI n.pag.).

[10] Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich. *The Dialogic Imagination*. 1975. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1981. e-book. University of Texas Press Slavic Series 1. *The Dialogic Imagination* was originally published in Russian entitled *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (1975).

[11] Bakhtin's definition of the term *ideology* must not "be confused with its politically oriented English cognate" (Holquist, Glossary n.pag.). In Russian, the term *ideology* indicates an "idea-system" (Glossary n.pag.). Thus Bakhtin, discussing the novel, does not only conclude that "the speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an *ideologue*, and his words are always *ideologemes*" (DI n.pag.); he also claims that the "great novelistic heroes are those with the most coherent and individuated ideologies" (Holquist, Glossary n.pag.), those able to fight and refuse authoritative idea-systems and to dialogically engage different ideas in order to create individual idea-systems. Consequently, according to Bakhtin, each utterance and each behaviour is ideological (Bakhtin and Vološinov 70); while one ideology (idea-system) can further the authoritative word of monologue, another can further the internally persuasive word of dialogue. In order to avoid confusion of terminology, the

Bakhtin's authoritative word/discourse is monological in structure, content and intention. Monologue is established when "in the presence of a (self-proclaimed) authoritative word, the word of the other is intentionally silenced" (Danow 124). Of its own the authoritative word does not offer space for contradiction: based on a value system of either/or, the content of authoritative discourse is not to be disputed, and "one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it" (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.); its content is fixed and "permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions" (DI n.pag.). Both Bakhtin and Barthes realise the strength and resilience required to counter authoritative/ideological discourse as "it is indissolubly fused with its authority – with political power, an institution[12], a person – and it stands and falls together with that authority" (DI n.pag.).[13] According to them, the only defence against the monologue of ideology is the process of dialogue, the potentially unending exchange of ideas in the moment in which "the word of one speaker *actively engages* the utterance of another and is itself engaged by that utterance" (Danow 125; emphasis added); in dialogue, monological structures, contents and intentions cannot settle and multiply. The internally persuasive word of dialogue is productive since it "awakens new and independent words" (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.); it is freely "developed, applied to new material, new conditions" (DI n.pag.). According to Bakhtin, internally persuasive discourse enters into stimulating "relationships with new contexts" and into "an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses" (DI n.pag.); it thus reveals "ever newer *ways to mean*" (DI n.pag.) since it is "*not finite*, it is *open*" (DI n.pag.). According to Bakhtin, in contrast to the authoritative word of discourse, which is externally forced, the internally persuasive word is "tightly interwoven with 'one's own word'" (DI n.pag.). The individual subject's own word, one that is not internalised by demand, is a constant and critical involvement, adoption, rejection and re-creation of social and historical discourses. Dialogue is thus "very important for coming to grips with the historical life of discourse" (DI n.pag.).

Bakhtin distinguishes between various forms of dialogue. The spatial communication act between two or more individual subjects is an *external dialogue* (Holquist, Glossary n.pag.). Dialogue, however, does not necessarily require several individual subjects: *internal dialogue* is the dialogue between two or more identities of one individual subject (Glossary n.pag.); if such dialogue involves a former and a present identity, the communication act is temporal

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term *idea-system* will be used to indicate Bakhtin's *ideology*, while *ideology* is used to "signify" authoritative discourse aiming at preventing dialogue.

[12] In line with Michel Foucault's concept of institution, in this dissertation, the signifier *institution* signifies anything which is firmly and powerfully established in society and implies and promotes monological structures, for example an organisation, a person, a law or a custom.

[13] Compare also Barthes's essay "Qu'est-ce que la critique?" in *Essais critiques* (1964).

(Glossary n.pag.). Dialogue may, furthermore, develop in the "exchange" between a speaking person and a silent person if silence is not enforced but chosen in response (Danow 124). Indeed, the silence of an author or narrator, to whom readers usually appeal for authorial guidance, can become the very basis for a dialogical involvement with a (literary) text. Despite the possibility of dialogue to counter ideology, Bakhtin and Barthes realise that the struggle against authoritative/ideological discourse is not only ongoing but also exhausting and not necessarily successful.[14]

In the textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the terms *ideology* and *authoritative word/discourse* are used to indicate a historical and cultural construct disguised as a natural (a-historical and universal) human essence which is indisputable. Proponents of such a construct seek power in spreading its monologue which is meant to manipulate and determine the identities of individual subjects. Although specific ideologies determining the thoughts and actions of the characters are mentioned when appropriate, the textual analysis does not aim at disclosing a variety of specific ideologies; it rather aims at analysing monological structures, contents and intentions in the characters' thoughts and actions and their difficulties to enter into dialogue and dialogical subjectivity. When the terms *dialogue* or *internally persuasive word/discourse* are used in the textual analysis, Bakhtin's definition of *actively engaging* is implied; non-engaging forms of (verbal) exchange will be termed *conversation*.

2.1.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity

Considering the immense variety of definitions and concepts of individuality, identity and subjectivity used in (literary) research, it is necessary to explain the specific definitions and concepts underlying the textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*; especially, since in discussions of subjectivity the terms *subjectivity* and *identity* are often interchangeably used. *Subjectivity* and *identity*, however, are two different although interrelated concepts, for subjectivity is a state of consciousness in which identity can be reflected: "one's identity can

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[14] Barthes instances the difference between *doxa* (ideological statement) and *paradoxa* (anti-ideological statement) to explain the seizing "nature" of ideology: "une *doxa* (une opinion courante) est posée, insupportable; pour m'en dégager, je postule un paradoxe; puis ce paradoxe s'empoisse, devient lui-même concrétion nouvelle, nouvelle *doxa*, et il me faut aller plus loin vers un nouveau paradoxe" (RB 149). The term *doxa* denotes common sense, monological thought which is considered universally valid and valid across time but which is actually culturally specific and historically produced: "the *doxa* suggests, and indeed embodies, the idea that stable meaning is possible, that a signified can be found for the text's signifiers, that language can uncomplicatedly represent the world, that a truth can finally be delivered by an author to a reader" (Allen, Intertextuality 76-77). The term *paradoxa*, on the contrary, denotes anti-common sense, dialogical thought which undermines monological thought and reveals its cultural and historical origin. Considering the power of ideology to absorb the *paradoxa,* the crucial importance of ongoing dialogue in fighting ideology becomes obvious.

be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that […] gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity" (Hall 3). A subject may adopt several identities – successively or at the same time (Zima, Theorie 21). Donald Eugene Hall argues that "we may have numerous discrete identities, of race, class, gender, sexual orientation" (134), and, consequently, "a subjectivity that is comprised of all those facets" (134). Identities are hence continuously adjusted and newly formed, and subjectivity is an ongoing "negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals" (134).

Peter V. Zima distinguishes between the *individual (natural)*, which is alive, and the *individual subject (cultural)*, which is alive and perceived as a person who consciously thinks and acts (Theorie 8-9). However, individuality and subjectivity are interrelated: on the one hand, individuality, the "natural" instinctive existence, is the basis for the "cultural" existence in thought and thought-ful action (Theorie 21); on the other hand, the state of subjectivity is necessary to realise and to name the state of individuality (Theorie 21). Individuality and subjectivity are interrelated in identity: in order to consciously think and act and to be perceived as consciously thinking and acting, human beings must first acquire an identity (Theorie 25). According to Zima's theory, the first identity human beings acquire is always imitative (Theorie 15); only when the first identity, externally determined by family or nursery, is acquired, the state of subjectivity originates – the interrelationship of individuality and subjectivity and thus consciousness to consciously acquire further identities is initiated and the *individual subject* comes into existence (Theorie 25).

Individuality and subjectivity are thus two different states of being, an unconscious one and a conscious one. Subjectivity is conscious existence in which human beings are able to know about identities, to scrutinise them, to change them; in short, subjectivity is *awareness* of one's identities: "subjectivity as a critical concept invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extend it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control" (Hall 3-4); hence, regardless of whether thinking is in lines with agency or its denial, "subjectivity is the intersection of two lines of philosophical inquiry: epistemology (the study of how we know what we know) and ontology (the study of the nature of being or existence)" (4).

Bearing in mind the permanent presence of (ideological) discourse[15] in society, it is necessary to consider the extent to which the individual subject can possibly self-create its identities. Negotiations of subjectivity always imply the question "of freedom and constraint, and of self-construction and social construction" (Hall 2). At all times subjectivity is theorised in terms of agency with some thinkers opting for the subject's autonomous agency in its action and identity formation, with some thinkers completely denying the subject's autonomy and with some thinkers attempting a dialogue between autonomous and discursive action and identity formation.[16] Hall hence correctly argues that agency is "a controversial topic that has been at the center of discussions of subjectivity for centuries, and one that will never be wholly put to rest" (5). Subjectivity is – historically viewed – "that tension between choice and illusion, between imposed definitions and individual interrogations of them, and between old formulae and new responsibilities" (2); consequently, subjectivity is, per definition, ambivalent.

Supposing the individual subject can (partly) counteract its discursive determination, the individual subject first needs to become aware of such determination. Many thinkers have aimed at raising the individual subject's awareness of its situatedness in history and society and hoped to liberate the individual subject from ideological determination; the approaches of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault shall be shortly outlined as they particularly focus on dialogue as major defence strategy against ideological discourse.

Foucault criticises Descartes's philosophy for treating the individual subject as a "universal and unhistorical subject" which is "everyone, anywhere at any moment" (Subject 216). In contrast, Foucault appreciates Kant's concept which situates the individual subject in the present moment and thus, according to Foucault, raises the important issue: "What's going on just now? What's happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?" (Subject 216) Kant indeed approaches the individual subject in specific political and religious circumstances which determine the individual subject's immaturity (n.pag.); while his appeal to maturity is universal (the ability to actively and critically think is considered a human essence), Kant is aware that each individual subject, situated in history and

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[15] Foucault defines *discourse* "as an individualizable group of statements" (Archaeology n.pag.), which, at the same time, regulates the production and circulation of new statements and new discourses (Archaeology n.pag.). A discourse is hence a thematic collection of statements which are of institutional and social relevance; for example, the discourse of sexuality contains all statements regarding sexuality. A discourse is always time- and culture-specific as the statements constituting a discourse may change and a discourse may produce new discourses; some discourses intersect. Discourses determine the individual subject's identities and exert power if dominant in society. A discourse, however, is not necessarily ideological, since some discourses are monological and others dialogical in structure, content and intention. For a detailed explanation of discourse and the interrelationship of discourse, truth and power, see Kehler, *Theodor Fontanes* Schach von Wuthenow *und* Effi Briest.

[16] Hall excellently introduces approaches to subjectivity from Classical and Pre-Modern Ages to Postmodernism.

society, faces different forms of ideological determination which need to be overcome in order to become active in dialogue (n.pag.). Hence in his examination of Kant's approach, Foucault concludes that "maybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time, and of what we are, in this very moment" (Subject 216). In order to understand the discursive determination of its identities, the individual subject needs to understand *why* it is *what* it is.

Consequently, in line with poststructuralist criticism, Foucault argues that "criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value" (Enlightenment 315). Instead, criticism should be a "historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying" (Enlightenment 315). An individual subject, according to Foucault, must not try to identify "the universal structures of all knowledge" or of "all possible moral action" (Enlightenment 315); in its place, it must attempt to understand specifically those local discourses which exert power on its individual subjectivity (Two Lectures 96) and thus "seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do" (Enlightenment 315). Foucault's concern is, according to Sara Mills, to turn the individual subject's "analytic gaze to the condition under which we, as individuals, exist and what causes us to exist in the way that we do" (25). If the individual subject analyses the origins of its specific existence, the impossibilities determined by discourse become possibilities of change: "the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think" (Foucault, Enlightenment 315-16). Foucault's discourse analysis is thus "seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom" (Enlightenment 316). His approach proposes that "the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are" (Subject 216). If the individual subject knows *why* it is *what* it is and aims at understanding the "simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (Subject 216), the individual subject can reject the "individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" and "promote new forms of subjectivity through […] refusal" (Subject 216). Foucault does not describe those new forms of subjectivity, nor does he, Hall correctly hints, "predict some utopian moment of full self-knowledge or empowerment over our selves" (94); indeed, if Foucault had proposed a future form of subjectivity, he would have been imposing instead of proposing the freedom of criticism. Foucault's individual subject is an individual subject of becoming, one which is always in process. Foucault hence concludes that the critical task "requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty" (Enlightenment 319).

Despite freedom in criticism, Foucault does not aim at saving the individual subject's autonomous agency; after all, "everything is constructed and apprehended through discourse" (Mills 55): human beings cannot think, feel, speak, act, doubt and criticise outside of discourse. However, while some discourses are monological in structure, content and intention, other discourses are dialogical and initiate dialogue; analysing discourse can raise acceptance of the ambivalence of society and its individual subjects and even awareness of those discourses (in power) which are dialogically arranged. The process of dialogue itself also raises awareness of the fact "that we are always caught up in the notions, terms, and values of our day" (Hall 94); hence dialogue "certainly should dislodge our assumption of mastery over them and any smugness that we may have concerning our own truths and critical formulae" (94). Foucault's philosophy is, consequently, not a-political; neither does it liberate the individual subject from the responsibility for its thoughts and actions; on the contrary, Foucault's philosophy is, like Kant's and Nietzsche's philosophy, a philosophy of awareness which challenges the individual subject into doubt about itself and its society and emphasises the individual subject's responsibility for dialogue.

Nietzsche explains the monological structure of ideology in its binary system of values which simplifies a complex existence into either/or. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), Nietzsche relentlessly unveils the ambivalence of values; he proposes to doubt binary opposition and to accept and focus on the ambivalence (simultaneity and consubstantiality) of values in order to expose the simplification of ideological thought and construction. Like Kant and Foucault, he "engages in a process of forthright consciousness raising that is clearly intended to inculcate a greater degree of personal agency and the taking of responsibility for one's actions in the process of self-creations" (Hall 70). However, the destruction of a value system, be it on public scale (e.g. the collapse of a government) or private scale (e.g. the collapse of a friendship), is a critical moment for the individual subject. Such critical moments the individual subject faces increasingly in Modernism and Postmodernism; in view of those developments usually associated with Modernism[17] and Postmodernism[18], the individual subject can no longer be considered an essential unity. Consequently, Nietzsche, a century before Foucault, has already postulated a self which "is not a constant, stable entity" but "something one becomes" (Nehamas 7). Considering such dialogical approaches to individual subjectivity initiated by historical developments, Zima argues that today's challenge is to

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[17] For a concise introduction to Modernism, see *The Modernism Handbook* edited by Philip Tew and Alex Murray and *Modernism* written by Peter Childs.
[18] For a concise introduction to Postmodernism, see *Beginning Postmodernism* written by Tim Woods.

formulate a new concept of individual subjectivity which is ambivalently comprised of diverse and fluctuating identities (Lit. Subjekt 6-7).

Zima suggests distinguishing between monological and dialogical subjectivity. Those individual subjects whose subjectivity is comprised of ideological and unified identities are monologically structured; those individual subjects whose subjectivity is comprised of ambivalent and non-unified identities are dialogically structured. Bakhtinian dialogue is, therefore, the idea behind dialogical subjectivity (Theorie 30, 84-85, 88, 368): the individual subject is monologically constituted in discourse when it imitates (ideological) discourse (Theorie 15); it is dialogically constituted when it engages discourse and reflects on its structures, contents and intentions and acts based on such reflection (Theorie 15). Although promoting a dialogical approach to discourse, Zima admits that behaviour is usually imitative (Theorie 15): individuals are born into history and society and hence easily determined by (religious, political, scientific) discourses (Theorie 16). Indeed, according to Zima, it is necessary to be partly determined by ideological discourses which simplify a highly complex social life and thus make life manageable (Theorie 16). Bakhtinian dialogue, however, raises the individual subject's awareness of such monological necessity and thus protects the individual subject from being unknowingly and exclusively determined by authoritative discourse: the individual subject turns into a dynamically dialogical subject which proactively lives negation and ambivalence and thus reflectively participates in the narrative of its identity construction (Theorie 368).

Dialogical subjectivity can be initiated by reading and reflecting philosophical considerations like those of Foucault; more often, however, an individual subject reconsiders its position in society when proponents of an ideological discourse fail to uphold its simplified value system: if some of the individual subject's identities are determined by the failing ideology, it hesitates to act, it might even become unable to act when it is deprived of the possibility to clearly position itself in moral space (Zima, Lit. Subjekt 6). In the individual subject's existential crisis, dialogue becomes a possibility: those individual subjects who seek security in simplification align themselves with new ideological discourse to remain capable of acting (Lit. Subjekt 8); those individual subjects, however, who admit ambivalence into their lives enter into the dialogical process of active criticism. "Ambivalenz löst nicht nur eine *Krise* aus, sondern bewirkt auch *Kritik* am ideologischen Soziolekt, der das Individuum lange Jahre hindurch zum sprechenden und handelnden Subjekt machte. Das Subjekt distanziert sich reflexiv (selbstkritisch) von seiner eigenen Subjektivität und versucht, sich als sprechende und handelnde Instanz neu zu orientieren" (Theorie 19). In this dialogical and critical process, the

individual subject arms itself against ideological determination since it argues beyond ideological dualisms (Lit. Subjekt 6).

Theorists of intertextuality, aiming at raising the individual subject's awareness of ideological determination, welcome the failure of ideological structures and even negate individual subjectivity as a major manifestation of authoritative discourse. While Kristeva eventually denies the individual subject any possibility of intentional reference (positioning) within the cultural text of society, Barthes's practical approach to Kristeva's concept of intertextuality enters ideological structures and intertextuality into dialogue; he thus unlocks the critical potential of intertextuality for the situated individual subject and its attempt at dialogical subjectivity. It shall be argued that **in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth,* the development of intertextuality (from Saussure to Genette) and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity is personalised within the literary development of the writing and reading protagonists Briony and Serena.** *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* thus contribute to raising consciousness of the individual subject's ideological determination in society and to distributing the possibilities of ambivalence and dialogical subjectivity; after all, while neither the philosophies of Kant, Nietzsche and Foucault, nor the "linguistic" philosophies of intertextual theorists are widely read, McEwan's novels are. In writing his novels, he offers his readers the Foucauldian possibility of refusing what they are and to enter into the "undefined work of freedom" (Enlightenment 316) when becoming aware of totalising ideological structures.

2.1.3   Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality

Since details of intertextual theory and development which are relevant to the textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* will be instanced in the textual analysis itself, in this subchapter only those ideas of intertextuality will be introduced which are relevant to understand the development of this dissertation's theses; thus Kristeva's original concept and Barthes's practical approach to intertextuality in form of the readerly and the writerly shall be addressed.

Kristeva's concept of intertextuality suggests that "authors do not create their texts from their own original minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts" (Allen, Intertextuality 35). While the verb *to compile* might still be suggestive of authorial intention (the author can *choose* from pre-existent textual material to combine them into a new text), the intertextual is not a conscious action of intentional reference but constitutive of any text

(Kristeva, MDR[19] 85). Each text is a mosaic of citations (MDR 85) – each text absorbs and transforms existing textual structure and content (MDR 85).[20] Kristeva, therefore, engages with the *text* instead of the *author's text* and questions the readers' and the scholars' "central concern with the author and more or less conscious authorial intentions and skills" (Clayton and Rothstein 3).

According to Kristeva, the intertextual is a *dialogical process* (TC[21] 52); in this process, discourse is absorbed and at the same time transformed (Allen, Intertextuality 35), intersected and neutralised: "dans l'espace d'un texte plusieurs énoncés, pris à d'auters textes, se croisent et se neutralisent" (Kristeva, TC 52). Analysing this passage, Mary Orr emphasises that the reflexive form of the verbs *se croisent* and *se neutralisent* underlines the dynamic and productive mode of the intertextual process (28); importantly, the practice of neutralising "is not so much a cancelling out as an interactive levelling" when "prior text materials lose special status by permutation with others in the intertextual exchange because all intertexts are of equal importance in the intertextual *process*" (28). The intertextual process, therefore, dialogically denies any authoritative word; instead, each text implies "the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse" (Allen, Intertextuality 35). Whenever novelists write words, for example *natural*, *God* or *justice* (Intertextuality 36), "they cannot help but incorporate into their novel society's conflict over the meanings of these words" (Intertextuality 36). Ideological discourse, however, attempts to silence this conflict to protect its dominance in society. Hence especially annoying for someone promoting ideological structure, Kristeva's approach to textuality is even more dangerous to authoritative discourse since it does not only focus on the linguistic text; indeed, according to Kristeva's concept, culture (discourse and its institutional structure) – and thus (individual) subjectivity – is a textual construct.[22] Consequently, in the intertextual process, (ideological) discourse is de-hierarchised in all linguistic and non-linguistic texts which are all situated in the *texte général* (in culture) (TC 52). Each text emerges from and dissolves into cultural textuality (TC 52). Accordingly, "individual text and the cultural text are made from the same textual material and

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[19] Kristeva, Julia. "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman." 1966. *Semeiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Seuil, 1969. 82-113. Print.

[20] According to Sarah Dillon, the image of the mosaic is "curiously inadequate to represent the interpretation of utterances, discourses, sign-systems" (86). She argues that this metaphor adequately signifies the fragmentariness of the (literary) text but fails to signify the absorbing and transforming function of textuality (86). However, in a mosaic the origin of the tessera is lost and it is absorbed and transformed within the new; equally, in a (literary) text the origin of the fragment is lost and it is absorbed and transformed within the new and within each new reading of the mosaic.

[21] Kristeva, Julia. "Le texte clos." 1966-67. *Semeiotikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Seuil, 1969. 52-81. Print.

[22] If not explicitly mentioned otherwise, *text* in this dissertation indicates a linguistic text.

cannot be separated from each other" (Allen, Intertextuality 35). As a result, a text can never "present clear and stable meanings" since each text is "thoroughly connected to on-going cultural and social processes" (Intertextuality 36); instead, the intertextual process is redistributive (simultaneously destructive and constructive) (Kristeva, TC 52), and hence every text is ongoing productivity.

Unsurprisingly, Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, dethroning the author and the literary text, is severely criticised in literary studies, especially for its lack of practicability. "Wenn man den Begriff der Intertextualität in einem so weiten Sinn verwendet, daß jeder Text in all seinen Elementen intertextuell ist, verliert der Begriff seine Trennschärfe und damit seine wissenschaftliche Brauchbarkeit zumindest für die Analyse einzelner Texte" (Broich 48). Consequently, in literary studies the signifier *intertextuality* has developed into an umbrella term for various forms of intentional reference (Pfister, Intertextualität 13-15).[23] Thus the critical potential of Kristeva's concept – targeting ideological structure and dominance – is lost. This loss is compounded when in literary research the term *intertextuality* sometimes signifies Kristeva's original concept and sometimes the umbrella term; indeed, the latter signification of *intertextuality* is by now so prevalent that it is necessary to explicitly remark when the term *does* indicate Kristeva's original concept. However, with the intention of discussing the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity personalised within Briony's and Serena's literary development, it is necessary to clearly distinguish *intertextuality* and *intentional reference*; it is particularly necessary to distinguish between these concepts and terms since it will be argued that Briony and Serena only succeed in their attempt at dialogue and dialogical subjectivity when ambivalently interrelating ideological structure with intertextual process.

Considering the literary text from classicism to postmodernism, Zima observes the ambivalent functions of intentional reference and intertextual process for individual subjectivity: "Sinnkonstitution und Sinnzerfall, Subjektkonstitution und Subjektzerfall" (Lit. Subjekt 206). Zima associates the concept of intentional reference with the literary periods of classicism, romanticism and realism: (a) authors intentionally refer to (literary) authority to position themselves in ideological space (Lit. Subjekt 189); (b) authors intentionally refer to (literary) authority to position their characters in ideological space (Lit. Subjekt 207). Consequently, considering the positioning function of intentional reference, the discursive (i.e. textual) determination of the individual subject postulated in intertextual theory has severe

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[23] The study *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, edited by Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister, offers detailed insight into the controversy surrounding the concept and term *intertextuality*.

consequences for the individual subject. Being a textual construct compiled from the *texte général*, the individual subject is denied the possibility to position itself through intentional reference: in the very moment in which it frames a specific utterance from the *texte général*, the individual subject and its intentional reference are transformed and neutralised in the textual web of cultural discourse (Kristeva, MDR 83). Neither meaning nor identity can be distinctly and permanently constituted. Consequently, within the *texte général*, criticism is a paradoxical process: while (ideological) criticism is the purpose of intertextual theory, the individual subject cannot possibly postulate a critical position since its position is immediately transformed within cultural textuality (Zima, Lit. Subjekt 197-98). The ambivalence of intentional reference (*Sinnkonstitution* and *Subjektkonstitution*) and intertextual process (*Sinnzerfall* and *Subjektzerfall*) is, therefore, a valuable approach (Lit. Subjekt 206). However, such ambivalence is even more thought-provoking when intentional reference and intertextuality ambivalently meet not only within *one* (literary) *period* but within *one* (literary) *text*. After all, ideological structure can only be successfully criticised if such criticism can be practiced by an individual subject which is situated in history and society and which is hence unavoidably discursively determined. Intriguingly, Barthes's approach to intertextuality aims at helping the situated individual subject to unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process and to enter its subjectivity into dialogue.

Barthes appreciates the critical potential inherent in Kristeva's concept of intertextuality; he also realises, however, that intertextuality is a theoretical concept which will lose its critical potential if it remains an unpractical, sterile idea (PT 1510). Barthes, aware of monological and dialogical writing and reading processes within the individual subject, therefore introduces the distinction between the readerly and the writerly text to promote the individual subject's intentional dialogue with plurality. The readerly text is a monological text, passively read and consumed; the writerly text is a dialogical text, actively written and produced.

The readerly text, emphasising logic and common sense (Barthes, S/Z[24] 660), is written and read to be signified, to be interpreted and thus reduced to one finite meaning (although the one finite meaning might differ according to the ideological value applied to the text) (TT[25] 1682). Consequently, avoiding all contradiction, the readerly text hinders ambivalence and thus dialogue and dialogical subjectivity. When faced with the binary either/or of ideological

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[24] Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1970. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 555-741. Print.
[25] Barthes, Roland. "Texte (théorie du)." 1973. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 1677-89. Print.

structure, the reader is reduced to a referendum: accepting or rejecting the text and its values (S/Z 558). While the reader might renounce a specific ideological value, the reader is kept from criticising ideological structure itself (S/Z 558). A writerly text, in contrast, encourages ideological criticism in being reversible: the text defies any principle and offers innumerable access points plus a galaxy of signifiers and thus irresistible plurality (S/Z 558-59). Instead of being interpreted in hermeneutical tradition (T[26] 1213), the writerly text is written to be explored in the plural which constitutes the text (S/Z 558). Written to avoid limited signification, the writerly text welcomes *signifiance* – connotative writing instead of denotative reading. The reader is not passively reading but rereading and thus actively writing the plurality of the text; indeed, the reader's individual subjectivity itself is pluralised in the process of *signifiance*: the individual subject, exploring the writerly text, is dialogised and overcomes its monological subjectivity (TT 1682).

Barthes is practically minded, however; although he theorises the writerly text, he realises that the writerly text is an ideal (S/Z 558). On the one hand, each *writer* is situated in social and historical context and hence always determined by some of the readerly in any writing process. On the other hand, each *reader* is situated in social and historical context and hence always determined by some of the readerly in any reading process.[27] However, instead of lamenting the impossibility of the writerly text, Barthes ambivalently dialogises the readerly and the writerly: "le texte **a besoin** de son ombre: cette ombre, c'est *un peu* d'idéologie, *un peu* de représentation, *un peut* de sujet" (PT 1510; bold emphasis added). Indeed, according to Barthes, the readerly within the writerly is *necessary*: a writerly text without shadows of ideology, of representation, of subjectivity (in intentional reference), is a lifeless text – "c'est vouloir un texte sans fécondité, sans productivité, un texte stérile" (PT 1510). The dialogical involves the traditional of monological structures (binary opposition and essence) which can be fought, dissected and regrouped (PT 1510-11). Consequently, worth analysing are those works which ambivalently feature the writerly in its readerly form (Allen, Intertextuality 77): a readerly text may be written and rewritten "into a plurality which undermines its status as a readerly text, which makes it, at least in its dénouement, writerly, plural, structured and yet infinite" (Intertextuality 77). If the individual subject is aware of its position in history and society, the ambivalence of the readerly (intentional reference, monologue, one meaning) and

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[26] Barthes, Roland. "De l'œuvre au texte." 1971. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 1211-17. Print.

[27] McEwan, too, points to the extreme rarity of the individual subject entirely dissolving in writing: only "on the very best days, or very best half-hours, you can write and get that sense of the self dissolving so that you are just the thing itself" (interv. with Bigsby 246).

the writerly (intertextuality, dialogue, ambivalent meanings) allows the situated individual subject to practically criticise ideological structure. While it is the writer's responsibility to raise awareness of social and historical situatedness and authoritative discourse, the responsibility of realising the critical potential of the intertextual process finally lies with the reader: while the dialogical individual subject may even *pluralise the readerly* text by dialogising meaning, the ideologised individual subject may *de-pluralise the writerly* in the readerly form by artificially finalising meaning (Barthes, S/Z 559). Accordingly, the approach **that in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity is personalised within the literary development of the writing and reading protagonists Briony and Serena** will be complemented with arguing that **Briony and Serena, in comparison to those who share part of their social and historical situatedness, initially deny but gradually attempt and succeed in dialogue and dialogical subjectivity when they unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process in dialogising the readerly and the writerly.**

The concepts of dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality, which have been introduced in this chapter, establish the *theoretical background* to the textual analysis. The textual analysis will be organised around major stages in the development of the intertextual idea. Since it is impossible to consider all stages and theories within this format of academic writing, the textual analysis will focus on Briony's and Serena's experience of Saussure's value, Bakhtin's word, Kristeva's text, Barthes's intertext and McEwan's involvement with Genette's paratext and metatext. In the next chapter, the importance of dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality for the writing and reading processes in McEwan's novels will be particularised to establish the *contextual background* to the textual analysis. While it is worthwhile analysing either *Atonement* or *Sweet Tooth* in terms of (dialogical) reading and writing processes and its consequences for the individual subject's subjectivity, Kristeva's and Barthes's approaches to intertext and intertextuality facilitate an intriguing rereading of *Atonement*: Serena, (initially) preferring to read readerly texts, can be read as Briony's ideal reader; and Briony, (initially) preferring to write readerly texts, can be read as Serena's ideal author – indeed, *Sweet Tooth* is a commentary, a *metatext* on *Atonement*.

2.2   State of Research

In 2018, Tomasz Dobrogoszcz published his monograph on *Family and Relationships in Ian McEwan's Fiction*. In this monograph, he criticises Sebastian Groes's essay collection *Ian McEwan* (2009/2013) for suffering "from some arbitrariness in its selection of texts (some works are not covered at all) and from the variety of theoretical approaches employed" (4). Indeed, he disapproves of an approach which contributes to unbinding: more than any other publication on McEwan, Groes's essay collection challenges the reader into actively thinking. Tellingly, Dobrogoszcz, trying to "offer a new and unique perspective on McEwan's work" (3), treats literary criticism previously published by his colleagues "either as allies, or as foes whose perspectives only sharpen the arguments and perspectives presented" (3). Considering the writer in whose (literary) texts Dobrogoszcz is inscribing himself, any criticism of arbitrariness, any attempt at uniqueness and a grammar of either/or is indicative of a monological and monologising approach. Thus Dobrogoszcz's valuable insight is overshadowed by his dismissive approach to the intriguing secondary literature published on McEwan's primary texts. I am perfectly aware that, in the context of (conservative) academia, it is expected to take a distinctive stance. And I am perfectly aware that (academic) language, culturally structured in binary opposition of agreeing or disagreeing, lacks vocabulary that allows the literary scholar to formulate a specific point of view without dismissing a different reading. I, too, hit the brick wall of linguistic limitation. However, if the language I have chosen will convey the impression that I dismiss a certain reading of *Atonement* or *Sweet Tooth*, I do apologise. Each reading was valuable to me in deepening my reading of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*. I do not consider any argument either as ally or foe, but I gratefully consider each argument a possibility.

In the first subchapter of this state of research (2.2.1 Dialogue), McEwan's dialogical approach to reading and writing processes will be briefly introduced. It will be suggested and subsequently discussed in the textual analysis that Briony Tallis, McEwan's acting writer in *Atonement*, and Tom Haley, his acting writer in *Sweet Tooth*, share his dialogical approach. While *Sweet Tooth* has not yet been made a focus of literary criticism, plenty and diverse secondary literature has been published on *Atonement*. Hence this state of research will focus on literary criticism which is relevant to discuss dialogue, subjectivity and intertextuality. It will not detail specific arguments but aims at giving an insight into current tendencies in research; significant details will be included directly in the textual analysis. Consequently, in the second subchapter (2.2.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity), research focusing on subjectivity in reading and writing processes will be introduced; in the third subchapter (2.2.3 Dialogue,

Subjectivity and Intertextuality), a lack of intertextual involvement with McEwan's novels *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* will be outlined.

2.2.1   Dialogue

McEwan, not unlike Barthes, emphasises the political dimension of the literary text. Independent of the writer's situatedness in history and society, a novel is an "opponent of political systems, tyrannies and cant" (McEwan, PMA xi) – if the writer dares to engage in "expressive freedom and the capability it has of naming everything, exploring every corner of human experience" (PMA xi). If a novel is meant to be written "in defiance of a thought-system" (PMA xi), the writer needs to resist from instructing the reader and thus enable the reader's "human possibility" (PMA xi); instructing, however, is "precisely the danger, precisely the ineradicable human sickness" (PMA xi). Unfortunately, "there never seems to be a lack of people ready to enforce obedience to the Word or the Book, their word, their book" (PMA xi-xii); indeed, "when the novelist has designs on his readers' opinions" (PMA x), the novel risks "becoming not an exploration or investigation, but an illustration of conclusions already reached" (PMA x). According to McEwan, however, a reader should not be influenced into passively accepting an authorial judgement but involved into actively admitting and producing ambivalence (McEwan, interv. with Gonzáles 59; cf. Barthes's writerly text). McEwan wants to offer his readers this dialogical possibility of active and critical thought: "if you set about writing fiction with a clear intention of persuading people of a certain point of view, you cramp your field, you deny yourself the possibility of opening up an investigation or free inquiry, which I think is the great redeeming quality" (59).

According to McEwan, active thought which criticises any given of history and society is the saving moment for both writer and reader; it is hence the writer's responsibility to write a space in which not only the writer is doubted and can doubt but in which the reader is doubted and can doubt. He thus tries "to avoid any programmatic moral manipulation" (interv. with Ricks 25) and to write narratives which are "moral in some kind of *abeyance*" (25; emphasis added); he hopes that "through restraint, one will generate a degree of compassion for the right people, even if the right people are in some other sense the wrong people" (25). While McEwan's literary texts, from *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) to *The Cockroach* (2019), differ in content and form, culture and time, his wish for abeyance and ambivalence, the wrong within the right, links all his writing: he writes characters whose thoughts and actions are too diverse to be classified even if they themselves seem to know right from wrong; he, furthermore,

includes narrators into his narratives who are, all the more if they are overtly judging, undermined by both content and form. Consequently, right from the beginning, McEwan refrains from classifying and thus limiting himself and his literary texts: "I certainly can't locate myself inside any shared, any sort of community taste, aesthetic ambition or critical position" (24). However, even if he does not classify himself, he cannot defy being classified. Literary critics have repeatedly undertaken the attempt of sorting McEwan's writing.

During the last 25 years, several studies have been published which introduce McEwan's biography, his literary development and his (literary) texts. Major studies are Kiernan Ryan's *Ian McEwan* (1994); Jack Slay's *Ian McEwan* (1996); David Malcolm's *Understanding Ian McEwan* (2002); Dominic Head's *Ian McEwan* (2007); and Lynn Well's *Ian McEwan* (2010). Major collections of criticism are *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* (2006), edited by Peter Childs; *Ian McEwan* (2009/2013), edited by Sebastian Groes; and *Ian McEwan: Art and Politics* (2009), edited by Pascal Nicklas. The readings offered in these studies are mostly profound and enlightening; so are the many readings of McEwan's literary texts which are published in scholarly journals and essay collections. Overall, secondary literature available on McEwan's writing offers diverse approaches and insights into his (literary) texts; abeyance and ambivalence, however, are accepted by many critics to a limited extent only – if at all: numerous insights are mediated in the form of categories and labels.

Although a literary critic who intends to understand McEwan and his literary texts by classifying them is foredoomed to fail, McEwan is constantly labelled in terms of content and form. At this point two examples shall demonstrate this labelling. (a) While some critics label McEwan to be realist, other critics label him to be (moderate) (post)modernist. Only few critics argue like Laura Marcus that McEwan's fictions "ultimately *confound absolute distinctions* between 'realist', 'modernist' and 'postmodernist' writing" (83; emphasis added). Indeed, *Atonement* "holds an indeterminate position between the classic, closed narrative and the open and experimental narratives of (post)modernism" (Albers and Caeners 708). (b) While some critics label McEwan to be feminist, other critics label him to be anti-feminist. According to Slay, McEwan is relentlessly scrutinising, balancing and even reversing traditional feminine and masculine values in "rebelling against the foibles of a male-dominated culture" and proclaiming "the necessity of creating a world in which the sexes are equal" (8). Angela Roger counters this argument with her reading that the "ascendancy of his women characters […] remains bound up with their capacity to nurture men" (25). Several thoughts have been published on McEwan's treatment of women and men, femininity and masculinity, and

patriarchal hierarchy; in those arguments it becomes most obvious that literary critics are situated in schools of thought, history and culture.

Of course, living in society critics are necessarily situated and their readings hence ideologically shaped; consequently, their readings differ. However, instead of wondering why McEwan's literary texts produce contradictory readings and instead of scrutinising their individual cultural and educational background, critics take special trouble to disprove their colleagues' readings by establishing new categories and labels. While Brian Finney argues convincingly that Briony's mediating voice is undermining the realist form of the novel, Alistair Cormack, examining Finney's article, argues equally convincingly that Briony's mediating voice is undermining the modernist form of the novel. While neither critic considers that both forms of the novel are undermined to create profound uncertainty, Cormack dares to deny Finney's reading any validity: "*Atonement* could never really be read in this way" (77). This alarming statement prevents any Bakhtinian dialogue: a "right" reading is replacing a "wrong" reading. The abeyance and ambivalence offered in McEwan's literary texts is thus obscured when different readings, which are valuable in principle, are apprehended in binarily opposed categories and labels. The consequence is discouraging: even if the writer provides content and form with abeyance and ambivalence, abeyance and ambivalence might be unnoticed or undesired. McEwan hence believes in the novel as the "adversary of a thought system" (PMA xviii) but he knows that the "clamorous democracy" of the novel is only a possibility (PMA xviii); both writer and reader can decide against exploration and plurality. Even if obscured, however, the abeyance and ambivalence encouraged in McEwan's writing becomes tangible in the intertext of its diverse literary criticism which transcends single and simplified categories.

Maybe in consequence of his rather sobering observation, McEwan's novels are not only spaces of abeyance and ambivalence but also spaces in which the dangers of monological reading and writing processes are broached and in which readers can develop into active and critical readers. Particularly **in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan elucidates monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader; indeed, introducing a meta-level within his novels, McEwan writes two *acting writers*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, who elucidate monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader.** In constructing Briony Tallis and Tom Haley as *acting writers*, McEwan provides *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* with a structure that allows him to show writers at work: familiar with intertextual theory and sharing McEwan's dialogical approach to the literary text, **McEwan's acting writers focus on their respective protagonist's development**

from monological to dialogical subjectivity by personalising the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity within her literary development. Confronting both dialogue and monologue in their relationships and environments, **Briony and Serena, in comparison to those who share part of their social and historical situatedness, initially deny but gradually attempt and succeed in dialogue and dialogical subjectivity when they unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process in dialogising the readerly and the writerly.** Within *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan, by means of his acting writers, introduces a writer who is constantly commenting her writing and a reader who is constantly commenting her reading; thus the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity are not only shown from both the writer's and the reader's perspective but they are also shown to be complementary; he thus raises awareness of dialogical and monological writing and reading processes, the consequences of writing and reading for the individual subject and the necessity for abeyance and ambivalence in the literary text. In a stroke of "genius," McEwan, instead of confronting a writing and a reading protagonist within one novel, waits eleven years to confront them in the intertext; when Briony is read as Serena's ideal author and Serena as Briony's ideal reader, Briony and Serena meet between the(ir) texts, and McEwan – for once without restraint – points at this intertext by including the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue within both protagonists.

2.2.2   Dialogue and Subjectivity

The deconstruction of individual subject in language and discourse preoccupied academic and literary writing in the last century; since the turn of the century, however, a major academic effort is to save the individual subject's unity / uniqueness. A most prominent attempt prevailing in criticism of McEwan's literary texts is ethical criticism. Ethical criticism originates in severe criticism of poststructuralist (intertextual) theory and its consequences for the individual subject but, according to Head, tries to negotiate in exploring the ethical potential of the narrative formation of individual subjectivity: ethical criticism argues for "a position that occupies a mid-ground between the privileging of the autonomous speaking subject and the dissolution of the self into larger social and linguistic codes" (13). This position assumes that "ethics in postmodernity cannot be conceived of as a prescriptive, universally valid system of norms and values" (Möller 188); instead, it "has to be seen as a continuous process of negotiation of different positions" (188). In ethical criticism, an ethical narrative is,

consequently, a space in which the plural initiates the individual subject's dialogical engagement with otherness (Head 13). Some proponents of ethical criticism, however, ascribe narrative the function of *choice <u>between</u> ideological contents* instead of *choice <u>against</u> ideological structures*. Claudia Schemberg's approach to *The Child in Time*, *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love* and *Atonement* shall illustrate this restrictive approach.

Schemberg argues that the *unity* of the individual subject is established in narrative form: "we narratively construct and reconstruct our *selves* by telling coherent stories about who, where, and what we are and by comparing our accounts of *self* with accounts of others" (8). Schemberg, furthermore, claims that this process of (re)construction is guided by those narratives provided by religion, philosophy, science and mythology (8-9). This approach to individual subjectivity does not consider any poststructuralist and intertextual insight into ideological criticism. While the individual subject can "choose" between ideological content provided by diverse but monological narratives, it cannot "choose" to speak against ideological structure and its determination of the individual subject. According to Schemberg, the individual subject striving for unity must necessarily accept *frameworks of belief* (i.e. ideologies) which "reliably guide our choices and […] keep our lives from falling into arbitrariness" (20). Although hierarchy is a major manifestation of ideological structure, she argues that the individual subject, burdened with the complexity and diversity of modern life and thus dependent on ideological means of orientation (20), "must rank the goods on offer by contrasting them or grading them hierarchically" (20). Schemberg hence situates the challenge to (post)modern self-making in "choosing" from the abundance of heterogeneous values provided by different ideologies; Schemberg, however, does not situate the challenge to (post)modern self-making in scrutinising ideological structure itself which aims at determining the individual subject's "choices." Additionally, according to Schemberg, the unity of the individual subject is "not achieved by the mere possession of frameworks of belief, but by the articulation and integration of those frameworks into the greater stories of our lives" (22). Ideological content is articulated and integrated, is adopted and *naturalised*: "the notion of possessing a coherent *self*, some **stable, fixed, unchallengeable core** of identity that marks us as uniquely 'I' in opposition to outward other, remains **unquestioned** in everyday life" (19; bold emphasis added). Schemberg's chain of adjectives is telling: they all denote ideological structure and monological thought. Of course, ethical criticism aims at a concept of individual subjectivity which is practical and liveable in everyday life; even pragmatism, however, should induce an awareness which goes beyond the possibly reasoned but eventually monological "choice" of what ideological value suits best.

According to Schemberg, even a poststructuralist / deconstructive / intertextual reading can never be "neutral" or "value-free" (13). She is right, of course; after all, each reader is situated in social and historical discourse; but a poststructuralist / deconstructive / intertextual reading induces awareness of ideological structure. While Schemberg's ethical criticism omits to encourage such awareness (O'Hara 90), Head's approach to ethical criticism differs from Schemberg's concept in that he recognises that restrictive ideological structures and contents cannot only be mediated in narrative but strengthened in narrative form. He acknowledges the author's possibilities to manipulate narrative and thus readers by using authoritative discourse: "readers may be duped by narrative rhetoric into making moral judgements they imagine to be independent; that, in doing so, they make deluded referential leaps of identification between text and world; and that the incremental sense of self a reader establishes […] is constructed by external narrative forms fashioned by various ideologies" (16-17). However, not only the author might ideologically manipulate a narrative; indeed, the reader is usually monologically approaching a literary text: even if a narrative is a space of dialogue, the reader needs to be willing and/or prepared "to identify those ideological factors that colour our reading" (17; cf. Barthes's shadows). Fortunately, authorial manipulation can be unveiled.

Although Head argues that "our sense of self develops through a process of acculturation to narrative forms" (17), he does not think that this "leaves us blind to rhetorical effects, or to covert ideological influences" (17). He instances that "a lifetime of reading" usually produces "an intellectually formidable reader, whether or not he or she is well versed in narrative theory" (17). Practised readers hence do not only profit from dialogical but also from monological narratives since they unmask manipulative ideological structures and contents implicit in rhetorical devices and narrative strategies (17). Despite being more detached from narrative content and form, these readers can still empathise with characters "in such a way as to extract a moral lesson applicable to their own life" (17). Active and critical readers, Head's reasoning needs to be broadened, might even particularly empathise with characters when understanding their conflicts to originate in ideological determination. Head's statement implies, however, that readers, except for cultural scholars who are (ideally) trained in (ideally dialogically) analysing narrative structures in literary and non-literary texts, are ideologically determined for large phases of their lives until they can finally fight such determination. This implication is disturbing, especially since Head argues that "familiarity with the formative impulses of narrative is a necessary social skill, an externalized survival mechanism that facilitates our role as social beings" (17). Consequently, it is not only the writer's responsibility to create a space for dialogical involvement but also to create a space in which readers are given the opportunity

to develop into active and critical readers despite the ideological shadows which are colouring their readings. *Atonement* is such a space. Indeed, the space for developing critical reading skills is "doubled" in the intertext of *Sweet Tooth* and *Atonement*. The reader of either *Atonement* or *Sweet Tooth* or both novels is encouraged to follow Briony's and Serena's way of becoming active and critical readers when they go through different stages in the development of intertextual theory.

In his approach to ethical criticism, Head agrees with the poststructuralist insight that "social life is seen as a fabric of ideologies and discourses" (17); he wonders, however, if the engagement with this textual fabric necessarily causes the individual subject to be simply a textual construct (17). "Every reader's sense of self is built from a body of narratives which are exclusive to them, and which have been internalized in highly individual ways" (17-18). Consequently, individual subjectivity is constantly reconstructed in the process of reading (18), for "our sense of self will develop, incrementally, every time we engage with and assimilate a novel, or other narrative, that we value" (18). Unlike Schemberg, Head thus considers individual subjectivity not essential and unified but *textual and unique*: "even if we accept that our identity has been formed through a series of responses to external narratives – that it has an evidently textual basis – its individual nature, in the last analysis, produced through that unrepeatably cumulative series of narrative encounters, makes it legitimate for us to think of personal identity as specific to ourselves, and so *internal*" (18). McEwan's characters, thus Head, are on a quest for their internal identity (18). In contrast to Schemberg, who argues that the individual subject requires a telos in its life (22), Head emphasises that McEwan avoids the risk of mediating a monological *telos* in focussing on the quest itself which can practically never be finished due to the individual subject's constant narrative engagement and application (18).

Swantje Möller, discussing crisis in McEwan's novels, equally argues for a narrative engagement which needs to avoid *teloi* in order to remain dialogically productive:

> One of the possible pitfalls of conventional narrative identity theory, however, is its tendency to focus on the integration and coherence of the self. Putting too much emphasis on the coherence of the self harbours the risk of not taking into account two central aspects: firstly, the interplay of different voices in the construction of the self, and secondly, the inconsistencies that any narrative necessarily contains. (32)

Head and Möller differ from Schemberg's approach to ethical criticism which focuses on coherence and unity; attention in their approaches lies on the unique for fluctuating self, a "dialogical self" which "is not static but emergent and ongoing" (Möller 34). According to

Möller, "the dialogical self appears to be the most fruitful model of selfhood" since "instead of silencing the forces of dispersion and the multiplicity of voices that make up postmodern life, it recognises the importance of aspects such as alterity, difference and heterogeneity that are central to postmodernism" (36).

Möller primarily analyses the "postmodern crisis of orientation" (17), which is, according to her and further critics, "at the heart of each novel" written by McEwan (17). Malcolm equals the characters' loss of orientation with a nightmare (156); Barbara Puschmann-Nalenz adds that this "singularity," which causes disorientation, can be experienced as either "ordeal, excitement or elation" (190) and calls for "unexpected and unprepared-for necessities to respond in some way, either to reach a decision or to disclaim the familiar, well-known security of the mind" (190). While Puschmann-Nalenz claims that the characters usually choose security over insecurity (190), Möller argues that in foregrounding "a postmodern ethics of alterity" in the individual subject's quest for orientation and engagement with otherness (17), McEwan "takes up a neo-humanist stance" which is "informed by an anti-essentialist, non-universalist ethics, which recognises the existence of a plurality of explanatory patterns" (189). The ethical is no longer a set of moral principles defining right (good) and wrong (bad); instead, thoughts and actions and thus narratives are ethical when they raise awareness of ideological determination and work against ideological monologue when initiating dialogue. Consequently, Möller argues that "through focussing on communicative exchanges between the characters McEwan's novels construct the postmodern individual as a dialogical self" (188). His novels thus become a space for negotiating values and identities when they "rise to the challenges of postmodernity by inviting their readers to renegotiate their frameworks of orientation and thereby endowing them with the means to face the plurality and heterogeneity of postmodern life" (190). Möller accordingly – in contrast to Schemberg and in line with McEwan's own statements – concludes that his "novels do not offer final answers" (189), that "they are not narrative compasses to which readers, who might find themselves in the midst of a situation of postmodern disorientation, can turn for moral guidance" (189). She summarises to the point that "in a truly postmodern manner, the novels defy closure" (189) and she adds that "it is precisely in these ambiguities and ambivalences, in the questions which are left unanswered, that the novels' ethical potential lies" (190).

Martin Jacobi, although not explicitly referring to the concept of ethical criticism, points to the difficulty of tapping a narrative's ethical potential. He argues that McEwan appropriates his readers' expectations of bleak endings to manipulate them into a profound misreading: the death of Cecilia and Robbie (56). According to Jacobi, McEwan's readers are determined by

the predominance of desolate outcomes in modernist and postmodernist literature and thus believe in Cecilia's and Robbie's death despite any proof of their passing (56); indeed, McEwan's readers only have Briony Tallis's word that Cecilia and Robbie have not survived the war. Jacobi's approach is an exception among critics who almost unanimously argue that Cecilia and Robbie die while readers wish for Cecilia and Robbie's happy reunion (e.g. D'Angelo 100; Margaronis 148; and Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 130). He claims that McEwan's readers misread although they have been warned against preconception by witnessing Briony's chain of misreadings and its devastating consequences (56); thus he focuses on how ideological determination produces false judgements: "ways of seeing the world have been developed from a lifetime of education, experiences, and the results of trial and error: for the most part people are unwilling even to consider assertions that contradict their views of the world and oftentimes are unwilling to look at, let alone examine, arguments offered in support of these contradictory views" (67).

Jacobi analyses several misreadings in *Atonement* which are based on the characters' ideological determination and wish for coherence. According to him, McEwan shows those (fatal) misreadings to raise the readers' awareness of their own monological determination: *Atonement* is "an attempt to show readers typical and recurrent reasons for why we misread, ways in which we do misread, and consequences resulting from misreading" (66).[28] McEwan thus encourages his readers "to develop and use a careful and multiperspectival analysis before arriving at conclusions" (71). Finney, analysing the construction of subjectivity in *Atonement*, argues similarly: "when novelists force us to understand the constructed nature of their characters, they invite us simultaneously to reflect on the way subjectivity is similarly constructed in the non-fictional world we inhabit" (Oblivion 76). Writing, reading and criticising are ethical processes when they show ideological content and structure and the misreadings ideology and its coherence produce. Consequently, Jacobi, like Möller, asks that coherence needs to be "devalued" and abandoned before criticism can become anti-ideological and thus ethical. Alan Palmer (discussing madness in *Enduring Love*) comes to a similar conclusion: referring to philosopher Galen Strawson, Palmer concludes that it is necessary to

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[28] Both Jacobi and Kathleen D'Angelo (94-95) use the term *misreading* to signify *false reading*. According to D'Angelo, "McEwan reminds readers to be critically engaged with the text, for while reader-response criticism – particularly the relativist stance that remains the inescapable implication of the deconstructionists' position – denies the possibility of a single 'correct' reading, McEwan illustrates that 'incorrect' readings clearly exist" (92). Nevertheless, those who are reading usually assume to read "correctly." The binary of "correct" and "incorrect" is a matter of perspective. Therefore, rather than criticising "mis"reading, it might be more productive to differentiate between monological / monologising readings which often result in destructive consequences for the self and the other and dialogical / dialogising readings which allow for ambivalence and critical reading in considering diverging perspectives.

resist "attempts to bind the notion of the self together by means of the concept of narrative" (292) and that "we would do better to accept the gappy nature of consciousness and the transitory and ephemeral nature of the self" (293).

However, at this point it should be mentioned that not all critics think McEwan and his novels ethical as described by Head, Möller and Jacobi; they argue that his conception of morality based on empathy is universal in theory but that he and his novels are indeed selectively empathetic. McEwan has repeatedly claimed that "the moral core of the novel is inhabiting other minds" and understanding their equality (interv. with Appleyard n.pag.). According to Puschmann-Nalenz, this approach is dialogical in principle, since "morality, as he defines it, consists of understanding another person, not imposing or self-imposing laws, imperatives or commandments" (188); she observes, however, that McEwan falls short of his own standards when his fictions "present a binding value-system and reliable truths, reliable because they are based on authority" (189).

The perception that McEwan's empathy is rather restricted increased when his definition of morality gained public attention in his article on 9/11 published in *The Guardian* only four days after the attack: "If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality" (Love n.pag.). The terrorists, he argues, are guilty of "a failure of the imagination" (Love n.pag.). However, McEwan, too, seems to have failed in his imagination; according to Nicklas, he "missed the chance of imagining himself into the world of the terrorists" (17) and failed to picture "how it feels like to be human collateral damage of American and British troops" (17-18). Nicklas concludes that McEwan implies human universals which are based on his "Western essentialism" (18). And he wonders that "this is a rather limited outlook on the world and falling much short of his usual insight into the human potential for violence and surprising acts of cruelty" (18). Helga Schwalm agrees that McEwan "calls up empathy and imagination as fundamental, universal qualities […] but does not extend his imagination to the other side, choosing not to think about what could have possibly driven the terrorists to such terrible acts" (174). Schwalm, however, argues – contrary to Nicklas – that McEwan's writing has always been injected with essential (Western) human values: "McEwan's vacillation between universalist notions on the one hand and occidental enlightenment assumptions on the other; between claims of reciprocity and one-sidedness of intersubjective relationships, seems to be symptomatic also of his literary productions *before*

and after 9/11" (174; emphasis added). She thus explores how "McEwan's novels *Amsterdam*, *Atonement*, and *Saturday* display and explore various dimensions of authorial and figural patterns of empathy and thus reveal its paradoxical nature as a fundamental quality of intersubjectivity and as a transgressive act of 'usurpation', of authorial appropriation, and of potential misrecognition" (174).

In his introduction to *Ian McEwan: Art and Politics*, Nicklas summarises the ambivalent readings of McEwan's writing. On the one hand, McEwan "is not a philosophical writer or someone with an ideological mission using literature to propagate his ideas" (10); consequently, "his novels are not schematically plotted but develop from individual scenes and explore fictional characters and situations" (10). On the other hand, his moral viewpoint suggests "a philosophical positioning of McEwan which stands in contrast to postmodern standards" (19); according to Nicklas, "it is rather some kind of essentialism we find, reflecting human nature in universal terms" (19).

Indeed, McEwan reflects on human essentialism; however, he is not promoting a pre-postmodern form of unique unity. Based on Edward Osborne Wilson's concept of sociobiology (biology determines social behavioural patterns, i.e. social behaviour is a product of evolution), McEwan argues that human beings have a natural essence in their genetic code (i.e. all humans share certain abilities which are hence universal, e.g. the ability to express emotions and the ability to empathise); this essence, however, is culturised (i.e. ideologised): "The expression and the physiology [of emotions] are products of evolution. But emotions are also, of course, shaped by culture. Our ways of managing our emotions, our attitudes to them, and the way we describe them are learned and differ from culture to culture. Still, behind the notion of a commonly held stock of emotion lies that of universal human nature" (Literature 10). When his article published in *The Guardian* is read within this line of thought, McEwan accuses the terrorists of ideological blindness: "the hijackers used fanatical certainty, misplaced religious faith, and dehumanising hatred to purge themselves of the human instinct for empathy" (Love n.pag.). Nurture veils nature. Human beings have a genetic essence, but this essence is buried below ideological differences which are *naturalised* and thus made *undisputable*; it hence becomes the function of literature to unveil such naturalising (cf. Barthes's approach to ideology and myth). Not unlike Foucault, McEwan argues that "at its best, literature is universal, illuminating human nature at precisely the point at which it is both parochial and specific" (Literature 6).[29] Introducing McEwan's approach, Head wonders that "the principal

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[29] In his essay "Literature, Science and Human Nature" (2001), McEwan offers detailed insight into his approach to sociobiology and the function of literature to exemplify nature and nurture.

business of the novelist, perhaps, is to describe the ways in which emotions are viewed, managed and learned in particular circumstances: this is the art of the cultural variation rather than the universal norm" (202). According to McEwan, in the ambivalence of nature and nurture, obstacles originating in social and historical situatedness can be minimised; hence it is necessary to disclose ideological structure which interprets nature and naturalises such interpretation. While literature does not define human nature, it surely defines human culture; hence literature is ethical when it initiates cultural dialogue. And so is (literary) criticism and theory.

Precisely because the intertextual denies the possibility of specific value systems, intertextual theory is most ethical: it raises awareness of ideological content and structure in society and individual subjectivity. Analysing the development of intertextual theory, from Saussure's value over Bakhtin's word, Kristeva's text, Barthes's intertext and Genette's paratext and metatext in form and content of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, especially within characters and primarily within Briony and Serena who in their writing and reading processes undergo several stages of this development, contributes to disclosing the individual subject's monological determination and the threats and chances it faces when becoming an individual subject of dialogue.

2.2.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality

All of McEwan's (literary) texts are traversed by references to further (literary) texts, some unmarked, some implicitly and some explicitly marked, some even discussed; consequently, (literary) critics analysing McEwan's (literary) texts never fail to mention the profound intertextuality of his writing. Groes, for example, takes special trouble to identify about forty writers, musicians, painters, artists and social science writers referred to in *Saturday* (Modernist Consciousness 102). He then concludes that "McEwan utilizes three distinct types of *intertextual engagement*: first, direct citation and the borrowing of 'voice'; second, the construction of parallels; and, third, echo and allusion" (Modernist Consciousness 102; emphasis added). The processes of citing, borrowing, parallelising or alluding, however, require the intention of the individual subject; hence none of these engagements can be termed, in the original use of the word, *intertextual*. Groes convincingly discusses the function of Virginia Woolf and Matthew Arnold in depicting contemporary London in *Saturday*; he does not, though, discuss the function of intertextual engagement but of intentional reference. Academically profound as research on McEwan's writing usually is – this appropriation of a

term which originates in poststructuralist theory to *deny* intentional reference is widely spread. However, analysing the development and further development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, it is crucial to maintain the difference between intentional reference and intertextuality in order to discuss monological and dialogical structures within the characters and (their) novels.

Research has produced excellent insights into the various functions of intentional reference in McEwan's writing: they create atmosphere; they construct similarity and difference in thought, emotion, action and character; they situate the character in social and historical discourse and confront the character with otherness; they praise, they criticise, they amuse, they sadden. Almost all critics mention intentional references observable in McEwan's writing; only a few, however, have made them their primary concern. Anna Grmelová analyses the function of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in *Atonement* and introduces W. H. Auden's poetry in relation to Robbie's suffering. She argues that "intertextual references are employed in *Atonement* to shape complex questions about moral responsibility for both personal and collective pasts" (153). Elsa Cavalié focuses on the "house of fiction" which is created to redefine "the ambiguous relationship between nostalgia and Englishness" (123). Mary Behrman, analysing the destructive consequence of passivity and waiting, focuses on medieval allusions for "McEwan does not limit himself just to mining the works of his nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors for literary inspiration" (453). Blakey Vermeule instances the signalling function of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding in Cecilia and Robbie's relationship. Some critics, for example Barbara Apstein and Doryjane Birrer, consider McEwan's engagement with the techniques and contents of Virginia Woolf's (literary) texts. Richard Robinson, focussing on the influence of Cyril Connolly, Virginia Woolf, Rosamond Lehmann, Henry James and James Joyce on *Atonement*, analyses the "assumptions the novel covertly makes about modernism, both as a literary period and a poetics" (474). D'Angelo emphasises the relationship of intentional reference and a critical reading practice. She focuses on the readers' responsibility and how a critical readership is constructed in *Atonement*. According to D'Angelo, the construction of a critical readership involves intentional references included in a literary text and she thus explores "the way in which McEwan uses allusions to ground the meaning of his novel" (89); his textual allusions, she argues, "provide semiotic markers to guide readers toward a particular fact within the text: the revelation of and (potential) atonement for Briony's crime" (89).

Understandably, in research only selected intentional references are thematised: on the one hand, critics are situated in history and society and thus each critic is aware of different

intentional references (if the references are not explicitly marked or discussed); on the other hand, the abundance of intentional references in McEwan's writing is not manageable within the common formats of academic writing. Consequently, each critic carefully selects the intentional references to be discussed; the intentional references to be discussed in this dissertation shall be those relevant to the development of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity.

While only a few literary critics have made the function of intentional reference their primary concern, hardly any have focused on intertextuality. An exception is Dillon who wants "to push a reading of *Atonement* in the light of Kristeva's ideas" and thus "provide a new interpretation of the function of the final section of *Atonement*" (94). She argues that "London, 1999" "exposes the text as productivity and alerts the reader to the infinite possibilities of palimpsestuous textuality" (101). Another exception is Earl G. Ingersoll who discusses rereadings of *Atonement*, L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and focuses on how "intertextuality 'deconstructs' the inevitable linearity of traditional literary history, with its simplistic assumption that a 'later' work can exist only in a relationship of belatedness to an earlier work" (241).

When Slay published his monograph on McEwan in 1996, he stated what can still be stated today: "McEwan's principal concern is that of relationships" (6). Relationships continue to be McEwan's most effective means of scrutinising society, since "the most intimate of these alliances reflect the social worlds in which they are enacted, becoming, in essence, microcosms of these worlds" (6). One of the most intimate alliances is shown in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*: the alliance of author and reader; indeed, in *Sweet Tooth*, the alliance is both mentally and physically intimate when author and reader meet in real life. The alliance between author and reader can be marked, like all relationships, with "violence and confusion, tainted by a world of chaos, desolation, and destructive hierarchies" (Slay ix); it can, however, be a critical relationship of productive abeyance and ambivalence if both writer and reader address their ideological shadows and make narrative a space of dialogical involvement.

3   Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*

In Briony Tallis[30] and Tom Haley[31] McEwan has constructed two writers who are familiar with the development of intertextual theory and its anti-ideological approach. Several intentional references to intertextual theory clearly indicate his acting writers' knowledge. Briony Tallis instances the gap between signifier and signified (A 37) and implies Saussure's approach to anagrams (A 114); she indicates the concept of the bounded text (A 6 and A 37) and evokes Barthes's comparison of the author to God (A 371). Tom Haley introduces his protagonist's *readerly* neck (ST 56), an adjective associated with Barthes's distinction between the *readerly* and the *writerly text*. Both writers set key moments of their story within a library (A 132-39) or a bookshop (ST 177-79) only to criticise the bounded text. Hence it is intertextually safe to assume Briony Tallis's and Tom Haley's knowledge of intertextual theory. Based on this hypothesis, it will be argued that Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, personify the development of intertextual theory and its insights within their protagonists to promote ambivalence and dialogue; of course, they largely do so without using intertextual terminology: neither are their protagonists constructed to be familiar with such terminology, nor can their readers and thus McEwan's readers be expected to know it. Describing Briony Tallis's and Tom Haley's protagonist's development within Saussurean, Bakhtinian, Kristevan and Barthesian terminology and thus highlighting the different stages of development is thus a major objective to be achieved in the textual analysis.

Briony Tallis, as acting writer for McEwan, chooses an authorial narrative situation to partly mediate, partly show her characters; although she often opts for her narrator to retreat within her characters, her narrator is omniscient, knowing and implying the future of all characters. Her narrator is most overt when Briony's thoughts and actions are criticised to be monologically structured; while it would be wrong to claim a personal union of Briony Tallis and her narrator, the insights into Briony Tallis which McEwan's readers gain in the last chapter of McEwan's *Atonement* suggest that Briony Tallis turns her narrator into an accomplice to mediate the necessity of dialogue.[32]

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[30] Briony Tallis refers to the writer of *Atonement* (Part One to Three). Briony refers to the protagonist of *Atonement* (Part One to Three).

[31] Tom Haley refers to the writer of *Sweet Tooth*. Tom refers to the character of *Sweet Tooth*.

[32] Literary scholars approaching *Atonement* do not agree on the novel's narrative situation. Sonja Vitanova-Strezova analyses *Atonement* according to Genette's approach to narrative situation (171-76); she concludes that "the postscript with its postmodernist metafictional twist refutes Genette's differentiation between narrative voice and narrative perspective in the whole novel and challenges the reliability of the narration" (176 and 177). Dorothee Birke comparatively introduces different approaches to narrative situation in *Atonement* (187-91). While I think that McEwan intended his readers to disagree on the narrative situation (authorial, figural, first-person) as much as he intended his readers to disagree on almost every formal or contentual aspect of his novel, I struggle

Tom Haley, as acting writer for McEwan, chooses a first-person narrative situation to mediate setting, character and plot: Serena tells her own story. Tom Haley constructs his first-person narrator as a narrating I who is reflecting what she is relating about Serena, the narrated I; thus Serena, the narrating I, is constructed in an identity which Tom Haley hopes for "real" Serena to gain in "real" life: a dialogical reader and writer. This narrative constellation allows for criticism *of* Serena's thoughts and actions *within* Serena's thoughts and actions; accordingly, Tom Haley's and hence McEwan's readers can closely experience Serena's development from monologue to dialogue when Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, enter into an internal dialogue which is made visible to the reader. Hence Ksiezopolska's suggestion that Serena's tone is *self-defeating* shall be rewritten (417); indeed, Serena's tone is self-defeating in *defeating* her previous and monological *self*. In contrast to Ksiezopolska's argument (417), Serena is not *appropriated* and *deceived* by Tom Haley; instead, she is *perceived* and *imagined* by Tom Haley into dialogue.

Constructing acting writers and showing them at work, McEwan raises the question whether writers write themselves into their (literary) texts and thus addresses a crucial issue of intertextual theory. Attempting to raise awareness of this issue, McEwan does not only quote himself within Briony Tallis's reflections on writing but explicitly constructs parallels between his own biography and the biography of Tom Haley.[33] McEwan and his acting writers share one major approach: they all emphasise the writer's and the reader's shared responsibility for embracing ambivalence and engaging into dialogue. In encouraging dialogical writing and reading processes, Briony Tallis atones for her crime[34] against Cecilia and Robbie which she committed because her reading, her writing and her subjectivity were monologically structured. Tom Haley encourages dialogical writing and reading processes to free the (literary) text and its reader from ideological appropriation and thus propaganda.

Since it will be argued that Briony and Serena undergo the different stages of intertextual theory, it is practical to structure the textual analysis according to these stages. In

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with those critics who consider the omniscient narrator unethical by definition or rather by literary tradition. In my opinion, an omniscient narrator which is not chosen to determine the reader but to guide the reader into dialogical criticism of form and content, self and other, reading and writing is by function ethical. Curiously, it is common in secondary literature on *Atonement* to equal author / writer and narrator although Briony Tallis's narrator is a narrative device analysing Briony and showing or mediating Briony to Briony Tallis's readers.

[33] In his short essay "Ian McEwan's *Sweet Tooth:* 'Put In Porphyry and Marble Do Appear'" published in *Ian McEwan* (2013), Childs analyses McEwan's processing of autobiographical elements in Tom Haley. Chalupský equally pays attention to this element of *Sweet Tooth* (111-13).

[34] The signifier *crime* is chosen by Briony Tallis to describe Briony's false statement which, I share this argument with Kim L. Worthington, originates in her authorial appropriation of Cecilia and Robbie (153). However, using this signifier, it should be remembered that "the evaluation of Briony's actions is complicated by the fact that the novel offers so many different standards according to which she can be judged, and that these different evaluations do not come together as a coherent whole" (181).

the first chapter, chapter <u>3.1 Saussure's Value</u>, Briony's and Serena's handling of language and its linguistic sign will be made the subject of discussion. In the second chapter, chapter <u>3.2 Bakhtin's Word</u>, Briony's and Serena's approaches to authoritative and internally persuasive discourse shall be analysed. In the third chapter, chapter <u>3.3 Kristeva's Text</u>, it will be explored how Briony and Serena (involuntarily) start to doubt the authorial function of the literary text. In the fourth chapter, chapter <u>3.4 Barthes's Intertext</u>, Briony Tallis's and Tom Haley's and thus McEwan's encouragement of dialogue in the intertextual process will be most carefully illustrated. And in the fifth chapter, chapter <u>3.5 Genette's Paratext and Metatext</u>, McEwan's re-thinking of the autographic peritext and his literary commentary on *Atonement* shall be focused on.

Within this format of academic writing, the development of intertextual theory cannot possibly be exhaustively discussed; indeed, the aspects of intertextual theory which are instanced in the textual analysis are a highly individual selection driven by my discursive and thus intertextual construction which structures how I read, reread and write *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* and how I construct the writer Ian McEwan based on his (literary) texts. Consequently, the only thing I can and want to suggest for Ian McEwan and his novels is *one* possibility.

3.1   Saussure's Value

In *Atonement*, Briony Tallis introduces a writing protagonist, Briony; in *Sweet Tooth*, Tom Haley introduces a reading protagonist, Serena. Both protagonists are shown to strongly appreciate a life of order; in consequence, their approach to literature unveils their fear of ambivalence and their attempt to silence dialogue: Briony and Serena passively consume literature. When reading literature, Briony and Serena are shown to deny ambivalence by claiming that the one meaning of a literary text originates in the author whose authority is beyond discussion; indeed, they claim it to be the author's responsibility to adjust the disorder of a complex reality through ideological simplification. Consequently, Briony is shown not only to read but also to write literature which is meant to establish order and to be passively consumed, and Serena is shown to passively consume even those literary texts which welcome dialogical participation in the process of reading. However, although Briony and Serena try hard to avoid dialogical participation in literature, Saussure's theory of the (linguistic) sign and

its consequences for the writing and the reading subject are implied within *Briony and Serena* by Briony Tallis and Tom Haley to subvert Briony's and Serena's attempts to silence dialogue.

In the first subchapter (3.1.1 Briony), it will be analysed how the instability of the constructed and valued (linguistic) sign allows for ambivalence in meaning and, when realised by Briony, induces a crisis of identity which she only temporarily succeeds to control in the transcendental signified of author and narrator in personal union; accordingly, it will be analysed how Briony's approach to narrative assumes a reader who reads for a moment of orderly non-contradiction and ignores the reader who wants to dialogise. In the second subchapter (3.1.2 Serena), it will be analysed how Serena, who fears disorder in dialogue as much as Briony, focuses on the signified and is thus to be read as Briony's ideal reader, a reader who reads for a moment of orderly non-contradiction. However, introducing Saussurean linguistics and mediating Saussure's insights within *Briony and Serena*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, imply that Briony's and Serena's attempt at monologising reality by reading and writing is eventually meant to fail.

3.1.1 Briony

When Briony Tallis's narrator first approaches Briony, Briony clearly distinguishes between fiction and reality; indeed, to Briony fiction adjusts the major deficiency which she observes in reality: a lack of order. Briony's life and love of order is visualised in the neatness of her room which is "the only tidy upstairs room in the house" (A 5). Among her toys is a miniature farm and its setup clearly betrays her "orderly spirit" (A 5). Usually, a farm is a place of tangled liveliness; Briony's model farm, however, is organised "across a deep window ledge" and the model animals are precisely arranged, "all facing one way – towards their owner – as if about to break into song" (A 5); even the miniature hens, although hens are usually left free to pursue their frantic business of pecking, are "neatly corralled" (A 5). While a farm symbolises the lack of order which Briony observes in reality, her fiction of a farm adjusts this deficiency; she simplifies complex reality and organises its tangled liveliness into neat lines of order. Briony's room is, as Briony Tallis's narrator notes, "a *shrine* to her controlling demon" (A 5; emphasis added). She renders homage to order and thus expects to be worshipped herself. Hence her construction of the farm evokes a first scene of deference: the miniature animals all face Briony, who is the authoritative and directive centre of their orderly life. Nick Bentley, accordingly, argues that Briony's "desire to control is associated with the power Briony wishes to exert over the world around her" (152).

Peter Mathews, analysing Briony's disposition (148-49), argues that "all of Briony's passions – her storytelling, her love of secrets, her penchant of miniaturization – stem from an obsession with order" (148). Indeed, the order Briony constructs in miniaturisation and secretiveness is her defensive strategy: miniaturising and thus simplifying the complex and keeping the simplified secret in her room, Briony is protected from a perplexing reality. However, while Briony is safe within her room, it requires forms of control which outreach the tidiness of her room: if she fails to convince her fellow human beings of the advantage of order in their lives, chaos will prevail, and Briony's life, however neatly organised, will always be threatened by their lives of disorder. Hence Mathews accuses her of a "narcissistic, totalitarian outlook" (155; also Marcus 88-89). Living and thinking human beings are not easily arranged and controlled, though; Briony cannot simply order them into order. Consequently, a subtle way of influence is required which might impose order not only inside but also outside of Briony's room, one that makes not only *her* world but "*the* world just so" (A 4; emphasis added). **Briony chooses the literary text to adjust the lack of order which she observes in reality because the literary text turns her defensive strategy of miniaturisation and secretiveness into an offensive strategy.** A secret, if kept safely in her orderly world, cannot be stained by the disorderly world around her. Briony realises, though, that her secret drawers, her toy safe and the space under a removable floorboard do not contain any secrets because "her wish for a harmonious, organised world denied her the reckless possibilities of wrongdoing" (A 5). A secret usually results from actions which are illegal or not approved of by family or society; yet Briony, eager to maintain order, would never partake in an action which might cause disorder: "mayhem and destruction were too chaotic for her tastes" (A 5). The writing process, however, is a secret process (if not publicly presented and discussed), which does not originate from wrongdoing but from her wish to propagate order: "art, she believes, will act as a corrective to the untidiness of life" (O'Hara 76).The writing process is also a moment of secret miniaturisation: "writing stories not only involved secrecy, it also gave her all the pleasures of miniaturisation" when "a world could be made in five pages" (A 7) and all fates can be *resolved* (A 6). Indeed, her defensive strategy in the process of writing is simultaneously her offensive strategy: the adjusted (simplified) reality depicted in her fictions is read and provides "an artistic ideal, a glimpse of the beautiful symmetry of the world" (Mathews 155). The writing process thus satisfies "her passion for tidiness" (A 7), while, at the same time, the literary text is outreaching and can make "an unruly world […] just so" (A 7). [35]

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[35] Cavalié explains how Briony's love for order is linguistically emphasised: the disorder of Cecilia's room, as perceived by Briony, "is described through privative suffixes" – hope*less*, help*less*, *un*closed, *un*folded, *un*made,

Having chosen fiction to adjust reality, **Briony Tallis's narrator mediates and criticises how Briony, aiming at order for herself and her family, approaches reality and fiction monologically in input and output: Briony's literary texts are not supposed to feature themes of ambivalence (e.g. divorce) which might involve her readers in dialogical participation; she therefore includes catharsis and poetic justice, typical features of typical plots, to guide her readers' reading in terms of morality and moral.** Briony is unhappy about her brother's absence and his ever-changing partners. She hence designs a plot which is meant to initiate **catharsis** in her audience. Briony is too young to know the term and the concept it implies; Briony Tallis, however, constructing Briony via her narrator, insinuates the concept which predefines a specific sequence of emotions and thus perfectly symbolises her protagonist's wish for order. Briony writes *The Trials of Arabella* "to inspire not laughter, but terror, relief and instruction, *in that order*" (A 8; emphasis added). She wants to provoke Leon's "admiration and guide him away from his careless succession of girlfriends, towards the right form of wife, the one who would persuade him to return to the countryside" (A 4). Briony hopes that Arabella's trials will inspire Leon to live a life of stableness (wife instead of girlfriends) and simple quietness (countryside instead of town). Hence a second scene of deference is evoked when Briony prefigures her brother's response to her play. Briony imagines "his big, good-natured face buckled in grief as Arabella sank into loneliness and despair" (A 4) and his "exultation as the final curtain fell" (A 4); she even pictures Leon boasting to his friends about his "younger sister, Briony Tallis, the writer" (A 4). Briony is convinced that order is a value which is lost but missed in the lives of many; consequently, she expects to be admired for re-introducing order in the lives of those who are overcome by disorder. Her arrangement of the miniature animals and the process of catharsis which she includes in her play indicate that she deems the author of fiction a centre of direction; consequently, she expects her readers to be submissively grateful for the guidance she offers. Her readers are only under obligation to admire her, however, if she successfully exercises her responsibility of establishing order; therefore, a literary text which lacks neatness and gives rise to ambivalence is necessarily a failure. Consequently, Briony ignores those aspects of reality which she does not understand; and she ignores those aspects of reality which she does not want to understand since understanding would unsettle her clearly simplified value system (Wolf 299-300).

One aspect of social life which is too complex for Briony to understand is **divorce**: "it was a mundane unravelling that could not be reversed, and therefore offered no opportunities

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*un*emptied. The binary opposition – order vs. disorder – is thus linguistically manifested; in centring order through emphasising disorder, focus is put on "the things that should have been" (126).

to the storyteller: it belonged in the realm of disorder" (A 8-9). Writing, according to Briony, is a method of adjusting reality (in fiction actions can be *reversed*); divorce, however, is too messy for Briony to understand and, thus, it is not adjustable. Under the pretence of mundaneness, which offers Briony a possibility to disregard subjects she does not understand, divorce is hence ignored and retained in quarantine. *Divorce* is not tameable, it is too ambivalent to simply be binarily opposed to *wedding*: "if divorce had presented itself as the dastardly antithesis […], it could easily have been cast onto the other pan of the scales, along with betrayal, illness, thieving, assault and mendacity" (A 9); instead, "it showed an unglamorous face of dull complexity and incessant wrangling" (A 9). Not only is divorce a concept too complex for Briony to understand, it is also a subject for a disorderly and unresolvable dispute; therefore, "it was simply not a subject" (A 9). By means of her protagonist's approach to reality and fiction, Briony Tallis thus illustrates the monological structure of ideological discourse which she aims to overcome: if an ambivalent aspect of life can be reduced to either/or, it is distributed; if an aspect of life is too complex to be simplified, it is ignored. Having heard her mother and sister discussing the divorce of Emily's sister (A 8), Briony has realised that divorce is considered a complex and socially improper action and subject which causes disorder in families and society (A 8). Divorce hence must not be discussed in one of Briony's literary texts which are meant to support structures of order; it is ignored and "countered" with the good and orderly moment between wife and husband: "marriage was the thing, or rather, a wedding was" (A 9).

While Briony equals *wedding* and *marriage* and does not think beyond the ceremony, Briony Tallis's narrator overtly distinguishes between *marriage* and *wedding*: a marriage is not necessarily an orderly structure especially if marriage is associated with sexuality and the emotional confusion often arising from (sexual) intimacy. Briony Tallis's narrator, describing Briony's fiction, mediates her inexperience: "in the aisles of country churches and grand city cathedrals, witnessed by a whole society of approving family and friends, her heroines and heroes reached their *innocent climaxes and needed to go no further*" (A 9; emphasis added). Briony, inexperienced and unaware of the complexity which might follow the wedding, can appreciate a wedding as a precisely organised business (at least a wedding which is accepted by family and society): the wedding service follows strict protocols and the guests are orderly lined up in the aisles of the churches. A wedding has a "formal neatness of virtue rewarded" (A 9). Via her narrator Briony Tallis introduces this intentional reference to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* to indicate and criticise the major function which the literary text needs to fulfil for Briony: **poetic justice** and the moral guidance this typical plot offers in the binary opposition

of good and evil. Poetic justice is indeed a moment of order for Briony: "a love of order also shaped the principles of justice, with death and marriage the main engines of housekeeping, the former being set aside exclusively for the morally dubious, the latter a reward withheld until the final page" (A 7). The concept of poetic justice introduced by Briony Tallis indicates Briony's monological approach to reality and fiction in which virtue and vice are clearly definable, the former rewarded and the latter punished.

Briony's monological approach to reality and fiction is particularly visualised in her handling of language. **Personifying within her protagonist the development of intertextual theory in order to criticise Briony's monological approach to reality and fiction, Briony Tallis contextualises Briony's involvement with language within Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign: Briony first eludes and then ignores the potential for ambivalence and dialogue inherent in the instability of the constructed and valued linguistic sign.** Saussure divides the (linguistic) sign into *signifiant* (a signal, e.g. a combination of phonemes) and *signifié* (a mental concept indicated by the signal). The relation between *signifiant* and *signifié* is, apart from a few exceptions (155-56), arbitrary (152). The word *arbitrary* does not indicate, however, that the *signifiant* depends on the free choice of the speaker (155): "nous voulons dire qu'il est *immotivé*" (155) – there is no natural relation between signal and mental concept (155). Emphasising the gap between signal and mental concept, Saussure raises awareness of the **constructedness of a (linguistic) sign**. Since the relation between *signifiant* and *signifié* is non-referential (155), it is formalised for practical reasons (155). Within a linguistic community, the gap between *signifiant* and *signifié* is obscured by conventionalising the relation between signifier and signified in order to communicate (153).[36] Convention may change, though, and, consequently, a linguistic system is an unstable system. Within the boundaries of her room, Briony can elude this instability of language. She keeps "a notebook written in a code of her own invention" (A 5). She constructs a language beyond the convention of a community, a language which, quarantined in her head and notebook, cannot be infected by any form of linguistic change (unless she *intentionally* changes her linguistic system). Again, however, stability and thus order exist only within the boundaries of her room; if she wants to guide her family's behaviour into orderly directions, she needs to communicate via a linguistic system which her family is familiar with. Unfortunately for Briony, writing within a language which is spoken by many involves the risk

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[36] The relation between *signifiant* and *signifié* is also formalised for monologising reasons when the gap between signal and mental concept is obscured to ideologically appropriate a linguistic community (cf. Barthes's approach to myth).

of misunderstanding and hence disorder; in order to avoid misunderstanding, Briony refers to dictionaries and thesauruses, authorities within the scope of language, which are supposed to dispel any doubt regarding language in clearly defining the meaning of a linguistic sign (A 6). Neither dictionaries nor thesauruses, however, give adequate information on the *value* of a linguistic sign.

According to Saussure, it is necessary to distinguish between the *meaning* and the *value* of a (linguistic) sign (259). The meaning of a linguistic sign is established when its signal, a combination of phonemes, is substituted for a mental concept of which none is pre-existing the other (vertical axis of the linguistic sign) (150); this substitution is arbitrary and usually unnoticed by those speaking as the link between *signifiant* and *signifié* is conventionalised (150-51).[37] The value of a linguistic sign, however, is established in a process of differentiation when its signified is compared to the signifieds of those linguistic signs neighbouring it (horizontal axis of the linguistic sign): meaning is valued in contrast (260).[38] The linguistic sign is hence arbitrary *and* differential. Accordingly, in order to be able to communicate, a linguistic community must not only conventionalise the relation between *signifiant* and *signifié*; the community is equally required to conventionalise the value of a linguistic sign: "l'individu à lui seul est incapable d'en fixer aucune" (255).[39] Since meaning and value of a linguistic sign differ between linguistic communities, speakers and writers can never be entirely sure if their listeners and readers share a specific meaning and value of a linguistic sign; the value of a linguistic sign thus even increases the instability of language (270-72). Moreover, the value of a linguistic sign changes whenever new linguistic signs are introduced into a linguistic system and hence initiate re-differentiation. Consequently, the meaning and the value of a linguistic sign allow not only for dialogue in signifying but also for rereading because a meaning and, above all, a value is constantly if slowly changing.

Considering Briony's writing, the dialogical potential which is inherent in the **value of a linguistic sign** becomes (inconveniently) obvious in Briony's word choice:

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[37] The meaning of the linguistic sign *tree* is established when the phonemes /t/ /r/ /i:/ are exchanged for the concept *tree*, defined, according to the *OED*, as "a perennial plant having a self-supporting woody main stem or *trunk* (which usually develops woody branches at some distance from the ground), and growing to a considerable height and size" (1.a.); *signifiant* is arbitrarily substituted for *signifié*.

[38] The signified *tree* is valued when it is differentiated from similar mental concepts, for example *bush* or *shrub* (Allen, Intertextuality 9). The mental concept *tree* is, according to the *OED*, "distinguished from a *bush* or *shrub* by size and manner of growth" (1.a.). The value of the linguistic sign *tree* is thus established through both arbitrary substitution between two systems (signifier and signified) and contrast for the purpose of differentiation within one system (signified): the whole (sign) is more than the sum of its parts (signifier and signified).

[39] While some linguistic communities separate the concept *tree* from the concepts *bush* and *shrub*, others might "include bushes or shrubs of erect growth and having a single stem [into the concept *tree*]; and even some perennial herbaceous plants which grow to a great height, as the banana and plantain" (*OED* "tree", def. 1.b.).

The long afternoons she spent browsing through dictionary and thesaurus made for constructions that were inept, but hauntingly so: the coins a villain concealed in his pocket were 'esoteric' [instead of *secret*], a hoodlum caught stealing a car wept in 'shameless auto-exculpation' [instead of *self-justification*], the heroine on her thoroughbred stallion made a 'cursory' [instead of *swift*] journey through the night, the king's furrowed brow was a 'hieroglyph' [instead of *sign*] of his displeasure. (A 6)

Juliette Wells, analysing Briony as a juvenile writer in the tradition of Jane Austen, observes that Briony's word choice "is obviously not quite right, but also not fully wrong" (106). Whereas she interestingly explains Briony's wording with the inexperience but potential of a youthful writer (106), the hauntingly inept results from the difference between meaning and value. While synonyms share one meaning, they often differ in value; hence Briony, relying on the authority of reference books which are meant to contribute to stability and order, chooses synonyms which are not conventionalised to be used in the context they are used in. Briony, as Bentley pointedly observes, still needs to learn "that words are not as straightforward as they appear" and that "language is not transparent or impartial, but already carries with it cultural signifiers and connotations" (156). Briony, who is only focused on definition, does not realise that a dictionary and a thesaurus refer only to the meaning of a linguistic sign and hardly to its value. Briony's "disregard" of the value of the linguistic sign makes her linguistic constructions, as Briony Tallis's narrator indicates, "inept" for the linguistic community of which her family is a part. Hence her usage of reference books proves self-defeating; while she means to establish her authority and aims at clarifying meaning, Briony's usage of dictionary and thesaurus facilitates misunderstanding and dialogue. Her constructions are not only *inept* but they are, according to Briony Tallis's narrator, *hauntingly* inept (A 6): a *swift journey* is an "orderly" combination of adjective and noun which hardly causes attention; a *cursory journey*, however, is a metaphor which readers might hesitate and think about. This passage indicates that through language thought can be both prevented and initiated; however, even if language is unobtrusive when widely known combinations and idioms are used to initiate an uncritical consumption of the literary text, language, ultimately, is never a system of order, for in the constructedness and the value of the linguistic sign, the potential for dialogue arises. This potential causes a major conflict in Briony: on the one hand, communication via language is unstable; on the other hand, language is her only possibility to communicate and guide her family towards order. Briony, consequently, concludes: the less language, the less misunderstanding.

When Briony discovers the variety which is inherent in language (A 7), she realises that the value of a linguistic sign can be more or less pronounced: *ugliness* "had infinite variation"

(A 7), while *beauty* "occupied a narrow band" (A 7). Briony is unwilling, however, to accept the variety inherent in language independent of its degree. Consequently, realising that she must share her family's linguistic community to guide them into orderly directions, Briony tries to deprive her fiction of unnecessary linguistic signs to minimise the risk of diverse readings. **Briony chooses drama over narrative in order to avoid the value of the linguistic sign.** When Briony decides to write a play, she is comforted to be freed of her duties as novelist: "it was a relief not to be […] describing the weather or the onset of spring or her heroine's face" (A 7). She minimises the danger coming from each linguistic sign; according to her, in a play a universe is "reduced to what was said in it" which is "tidiness indeed, almost to the point of nullity" (A 7-8). However, her decision to write a play is immediately challenged by her cousins. When Jackson and Pierrot doubt the intellectual merit of drama and indirectly accuse Briony of "just showing off" (A 11), Briony, although partly acknowledging her wish for attention (A 11), refers to *the* institution of drama (as she has before referred to *the* institutions of language, dictionary and thesaurus) to justify her decision for a play: "Do you think Shakespeare was just showing off?" (A 12) Momentarily, "this warlike name" which is "faintly familiar, with its whiff of school and adult certainty" silences the twins (A 12). Shakespeare, whose person and writings are canonised and hence institutionalised by school and higher education and the educated classes (to whom the Quincey children's parents belong), is an authority which is not easily rejected. Jackson and Pierrot, though, are not yet sufficiently institutionalised to simply accept Shakespeare's supremacy (A 12). Briony, however, does not only fail to establish her authority over the twins; indeed, her reference to an institution proves again self-defeating. Not only is Shakespeare's "authority" itself constantly subject of doubt and discussion but the characters' speeches in Shakespeare's plays are filled with "prose" descriptions of characters, times and places beyond "tidiness indeed" (A 8); considering the humble possibilities of the Elizabethan stage (compared to the possibilities of contemporary staging), in Shakespeare's plays word scenery complements those humble possibilities.

However, even although Briony herself avoids word scenery, her hopes in drama are misplaced. **Being contextualised within Saussurean linguistics, Briony is necessarily confronted with the value of the theatrical sign and thus fails to reduce ambivalence and dialogue through drama.** While Saussure focuses on the linguistic sign, his theories can be transferred to each non-linguistic sign (45-52) and therefore also to the *theatrical sign*. When writing her play, Briony does not distinguish between the text of a play, which consists of linguistic signs only, and its performance, which always interprets and hence exceeds the text through a dense web of theatrical signs (auditive signs, visual signs etc.). Hence the complexity

of prose descriptions which Briony tries to avoid is re-introduced: the tear Arabella sheds (signifier) signifies an emotion (signified) (vertical axis of the theatrical sign). But what emotion is signified? Is Arabella's tear a tear of regret, a tear of fear, a tear of loneliness? The value of each theatrical sign is determined by the value of its neighbouring theatrical signs (horizontal axis of the theatrical sign), and, consequently, each theatrical sign is a moment of ambivalence. Furthermore, in her attempt to avoid the linguistic sign, Briony has only included primary text in her play and excluded secondary text in the form of stage direction or description of scenery and characters; hence in her position as author she cannot even influence the theatrical signs of the actors' appearances and performances, of costumes or props and thus at least partly guide the audience's understanding of her play. Again, Briony's plan of minimising ambivalence and eliminating the potential for dialogue has failed; instead of reducing the possibilities for dialogue in drama, they are even increased because the linguistic sign is complemented by the theatrical sign.

Being confronted with the complexity of the valued theatrical sign, Briony tries to simplify the theatrical sign into a binary opposition; however, outside of her room, she fails to simplify when she is faced with the opposition of Lola. Briony first realises the complexity and inevitability of theatrical "language" when first meeting Lola and the twins: "on the face of it, Arabella, whose hair was as dark as Briony's, was unlikely to be descended from freckled parents, or elope with a foreign freckled count, rent a garret room from a freckled innkeeper, lose her heart to a freckled prince and be married by a freckled vicar before a freckled congregation" (A 10). Meeting Lola and the twins, Briony learns that in a performance of her play, she needs "to make do" with what and who is available (A 10). Fortunately for Briony, Briony is author and director in one person. While Briony the author has missed her opportunity of instruction in the secondary text, Briony the director, who will direct *The Trials of Arabella* and act the part of Arabella, re-gains some control over the theatrical sign system and, although forced, decides to take advantage of her cousins' freckled faces: "Arabella's *lack* of freckles was the sign […] of her [Briony's] distinction" (A 10). This advantage originates in the signifier of a (linguistic) sign. According to Saussure, phonetic difference carries meaning (264-65). In the minimal pair *bee* and *see*, for example, meaning is constituted through the different phonemes /b/ and /s/. Consequently, *arbitrary* and *differential* denote two correlative qualities (265): a sequence of phonemes is arbitrarily substituted for a concept and, therefore, a different combination of phonemes denotes a different concept. Briony's complexion (pale and dark haired) and the Quincey children's complexion (freckled and red haired) are signifiers within the system of theatrical signs; if Briony's / Arabella's face on stage is the only face which

differs (minimal pair freckles – no freckles), this contrast is not only meaningful but also out-standing: Briony's lack of freckles will be the sign of her distinction (A 10). If difference in signifiers carries meaning (270), Briony's Arabella "means" in contrast to the freckled characters on stage. This does not only meet Briony's wish for attention and adoration (A 11), she also uses this difference to guide her audience's attention and interpretation for its focus will be on Arabella and hence her trials. Unfortunately for Briony, her plan of creating a binary opposition between herself and the Quincey children does not work out; instead of Briony Lola is "casted" for the role of Arabella (A 13-14) and, facing the difference between her cousin's representation of Arabella and her own (Mathews 155), "the aesthetic symmetry she had imagined to be at the heart of life and literature" is shattered (155; also D'Angelo 93). Briony, who does not distinguish between author and character and inserts herself in her fiction to adjust reality through guiding her audience in interpretation (A 6), has given her own looks (though not explicitly in the secondary text) and thoughts to Arabella: "her skin was pale and her hair was black and her thoughts were Briony's thoughts" (A 14). Consequently, Briony's authorial intention is challenged (Müller-Wood 148) when Lola's intervention causes two major problems. (a) Reality might be adjusted other than Briony intended: according to Briony, Lola (signifier), who does not even keep her mind fully on the task (A 17), denotes an entirely different Arabella (signified) than Briony would have (cf. Briony's and Briony Tallis's narrator's descriptions of Lola which indicate her sensual femininity and establish her as one of those women on whom Leon should turn his back: A 11-17); therefore, Leon's conversion is threatened. Briony is "not playing Arabella because she wrote the play" but because this is "how Leon was to see her" (A 13). Only Briony's performance of Arabella can "guarantee" that her authorial intention is realised. (b) If Arabella's thoughts, which are Briony's thoughts, are interpreted by Lola's performance, Briony will have to enter into dialogue with Lola's interpretation of herself. It is, indeed, Lola's interpretation of *The Trials of Arabella*, which is very different from Briony's concept, which first calls Briony's attention to the insignificance of the author in creating meaning.

Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign can be transferred not only to the theatrical sign but also to the literary sign. "Authors of literary works do not just select words from a language system, they select plots, generic features, aspects of character, images, ways of narrating, even phrases and sentences from previous literary texts and from the literary tradition" (Allen, Intertextuality 11). Reading the summary of *The Trials of Arabella* (A 3), it becomes perfectly obvious that Briony processes her reading experiences; she refers to plots (fairy tale, tragedy), generic features (poetic justice, rhyming prologue) and typical characters (a reckless heroine, a

foreign wicked count and a philanthropic prince in disguise). Consequently, the literary text is a sign whose signifier is composed of at least two forms of value, the value of the linguistic and the value of the literary sign (Intertextuality 11); combined those values signify an interpretation (vertical axis of the literary text). However, the more complex a signifier is (i.e. the more value is combined to compose a signifier), the larger the gap between signifier and signified becomes; the signified (interpretation) of the literary text takes different forms because each reader is a product of different linguistic, literary and social communities and hence meets different values in the literary text. The interpretation of a literary text is, furthermore, itself valued if several interpretations are contrasted (horizontal axis of the literary text). The more complex a sign is the more dialogue is initiated.

Of course, this is not according to the mind of Briony who wishes to convey one specific meaning without free play in gap and value; only thus she can persuade her brother into a stable life and her family's actions into orderly directions. Lola, however, reads Briony's play in a way which Briony does not even understand: "'I had a long illness last year, so I could do that part of it well too.' Too? Briony could not keep up with the older girl" (A 14). Lola's interpretation is not specified (although considering the description of Lola's sensual femininity, Briony Tallis's narrator indicates that the difference in interpretation results from Lola's edge in experience); however, the crucial point is Briony's confusion when Lola's reading differs from Briony's "authorised" reading. "In dealing with her cousins Lola, Jackson and Pierrot she is subject to the ungovernable inconsistencies of real people who have their own anxieties and agendas" (Bentley 153); in consequence, Briony is denied "the purity, wholeness and order that can be obtained in her fictions" (152). Lola does not provide Emily's "affirming nods" (A 4) or the encouragement of Briony's family (A 6-7); instead, she opposes Briony's writing: Briony, the author, is doubted when Lola, the reader, moves "outwards from the work's apparent structure into the relations it possesses with other works and other linguistic structures" (Allen, Intertextuality 12), when she establishes new relations within the *texte général* which Briony could not have established. This moment of opposition is an epiphanic moment for Briony: meaning does not necessarily originate in the author but is *individual*. **Briony begins to understand that the literary text, like the linguistic and the theatrical sign, is valued in contrast and hence allows for diversity in meaning; in consequence of this insight, Briony is shown to suffer a crisis of identity.** Being the indulged baby of her family, discussion and confrontation are alien concepts to Briony (A 6-7 and A 15); the insignificance of her authorial position, initiated in Lola's alternative reading, hence unsettles her major identities. On the one hand, Briony clearly identifies herself as daughter and sister

and both identities are threatened by Lola's interference when Briony fears that Lola will receive the attention from Emily and Leon which Briony claims for herself (A 14). On the other hand, her identities of daughter and sister are strongly linked and sub-ordinated to her identity of author. First, Briony demands and receives most attention as daughter and sister when she is recognised in her identity of author (A 6-7); second, through her writing she can prove to her parents and sister that she is no longer a small child (A 6). If her authorial significance is reduced in the gap between signifier and signified and the value of the literary text, her identity of author and all those identities sub-ordinated to her identity of author are threatened; even worse, Briony's individual subjectivity itself is in danger. The state of individual subjectivity (be it monological or dialogical) is based on recognition (Zima, Theorie 8-9); Briony links recognition and authorship, and, consequently, if her authorial significance is reduced, even lost in gap and value, her individual subjectivity is threatened: "it was slipping away from her, she knew, but there was nothing that she could think of to say that would bring it back" (A 13-14). Briony's observation does not only refer to her control over the performance of *The Trials of Arabella* but also to her individual subjectivity.

Undergoing a crisis of identity which is initiated by her loss of authorial supremacy, Briony becomes aware of the ambivalence of social existence. She does not enter into dialogue, though; feeling her uniqueness threatened by the equalising moment of ambivalence, she monologically ignores its critical potential. Although Briony Tallis's narrator does not specify the ideological values internalised by Briony, her individual subjectivity, her thoughts, actions and literary texts are nevertheless monologically structured, which is perceptible in her abhorrence of complexity, disorder and ambivalence; her attempt to guide her family's behaviour into orderly directions; her rejection of those subjects which are too complex to be simplified and classified; her reference to institutions in society to establish her authority and her belief in the author's authority over her readers. However, Briony's epiphanic moment during the rehearsal of *The Trials of Arabella* makes her realise that each human being is, like Briony herself, a thinking human being full of "bright and private *inside* feeling" (A 36): "though it offended her sense of order, she knew it was overwhelmingly probable that everyone else had thoughts like hers" (A 36). She hence concludes that "the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and everyone's thoughts striving in *equal importance* and everyone's claim on life as intense, and everyone thinking they were unique, when no one was" (A 36; emphasis added). Ambivalence is the equal importance of every thought, of every claim. On the one hand, being aware of ambivalence can initiate dialogue with all those thoughts of equal importance; on the other hand, being aware of

ambivalence can provoke defensiveness since "two billion voices" of equal relevance make the social world "*unbearably* complicated" (A 36; emphasis added) – Briony feels *overwhelmed* and threatened by *irrelevance* (A 36). Accordingly, since Briony manifests her individual subjectivity in her authorial supremacy over and responsibility for her fellow human beings and although she realises that a world without ambivalent voices would be "sinister and lonely" (A 36), she is fiercely determined to bring back order into the chaos for both her and her family's sake (A 37). Hence Head, analysing Briony's dramatic experiment and its aftermath, concludes that Briony's weakness, "her immature inability to accept contingency and the randomness of experience" (168), is "an authorial weakness" (168). Her longing for order and her need for appreciative attention prevents her from using the critical possibilities inherent in ambivalence; consequently, her insight into ambivalence remains theoretical: "she knew this, but only in a rather arid way; she didn't really feel it" (A 36). She is too frightened and offended, too emotionally involved, to seize the dialogical chances of ambivalence; and she blames the literary form of drama for the disorder in her thoughts: "The rehearsals also offended her sense of order. The self-contained world she had drawn with clear and perfect lines had been defaced with the scribble of other minds, other needs" (A 36). The dramatic performance, which involves other minds and thus undermines authorial aims and intentions, is incalculable (Müller-Wood 148). Accordingly, Briony considers those other minds a destructive threat (A 17) since they are to be blamed (in the form of Lola and the twins) for her confusion and chaos; consequently and paradoxically, Briony reverts to narrative in order to oppress two billion voices.

When Briony is confronted with the critical potential of ambivalence, she reverts to narrative to protect herself in a personal union of author and narrator; by personifying anti-dialogical ideas within Briony, Briony Tallis indicates the danger which lies in this personal union of author and narrator which functions as a transcendental signified: Briony's authorial significance can be restored and the voice of the reader be silenced. While Briony originally abandoned narrative to avoid the value of the linguistic sign (A 7), she now reverts to narrative in order to avoid "other minds" and "other needs" (A 36): "A story was direct and simple, allowing *nothing to come between herself and her reader* – no intermediaries with their private ambitions or incompetence, no pressures of time, no limits on resources. In a story you only had to wish, you only had to write it down and you could have the world; in a play you had to make do with what was available" (A 37; emphasis added). Considering her recent experience with drama and performance, Briony returns to the comparable stability of a narrative which does not require challenging actors and rehearsal time, compromise in stage

design or, even more problematic for the author's authority, two-sided communication and hence possible discussion. A narrative, according to Briony, is "direct and simple" (A 37) and allows the author a "near-telepathic transmission" (Müller-Wood 148; also D'Angelo 93), a straight and one-sided communication with her readers, who cannot contradict her interpretation. Briony's definition of a *narrative* is Barthes's definition of a *readerly text*. She tries to produce a literary text without any inconsistencies: "the title lettering, the illustrated cover, the pages *bound* – in that word alone she felt the attraction of the *neat, limited and controllable* form she had left behind when she decided to write a play" (A 37; emphasis added). While Barthes distinguishes between the readerly text, a literary text which creates *one* meaning *for* the reader and which hence *binds* reader and text, and the writerly text, a literary text which creates *several* meanings *with* the reader and hence *unbinds* reader and text, Briony ignores the potential for dialogue inherent in the literary sign and restrictively identifies narrative with the readerly. Consequently, Briony does not distinguish between author and narrator; after all, a narrator is an intermediary who, even if the narrator is employed not to raise the reader's critical awareness, is always a *gap between author* (who signifies) *and reader* (who is signified), a gap which might give rise to the critical reader's critical voice. Briony, who argues that in a narrative nothing and no one can come between herself and her reader (A 37), assumes a personal union of author and narrator and thus apparently closes this gap from which criticism might arise. She resolves to simultaneously write and interpret her story; attempting to safe her individual subjectivity which is linked to her authorial significance and appreciation, she (re)centres meaning in the author and thus constructs herself as a *transcendental signified* – a signified which is indisputable since it "does not depend upon other signs for its meaning" and is, therefore, constructed outside of value (Allen, *Barthes* 68).

According to Jacques Derrida, a transcendental signified is a man-made centre whose ideological function is "to orient, balance and organize the structure" (352); to arrange "the coherence of the system" and to restrict "the play of the elements *inside the total form*" (352; emphasis added). A transcendental signified (for example the signifier *God*) is constructed by those in society who, aiming at power, want to promote their ideological values to control (groups of) individual subjects. Individual subjects are often ready to accept a transcendental signified and its monological structure which offer permanence, certainty and security (352). Based on this stability, although artificial, "anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game" (352) – in unruly dialogue. Briony, considering the permanent absence of her authoritative father (A 6) and the presence of a mother who fails to centre her family (A 127-28), is afraid for herself and her family of being implicated

and caught in the disorderly and unstable play of existence; in consequence, she centres and organises her writing and hence her family around herself and thus becomes the origin, the transcendental signified, for her interpretive structure: meaning is traced down to the author. However, a centre was exposed to be a theoretical concept when Saussurean linguistics allowed the (linguistic) sign to become the site of "an infinite number of sign-substitutions" (Derrida 353) – meaning was endlessly deferred. This de-centralising process of *différance* can only be stopped *artificially* when an author provides a centre *and/or* a reader reads a centre into the literary text. In consequence, **Briony's personal union of author and narrator *only* gains the function of a transcendental signified which centres meaning *if* her reader accepts authorial authority. Her authorial significance can be restored, and the voice of her reader be silenced *only if* her reader passively consumes literature.** Briony does not realise this dependency, though, and names a story "a form of telepathy" (A 37) which is and always must be, according to Briony, a monologue.

> By means of inking symbols onto a page, she was able to send thoughts and feelings from her mind to her reader's. It was a magical process, so commonplace that no one stopped to wonder at it. Reading a sentence and understanding it were the same thing; as with the crooking of a finger, nothing lay between them. *There was no gap during which the symbols were unravelled.* (A 37; emphasis added)

Briony is entirely dependent on a stable relationship between signifier (author) and signified (reader) which "represses revolutionary, or at least unorthodox, thought" (Allen, Intertextuality 31). Robinson, analysing this passage, observes that "the unsplit sign is not allowed to threaten the controlling language – and thus the controlling plotting of the author" (489; also D'Angelo 93). Such stability, however, is a theoretical fallacy (Kristeva, IA[40] 152). According to Saussure, outside of analysis there is indeed no gap between a signifier and a signified (150-51); while communicating, speakers do not take the (linguistic) sign to its pieces (communication would become rather halting if they did), and, equally, while reading, there is no gap between reading and understanding, between author and reader – exactly as Briony claims. In critical analysis, however, the reader who does not aim at centring meaning can always undermine the author's significance when the gap between signifier and signified is explored (231). Saussurean linguistics and its further development in *différance* are meant to

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[40] Kristeva, Julia. "D'une identité l'autre." 1975. *Polylogue*. Paris: Seuil, 1977. 149-72. Print.

involve the reader in a process of analysis which de-centres meaning and opens the gap in which symbols *are* unravelled.

Since Saussurean linguistics, the (linguistic) sign is "a non-unitary, non-stable, relational unit, the understanding of which leads us out into the vast network of relations" (Allen, Intertextuality 11); consequently, the meanings which are produced "depend upon processes of combination and association within the differential system of language" (Intertextuality 10). Derrida even argues that the concept *sign*, which is defined as "a signifier referring to a signified" (355), needs to be abandoned: "as soon as one seeks to demonstrate […] that there is no transcendental or privileged signified and that the domain and play of signification henceforth has no limit, one must reject even the concept and word 'sign' itself – which is precisely what cannot be done" (354). He hence encapsulates the paradoxical insight of all (poststructuralist) theorists: "we cannot do without the concept of the sign […] without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity" (355). It is impossible to communicate without the (linguistic) sign. While Briony fears language because, despite of its ambivalence, she needs to communicate her order via language, poststructuralist theorists fear language because, despite of its ideological appropriation, they need to communicate disorder via language. The sign will hence always be "occupied" by those promoting monologue in the orderly signified and it will always be "occupied in the attempt of freedom" by those initiating dialogue in the disorderly signifier; consequently, neither sign (according to Derrida) nor writing (according to Barthes) nor subjectivity (according to Zima) can be purely dialogical. Briony's success at stifling doubt and dialogue hence is reliant on her reader's engagement with the (linguistic) sign. On the one hand, a dialogical reader can expose a readerly text and show its monological structures, can de-centre authorial meaning in focussing on the play of the signifier. Briony, on the other hand, assumes a reader who is, like herself, in love with (and in need of) order; such a monological reader is most willing to accept her central signifying position and her simplification of a complex reality. *Sweet Tooth* offers a portrayal of such a reader. Serena, the narrated I, who is reading to maintain order and to escape the major deficiency of reality, a lack of order, is Briony's reading counterpart.

Briony Tallis introduces Briony, a writing protagonist, who strongly appreciates a life of order; consequently, she passively consumes literature and, when writing fiction, simplifies a complex reality to adjust the major deficiency which she observes in reality, a lack of order; in particular, her fiction is meant to guide her family into orderly directions. However, Briony Tallis contextualises Briony's approach to language and literature within Saussurean linguistics

and thus shows Briony's literary attempt at ordering reality to fail in the gap between signifier and signified of the constructed and valued (linguistic) sign, which offers a starting point for the critical voice of the critical reader. Mediating Briony's discomfort with her insights into the dialogical potential of language, Briony Tallis emphasises Briony's fear to accept any form of dialogue and thus loss of control: when Briony, during her excursion to drama and performance, becomes aware of the ambivalence of social existence, the ambivalence of reading and the critical potential inherent in literature, she even lives through a crisis of identity and decisively averts ambivalence and dialogical subjectivity to safe her individual subjectivity; avoiding, in consequence, the ambivalent form of drama and its performance, Briony reverts to narrative and assumes a personal union of author and narrator to establish herself as an interpretive centre, a transcendental signified which originates meaning in the author and organises her readers' approach to her text. She enforces obedience to her word and book when she (re)succumbs to the "ineradicable human sickness" – instruction (McEwan, PMA xi). Briony Tallis implies, however, that Briony does not realise that her success in instructing her readers' reading is dependent on her readers' understanding of language and literature: her attempt is successful if her readers seek order in reading and hence accept Briony's authority and her interpretation; her attempt is unsuccessful if her readers open the gap between signifier and signified, accept the value of the (linguistic) sign and enter into the de-centred and dialogical play with the signifier.

By personalising Saussurean theory of the (linguistic) sign and its further development in *différance* within Briony, Briony Tallis achieves two major objectives. On the one hand, she contextualises Briony's crime, her monological reading of Cecilia and Robbie (cf. the following textual analysis); this monological reading results from Briony's monological approach to the (linguistic) sign and results in Robbie's deterioration from dialogue to monologue. On the other hand, right from the beginning, Briony Tallis supports her readers' emancipation: by showing an author at work and revealing this author's monologically structured thoughts on authorship and readership and this author's strategies for manipulating her readers, Briony Tallis arms *her* and, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, McEwan's readers against authorial manipulation. Based on Saussurean linguistics and its further development by Derrida, she encourages dialogue when mediating that the (linguistic) sign is, independent of the author's authorial intention, the reader's sign to unravel. However, considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan shows that readers are too often too uncritical.

3.1.2   Serena

Tom Haley, choosing a first-person narrative situation and distinguishing between narrating I and narrated I to relate Serena's development from monologue to dialogue, proceeds in chronological order; hence, when Serena, the narrating I, first enters the page, she describes her childhood and youth and her family's life of order. **Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, and her family live the life of order which Briony resolves to effect for her family in centring meaning within the author and authoring readerly texts.** While Briony is distressed by a lack of order in her family life and, accordingly, tries to establish tidiness beyond her room in guiding her family's behaviour into orderly directions, Serena does not carry the burden of a family which lives in disorder. **Serena's childhood and youth are spent in a limited environment which is distinguished by order. This order is initiated and maintained by monological structures which she observes, appreciates and adopts in her family and school setting.** Being the daughter of an Anglican bishop, she lives in "the *cathedral precinct* of a *charming small city* in the east of England" (ST 1; emphasis added), where she and her family are established in a "*comfortable*" house which overlooks "an *enclosed* garden with ancient herbaceous borders" (ST 1; emphasis added). Those spatial boundaries involve a security which Serena appreciates: a *small city*, free of metropolitan disruptions, is *charming*; the *cathedral precinct*, a place of protection, even further limits her major environment; and her family home offers *comfortable* safety with its garden *enclosed*. Serena is protected from the ambivalent disorder of the outside world and feels sheltered in her "genial, polished, orderly" home (ST 1).

The order within her family home signifies the **orderliness within her family** (ST 1). Although Serena fights with her sister during adolescence, no "lasting harm" is done (ST 1). In contrast to the relationship of Briony's parents (her father is permanently absent: A 6), Serena's parents like each other "well enough" (ST 1). Serena is loved and protected but not patronised by a father, whose belief in God is "muted and reasonable" and does "not intrude much on" her and her sister's lives (ST 1). And she is loved and protected and tolerably patronised by a mother, who is the perfect "bishop's wife" with "faultless charm on any social scale" (ST 3). Ambivalence and dialogue are unknown to Serena for both her parents and she herself prefer to avoid any possible conflict (ST 2-3). Consequently, Serena's childhood and youth are, since they are "protected" from the outside world and any debate, "stable, enviable, idyllic even" (ST 1). Being sheltered "inside a walled garden" (ST 1), Serena enjoys living in a paradise although this paradise implies, like the Garden of Eden, "pleasures *and* limitations" (ST 1; emphasis added). Serena, however, appreciates these limitations for they *secure* her foremost pleasure:

an orderly (family) life; in retrospective, Serena, the narrating I, realises that, desirous to maintain this order, her attempts at rebellion were never serious. "The late sixties lightened but did not disrupt our existence. […] In my late teens there slipped over the garden wall some heavy petting, as they used to call it, experiments with tobacco, alcohol and a little hashish, rock and roll records, brighter colours and warmer relations all round. […] We liked to think ourselves as bad girls, but actually we were rather good" (ST 2). Although Serena, the narrated I, tastes various "forbidden fruits," the protective garden wall is never demolished, and she always returns to her personal Garden of Eden. She does not attempt to destroy paradisiacal order for this order involves not only temporary but lasting pleasures.

The order Serena enjoys at home is complemented by **the order she encounters at school**; with hindsight, Serena, the narrating I, admits that she did neither challenge her family order nor the institutional order provided at school. "At seventeen my friends and I were timidly and delightedly rebellious, but we did our school work, we *memorised and disgorged* the irregular verbs, the equations, the motives of fictional characters" (ST 2; emphasis added). Such schooling is emblematic of a monological thought determined by academic institutions: memorising is a form of imparting knowledge which denies any form of dialogue because its plain aim is identical reproduction. *Irregular verbs* are merely memorised and not discussed in their rich etymology; *motives of characters* are merely memorised and not discussed in their rich context; *equations* are merely memorised in their form instead of discussed in terms of the unknown. Facts are accepted and repeated. Neither at home nor at school is Serena encouraged to doubt structures and knowledge which she is offered and asked to learn. She does not dialogise and is unaware of the (potential) ambivalence of social existence beyond her limited environment; instead, Serena appreciates the simplicity of her life. Retrospectively, however, Serena, the narrating I, clearly criticises the monological learning concept which she was faced with at school in using the verb *to disgorge*.[41] Constructing a narrating I whose approach to herself is rather critical, Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, indicates the development towards dialogue which Serena, the narrated I, will undergo; however, considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, as first introduced by Serena, the narrating I, lives Briony's ideal life of order.

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[41] *Bulimic learning* signifies a learning behaviour which, shortly before and during examination phase, aims at memorising information without critically engaging with them; the information is stored in the short-term memory, *disgorged* during examination and almost immediately forgotten. *Bulimic learning* may be caused by inadequate learning management but is more often the effect of an educational system or tuition which focuses on knowledge over methodical expertise and thus expects pupils and students to remember (and understand) large quantities of (relevant) knowledge instead of applying, analysing, creating and evaluating knowledge.

Serena, the narrated I, lives and enjoys a life of order; consequently, in contrast to Briony, she does not feel the need to adjust any deficiency. When she is about to graduate from school and change is inevitable, she opts for the least change, "a provincial university far to the north or west" (ST 2). She thus attempts to avert disorder in continuing her life within limited but idyllic space; furthermore, she hopes to avert disorder by turning her pastime, reading (ST 2), into her subject of study. Skipping that reading may exceed the surface of the (linguistic) sign and the author's obvious intention, Serena plans "a lazy English degree" (ST 2), which will be orderly and effortless due to her technique of fast-reading novels (ST 2) – a technique which makes her "turn a page every few seconds" (ST 6); indeed, fast-reading novels for three years will suit her "just fine" (ST 2). **While Briony writes literature to *adjust* the lack of order which she observes in reality and attempts to make the world "just so"** (A 4 and 7), **Serena reads literature to *continue* her life of order which is already "just fine"** (ST 2); both, however, consider the author a centre and instrument of order.

Tom Haley contextualises his protagonist's approach to author and literature within Saussurean and Barthesian theories of the (linguistic) sign: Serena, the narrated I, is keen to avoid disorderly dialogue and hence refrains from analysing the literary text which would necessarily open the gap between signifier and signified and uncover the value of the (linguistic) sign. Throughout her childhood and youth Serena lives in a home which is "orderly, book-filled" (ST 1); avoiding disorder and hence discussion, she favours *readerly texts*: narratives which are bound by their authors in whom meaning is centred, narratives which are closed in the shelves of libraries and in the canons of educational institutions (Barthes, T 1212). Serena loathes experimental writing (ST 6 and ST 66) and enjoys, like Briony, the typical plot of the readerly text (ST 6). Retrospectively considered, Serena, the narrating I, knows that her preference for this typical plot was naïve and uncritical, even unrefined: "it was *vulgar* to want it, but I liked someone to say 'Marry me' by the end" (ST 6; emphasis added). Serena thus criticises those readers who, like Briony or Serena, the narrated I, delight in the happy ending offered by a normative plot of poetic justice which renders critical involvement with disorder unnecessary since the order which has been disrupted is restored. Serena, the narrated I, shares Briony's preference for poetic justice and approves those literary texts which Briony wants to author; indeed, Serena's reading reflects the ideological simplification of the Saussurean (linguistic) sign which allows the author to exclusively signify text and reader: "d'un côté le signifiant (matérialité des lettres et de leur enchaînement en mots, en phrases, en paragraphes, en chapitres), et de l'autre le signifié, sens à la fois originel, univoque et définitif" (Barthes, TT 1677). This authorial closure of the

signifying process is facilitated by Serena's technique of fast-reading which *consumes* the readerly text. A literary text is consumed when the reader, while reading, is not actively involved in the signifying process but passively "inscribed" with the author's signified. Serena experiences this passive inscription when her "eyes and *thoughts go soft*, like wax, to take the impression fresh off the page" (ST 6; emphasis added). The reader does not *actively think* but *passively accepts* meaning, which is made for the reader who, soft in thought, becomes wax to be formed in the author's hand. When Serena is reading, there is no gap in analysis between author and reader, between reading and understanding; indeed, there is no gap during which symbols can be unravelled (A 37). Serena's fast-reading forecloses analysis; she does not undo the (linguistic) sign and hence the gap between signifier and signified remains closed and the potential for dialogue in gap and value unexploited. This passivity, however, is not necessarily one claimed by the author, but one chosen by Serena herself; indeed, she actively resists active involvement in the signifying process when *letting* her eyes and thoughts go soft (ST 6).

Tom Haley constructs his first-person narrator to be a reader who has undergone a change from monological to dialogical reading; the difference between Serena, the narrating I, and Serena, the narrated I, is exemplarily instanced when Serena, the narrating I, appropriates the irony inherent in Jane Austen's "financial" character descriptions to criticise Serena, the narrated I, and her ignorance of gap and value.

> I present these details not to complain, but in the spirit of Jane Austen, whose novels I had once raced through at Cambridge. How can one understand the inner life of a character, real or fictional, without knowing the state of her finances? *Miss Frome, newly installed in diminutive lodgings at number seventy St. Augustine's Road, London North West One, had less than one thousand a year and a heavy heart.* (ST 42-43)

Jane Austen's novels are full of "financial" character descriptions – many of them ironised to voice social criticism.[42] However, the ironical utterance requires an audacious reader who reads beyond the first (literal) signification of the ironical utterance and perceives and dares the second (ambivalent and subversive) reading. Serena, the narrated I, fast-reading Jane Austen's novels instead of engaging with them, remains unaware of the social criticism mediated in Jane

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[42] In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, characters are discussed in terms of finances in approximately a third of the chapters. In particular, Jane Austen's narrators ironise the thoughts and actions of those characters who consider money to be essential to human (natural) existence and thus to define human (instinctive) behaviour: "it is *a truth universally acknowledged* [cf. Barthes's definition of ideology], that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Austen 5; emphasis added) / "Mrs. Bennet had been strongly inclined to ask them to stay and dine there that day; but, though she always kept a very good table, she did not think anything less than two courses could be good enough for a man on whom she had such anxious designs, or *satisfy the appetite and pride of one who had ten thousand a-year*" (Austen 260; emphasis added).

Austen's "financial" character descriptions. Racing through Jane Austen's novels and thus merely taking in surface impressions, she only observes the first (literal) reading of the ironic utterance and fails to realise that individual subjects are too complex to be defined according to the status of their finances; accordingly, in *her* spirit of Jane Austen, the description of "Miss Frome," reduced to the state of her finances and the state of her romantic relationship (a combination common and commonly criticised in Jane Austen's novels), is natural and thus perfectly adequate. Serena, the narrating I, however, perceives and dares the irony inherent in Jane Austen's "financial" character descriptions; consequently, in *her* and Jane Austen's ironical and thus dialogical spirit, she strongly suggests that a description which reduces an individual subject to the state of her finances and the state of her romantic relationship is constructed and thus entirely inadequate. Considering the difference between Serena, the monological narrated I, and Serena, the dialogical narrating I, the question whether the inner life of a character can be known without knowing the state of her finances, turns from rhetorical (Serena, the narrated I) to ironical (Serena, the narrating I): the answer to this question and the literal or ambivalent reading of "Miss Frome" depend on the reader who is reading Tom Haley's novel – a reader like Serena, the narrated I, who favours order and who accepts and heeds "financial" character descriptions or a reader like Serena, the narrating I, who criticises monological approaches to life and literature, perceives the ironic moment in the description of Jane Austen's characters and includes this moment in her description of "Miss Frome." In his function of acting writer for McEwan, Tom Haley thus constructs a narrative situation which allows him to confront his readers by making them wonder if they read like Serena, the narrated I, or if they read like Serena, the narrating I; he thus advocates, if not initiates a dialogical approach to his novel in particular and literature in general by encouraging his readers' self-reflection.

It can be argued, of course, that only those of Tom Haley's and thus McEwan's readers who are familiar with Jane Austen's irony can perceive the irony inherent in the description of "Miss Frome." However, Serena, the narrating I, emphasises the difference between narrating I and narrated I by her opening verb (*to present*); furthermore, in the spirit of Jane Austen, whose irony is often only revealed throughout the plot, the complexity and development of Serena's "inner life" which gradually manifests itself encourages every reader to finally realise the reducing and criticising moment the description of "Miss Frome" implies. Nevertheless, regardless of her future development, Miss Frome's technique of fast-reading stifles Jane Austen's attempt to initiate dialogue; hence Serena does not only defy active thought in favouring readerly texts but she also defies active thought when racing through *(potentially)*

writerly texts: narratives, like those of Jane Austen, which meet the reader in readerly form only to actively involve the reader in a productive signifying process (Barthes, T 1216). Instead of welcoming such productivity, Serena, intentionally fast-reading, puts the author in charge of centralising and steadying meaning in simplified content (ST 66) and makes the author a transcendental signified which structures and limits the possibilities of a literary text (Derrida 352). Consequently, **considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* and Serena's resistance against gap and value in her fast-reading, Serena, the narrated I, is Briony's ideal reader and Briony is Serena's ideal author.** Serena is established, through her monological reading practice, as Briony's reading counterpart; she intentionally ignores the ambivalence of a signifying process as Briony intentionally ignores the ambivalence of two billion voices. Serena does not want to become an "agent" of meaning by actively joining writer and text (Barthes, T 1216) or by exploring unthought of connotations (TT 1681). Although signifier and signified are not the author's prerogative (TT 1681), Serena accepts the author's closure of the readerly text and even forces her "authorial" closure on the (potentially) writerly text. Meaning, according to Serena, needs to be orderly centred in the author. Briony, thinking it the author's function and responsibility to provide such meaning in the readerly text, is hence Serena's ideal author; and Serena, expecting and accepting the authorial responsibility of predetermined interpretation in the readerly text, is hence Briony's ideal reader. Both Serena and Briony welcome and claim the readerly and its ideological simplification since both Serena's and Briony's individual subjectivity is a monological one: they resolutely avoid ambivalence and dialogue, and thus, unsurprisingly, theatre embarrasses Serena as much as it confuses and angers Briony (ST 5). With the theatrical performance of the dramatic text always interpreting the dramatic text in the system of theatrical signs, Serena does not only encounter the various signifying processes of those involved in the performance which might differ from the author's intention; she is, furthermore, equally confronted with the various signifying processes existing and initiated in the audience. Both Briony and Serena opt against drama and its performance because it initiates ambivalence and dialogue. Additionally, poetry, usually lacking character and plot, effusing symbolism and being dependent on the reader's active involvement in creating meaning, offers too many loose signifiers for Serena (ST 5).

Although Serena's mother is normally not imposing, Serena, the narrated I, is once "matronised" and, in consequence, she is compelled to study mathematics, "the wrong subject" (ST 5), at a university which is not in the least provincial, the University of Cambridge (ST 3). **When Serena, the narrated I, is ordered into disorder by her mother, reading gains an escapist function**: it becomes Serena's "way of not thinking about maths" (ST 5). Reading is,

however, not only Serena's way of not thinking about maths (ST 5); retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, admits that reading was her "way of *not thinking*" (ST 5; emphasis added). Serena, the narrating I, severely criticises Serena, the narrated I, who is reluctant to be actively involved in any signifying process; she admits, nevertheless, that she had "more pleasure out of novels" because she was not "obliged to sweat over weekly essays" (ST 5). Thinking critically beyond the surface of the (linguistic) sign is *always* an effort. However, although studying literature is more complex than Serena, the narrated I, expected (ST 5), she is, nonetheless, unhappy to study mathematics (ST 5).

Serena, the narrating I, mediates how Serena, the narrated I, when facing discontinuity and hence disorder in her life, starts to read literature in order to *escape into realist fiction*: she effectively reduces the (linguistic) sign in gap and value by ignoring anything but character and action. Thus, considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, successfully monologises the literary text – in contrast to Briony. Serena searches distraction in character and action of the realist novel: "I didn't bother much with *themes* or *felicitous phrases* and skipped *fine descriptions* of weather, landscapes and interiors. I wanted characters I could believe in, and I wanted to be made curious about what was to happen to them" (ST 6; emphasis added). In retrospective, Serena, the narrating I, admits that her needs were simple (ST 6); her needs, however, were not only simple, they were *simplifying*. Reading Serena and Briony within the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, like Briony, tries to tidy the literary text from dangerous value by reducing it to what is said and done (character and action); however, Serena, unlike Briony, is successful. Whereas Briony turns towards drama to avoid the value of the (linguistic) sign in narrative descriptions of "weather or the onset of spring or her heroine's face" (A 7), an attempt which fails in the complexity of the dramatic performance, Serena simply ignores any passages which might initiate dialogue: *themes* which involve the risk of discussion; *felicitous phrases* which imply the ambivalence of stylistic devices; and the possibility of subversion in *fine descriptions*. If such content is not read, if connotations which might be established between what is said, done and described are ignored, character and action are simplified to a first-order reading (signifier-signified) (Barthes, T 1213). If imagery and descriptions confirm the first-order reading, Serena does not miss anything; if imagery and descriptions prompt a rereading of the first-order reading, Serena remains *intentionally unaware* of this destabilising moment. Since the writer of a narrative can use imagery and descriptions in order to create a gap between character and reader, Serena, ignoring both, forecloses this gap. Consequently, the subversive potential the *felicitous phrases* and *fine descriptions* of realist writing often imply when they

are *read against* the characters' speeches and actions is stifled by Serena. Her attempt to avoid gap and value of the (linguistic) sign is hence more successful than Briony's attempt to avoid it; while in the performance of a play complexity is re-introduced, Serena's sketchy reading is indeed what Briony calls "tidiness indeed" (A 8). If readers like Serena simply skip imagery and descriptions, the potential for dialogue inherent in the (linguistic) sign is effectively reduced, as Briony says, "almost to the point of nullity" (A 8). If gap and value of the (linguistic) sign are "only" to be dealt with in the characters' speeches and actions, the risk of dialogue is minimised and characters and actions are simplified in order to achieve passive consumption for escapist reasons; Serena's fast (i.e. sketchy) reading thus proves to be an *active* resistance to *active* involvement. While usually authors are criticised for signifying their texts and readers, Serena's fast-reading implies that readers are equally capable and often willing to close the signifier, even in (potentially) writerly texts; indeed, while the author's readerly text can be dialogised by the "disorderly" reader, the writer's writerly text can be monologised by the "orderly" reader.

In *Sweet Tooth*, Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs Serena, the narrating I, who reflects what she is relating and who criticises Serena, the narrated I, for her monological approach to the literary text; he thus implies Serena's development from monologue to dialogue and attempts to engage his readers into criticising the monological and monologising arrangements of Serena, the narrated I. Serena, the narrated I, does not doubt knowledge and structure provided for her; consequently, her individual subjectivity, like Briony's subjectivity, is a monological one. Avoiding ambivalence and dialogue, Serena lives a life of order; indeed, Serena lives the life of order which Briony wants to establish for herself and her family in authoring readerly texts in which meaning is limited and centred in the author. Accordingly, in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, is established as Briony's reading equivalent since Briony authors those literary texts which Serena enjoys to consume: Briony authors literature to mediate order and Serena reads literature to maintain order; both focus on the readerly text and consider the author a transcendental signified, a centre and instrument of order, and the literary text a resource of pleasure or direction. Consequently, neither Briony nor Serena, whose thoughts and actions are monologically organised, see the necessity to analyse the literary text, be it readerly or writerly or of writerly potential, because analysis would disintegrate the (linguistic) sign into gap and value and admit ambivalence, dialogue and hence disorder. When disorder is nevertheless introduced in Serena's life, she starts reading to escape into the character and plot of realist

fiction. While Briony fails to reduce the critical potential of the (linguistic) sign in the dramatic text which is complicated in performance, Tom Haley, contextualising Serena within Saussurean linguistics, mediates via his first-person narrator that Serena manages to effectively reduce the critical potential of the (linguistic) sign by simply skipping imagery and descriptions within realist fiction. Serena thus monologises in ignoring the subversive potential which might be inherent in imagery and descriptions to undermine the first-order reading of signifier and signified in character and action. A reading of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* which focuses on the (post)Saussurean theory of the (linguistic) sign thus emphasises that not only the author can try to avoid dialogue in clearly signifying the literary text; a reader, who is seeking for a transcendental signified, can force closure even on those literary texts which actually welcome the readers' productivity.

In their function of acting writers for McEwan, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley personalise the Saussurean origin of intertextual theory in their protagonists to mediate and criticise monological writing and reading processes and thus to facilitate their readers' emancipation in raising awareness of ideological simplification. Intending to offer their readers and thus McEwan's readers the Foucauldian prospect of entering into the "undefined work of freedom" (Enlightenment 316), they continue to criticise their protagonists' monological and monologising approach to literature and subjectivity when they contextualise them within Bakhtinian theories of the word and emphasise that their anti-dialogical thoughts and actions result in destructive consequences – for themselves and for those around them.

3.2 Bakhtin's Word

Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise Briony and Serena within the Bakhtinian theory of the word to illustrate their intertextual development from monologue to dialogue and the devastating consequences of monological and monologising processes; furthermore, Briony Tallis contextualises Emily, Cecilia and Robbie within Bakhtinian theory of monologue and dialogue in order to explain and challenge Briony's authoritative thoughts and actions. Since Briony Tallis and Tom Haley personalise Bakhtin's involvement with Saussurean linguistics and some insights resulting from this dialogue within Briony and Serena, the major differences between Saussurean linguistics and Bakhtin's approach to language shall be briefly introduced in advance; further Bakhtinian ideas (on Saussurean linguistics) will be provided in the textual analysis.

Saussurean linguistics is primarily concerned with systemising language. Saussure, attempting to render language a subject of scientific study, focuses on *la langue* (36), the abstract system of a specific language (its linguistic signs and its grammatical structures) which is available to each present speaker of this language; while *la langue* facilitates communication since all members of a linguistic community share knowledge of its components, within *la langue* meaning is limited to conventionalised signification (30-31). Saussure is perfectly aware of the complexity of language, synchronically and diachronically, within *la parole* (30-36), the individual utterance (word, sentence, text) of the individual speaking subject; if the object of linguistics is to systemise language, however, *la parole* is "an inappropriate or impossible object of study" (Dentith 25). Saussure, according to Michael Holquist's reading of Saussurean and Bakhtinian concepts, appreciates that the individual utterance actually "resists all attempts at generalization" (Holquist, Dialogism 45); nevertheless, Saussure, aiming at making language a researchable object, systemises and hence simplifies language within a process of intentional abstraction. In this process the fact must be evaded "that signifiers are plural, replete with historical meaning" (Allen, Intertextuality 31). Consequently, although Saussure's theory of the (linguistic) sign – of its signifier, its signified and its value – facilitates a critical approach to ideological structure, Saussure's abstraction of language, including the abstraction of the linguistic sign, enables an ideological appropriation of language.

Bakhtin, attacking ideological structure, is primarily concerned with *la parole*, with "the word's existence within specific social sites, specific social registers and specific moments of utterance and reception" (Allen, Intertextuality 11). Indeed, Bakhtin and Saussure share a basic approach to language: "both thinkers begin with the revolutionary assumption that language should be looked at from the point of view of the individual speaker" (Holquist, Dialogism 44); however, while Saussure abstracts *la parole*, Bakhtin, who is not interested in (ideological) simplification, appreciates and focuses on the complexity of the individual speaker's utterance in social and historical context. According to Bakhtin, a (linguistic) sign obtains meaning and value only in the context of its utterance: "at any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (Holquist, Glossary n.pag). Since the meaning and value of a (linguistic) sign which forms (part of) the utterance is historically unique, Bakhtin and Vološinov[43] argue that

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[43] *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language.* Originally published in Russian entitled *Marksizm i filosofiia iazyka* (1929). Trans. by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik 1986. The degree Bakhtin contributed to this study is controversial (Allen, Intertextuality 15; Danow 5-8; Dentith 8-10); this discussion, however, is not important to the textual analysis of this dissertation.

"a synchronic system, from the objective point of view, does not correspond to any real moment in the historical process of becoming" (66). Accordingly, they focus on the individual utterance since language "acquires life and historically evolves precisely here, in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic system of language forms" (95). Although each utterance is the product of a historically unique context, the (linguistic) sign which forms (part of) an utterance always implies its ambivalent meanings and values which are impossible to resolve (Holquist, Glossary 428); although some utterances are openly dialogical (heteroglot) and some conceal ambivalent meanings and values (monoglot) (Allen, Intertextuality 221), each utterance ultimately implies "other utterances, past utterances and future responses or redeployments" (Intertextuality 221). Consequently, if the individual speaking subject focuses on the specific context of an individual utterance instead of the structure underlying it, the monoglot utterance can be disclosed in its ambivalence and thus the ideological appropriation of language obviated.

Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, imply Bakhtinian anti-ideological ideas in order to criticise their protagonists' monological (reading and writing) structures which Briony and Serena (fatally) apply to those in their acquaintance. In the first subchapter (3.2.1 Briony), it will be analysed how Briony Tallis's narrator mediates that Briony's abstraction and simplification of the individual utterance in disregarding its reciprocal purpose and social and historical context cause the wrong man to be convicted for the assault on Lola. In the second subchapter (3.2.2 Emily, Cecilia and Robbie), it will be discussed how Briony Tallis's narrator implies that the authoritative word of monologue prevents dialogue in Emily, Briony's mother; that Cecilia experiences a crisis of identity when she is equally exposed to the authoritative discourse of two major ideologies; and that the internally persuasive word of dialogue is, in the beginning, only realised by Robbie. In the third subchapter (3.2.3 Serena), Tom Haley's contextualisation of Serena within Bakhtinian theory will be examined; in an intertextual reading of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena is not only established as Briony's reading counterpart but also as a reading foil to Robbie and as a historical continuation of Cecilia.

3.2.1 Briony

Contextualised within Saussurean linguistics, the orderly structure of Briony's simplified reality as mediated in the typical plot and stock character of her readerly texts can be considered an abstract system of reality (*langue*) to which she relates each individual utterance (*parole*). While Saussure proceeds from the utterance of the individual speaker, which is simplified into a language state (as depicted in dictionaries and grammar books), Briony proceeds from a simplified reality state (as depicted in her readings and writings) to which she relates Cecilia's and Robbie's individual utterances; indeed, "she refers to her own backlog of narrative schematics in order to interpret the ambiguous behaviour of the couple" (O'Hara 78; also Worthington 153). Briony denotes typical plot and stock character to clearly classify Cecilia's and Robbie's actions and to position them and hence herself in the monological space of unambiguity. Although Briony cannot possibly contextualise and thus understand Cecilia and Robbie's encounter by the fountain (she has not observed their struggle over the vase: A 39), the situation is perfectly logical: "A proposal of marriage. […] She herself had written a tale in which a humble woodcutter saved a princess from drowning and ended by marrying her. What was presented here *fitted well*" (A 38; emphasis added). According to Jacobi, who analyses moments of misreading in *Atonement*, misreading results from interpreting "individual events by a process of oversimplification and analogical extensions" (66). Worthington, too, suggests oversimplification as "Briony 'reads' these events within the terms of the childish understanding that frame, like the window, what she 'sees'" (154). Indeed, Briony reads Robbie's "formal" pose to be a marriage proposal (A 38), a signification which perfectly matches into the typical plot of love across social boundary: "Robbie Turner, only son of a humble cleaning lady and of no known father, Robbie who had been subsidised by Briony's father through school and university, had wanted to be a landscape gardener, and now wanted to take up medicine, had the boldness of ambition to ask for Cecilia's hand. It made *perfect sense*" (A 38; emphasis added). The complex encounter between Cecilia and Robbie is *matched into typical plot and stock character* (woodcutter and princess) and hence, like a complex linguistic sign which is *matched into its meaning* by consulting a dictionary, definable and classifiable and thus entirely logical to Briony; however, as Briony's usage of dictionary and thesaurus has indicated, a (linguistic) sign cannot be approached "out of value" and an utterance (be it audible in the form of spoken word / text or visual in the form of gesture / action) cannot be approached "out of context" (i.e. outside of its social situation): the connection between

signifier and signified "in the word taken concretely and independently of the concrete utterance, as in a dictionary, is completely random" (Bakhtin and Medvedev 120).[44]

Bakhtin and Medvedev agree with Saussure on the arbitrary relation between *signifiant* and *signifié*; yet, the (linguistic) sign is "a part of social reality" (120). Within a social and historical context, the (linguistic) sign turns concrete: "it organizes communication oriented toward reciprocal action" when it is realised "in the here and now, in given circumstances, at a certain historical moment, under the conditions of the given social situation" (120). The meaning of every word is dependent on the social and historical situation it is uttered in; the phoneme sequence /j/ /ɛ/ /s/, taken out of the concrete context, may be substituted for the abstract idea *consent*; in the social and historical situation, however, nuance is added and the sequence may be substituted for the ideas *joyous approval* or *reluctant obedience*. Briony, however, does not know the social and historical context of Cecilia and Robbie's encounter and, accordingly, she is extremely puzzled when they suddenly show unexpected action which does not match her systemised reality.

Observing Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain, Briony is unsettled when she fails to relate Cecilia's and Robbie's visual utterances to the typical plot of her abstracted and systemised reality; contextualised within Bakhtin's insight into meaning, Briony cannot understand what she observes since she is neither the addressee of Cecilia's and Robbie's visual utterances nor is she familiar with their visual utterances' social and historical context which proves, furthermore, too complex to allow simplification. While Briony is unsurprised by Robbie's formal pose since it matches the abstract system of her simplified reality, she fails to classify his next gesture: "what was less comprehensible, however, was how Robbie imperiously raised his hand now, as though issuing a command which Cecilia dared not disobey" (A 38). On the one hand, Briony does not understand Robbie's gesture because it does not fit well into her typical plot of love across social boundaries: a "humble woodcutter" does not wield authority over his princess (A 38). On the other hand, Briony does not understand Robbie's gesture since a gesture (a visual utterance) is, according to Bakhtin and Medvedev, a social act and needs to be evaluated as such in the context of its social reality (120). Consequently, misreading is inevitable. First, Briony has not observed the prelude to Cecilia and Robbie's encounter, their struggle over the vase, and hence lacks the context (A 39);

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[44] *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics.* Originally published in Russian entitled *Formal'nyi metod v literaturovedenii: Kriticheskoe vvedenie v sotsiologicheskuiu poetiku* (1928). Trans. by Albert J. Wehrle 1985. The degree Bakhtin contributed to this study is controversial (Allen, Intertextuality 15); this discussion, however, is not important to the textual analysis of this dissertation.

second, Briony does not see that Robbie's gesture is accompanied and hence "valued" by a second gesture: Robbie is not only raising his hand but also pointing to the vase which is lying behind Cecilia (compare the two descriptions: A 30 and A 38). Considering the context and the neighbouring of his two gestures, Robbie's gesture is not a signifier signifying imperious command but a signifier signifying warning: he wants to stop Cecilia from moving backwards and stepping onto the vase (A 30). His gesture hence makes "perfect sense" in the social and historical context of Cecilia and Robbie's situation but not in Briony's abstract system: meaning is indeed "inseparably enmeshed in the communication event" (Bakhtin and Medvedev 120). Judging "out of context" but based on her typical plot, Cecilia's response is equally incomprehensible to Briony: "It was *extraordinary* that she was *unable to resist* him. At his insistence she was removing her clothes, and at such speed" (A 38; emphasis added). Considering the larger social and historical context (Cecilia's annoyance with Robbie's behaviour of late: A 22-30) and the specific social and historical context (Cecilia's anger with Robbie's inadequate reaction when the vase is broken: A 30), Cecilia's speedy undressing is signifying Robbie to stop his "intolerable" attempt to retrieve the broken pieces from the fountain (A 30), an attempt which Robbie signals Cecilia by unbuttoning his shirt (A 30). Thus neither is Robbie commanding Cecilia, nor is Cecilia obeying Robbie; indeed, considering Cecilia and Robbie's reciprocal relationship, Cecilia is, as opposed to Briony's impression, *resisting* Robbie (A 30). Briony, focused on matching, fails to realise that an individual utterance (be it word, gesture or action) "*is a two-sided act*" (Bakhtin and Vološinov 86). According to Bakhtin and Vološinov, a word, like every individual utterance, "is determined equally by *whose* word it is and *for whom* it is meant" and thus it is a "*product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*" (86). Briony, however, is not the recipient of either Cecilia's or Robbie's utterances and hence, according to Bakhtin and Vološinov, excluded from understanding; furthermore, she has neither information about Cecilia and Robbie's awkward relationship, nor does she know about the fragments in the fountain, nor does she see that Robbie is unbuttoning his shirt (compare the two descriptions: A 30 and A 38). Not being addressed and informed, Briony is puzzled by Robbie's behaviour and overwhelmed by her sister's action which is to her indeed *extra-ordinary*, beyond order. Briony is even tempted to demand an explanation of Cecilia (A 40); she is entirely perplexed and, finally admitting defeat, concedes that she does not understand the encounter between Cecilia and Robbie as "the sequence was illogical" (A 39): according to her structure, "the drowning scene, followed by a rescue, should have preceded the marriage proposal" (A 39).

Contemplating Cecilia and Robbie's encounter by the fountain, Briony realises that the orderly structure of her simplified reality is too abstract to explain each individual – contextualised and reciprocal – utterance; following this Bakhtinian insight, she first considers the advantages of a polyphonic (heteroglot) novel. Briony Tallis's narrator, showing Briony's observation of Cecilia and Robbie's encounter by the fountain, evokes a moment of dramatic performance: Briony, sitting in her window which frames the stage (A 37), concludes that "what was *presented* here fitted well" (A 38; emphasis added). However, being forced into the position of the audience, the impossibility of the dramatic text and performance to predictably influence the audience is exemplified in Briony herself who concedes the difficulty to clearly interpret in using conjunctive mood: had she observed a marriage proposal, "Briony *would* not have been surprised" (A 38; emphasis added). Briony is also hesitant to clearly signify Robbie's gesture: Robbie raises his hand "*as though* issuing a command" (A 38; emphasis added). Having recently experienced contradiction in Lola's interpretation of Arabella and observing but not understanding Cecilia's and Robbie's utterances, Briony admits that the orderly structure of her simplified reality cannot explain all individual utterances (A 39-40). She thus first contemplates "the *strangeness of the here and now*, of what passed *between people*, the ordinary people that she knew, and what power one could have over the other" (A 39; emphasis added). Briony approaches Bakhtin's appeal to consider the meaning of an individual utterance in "the here and now" of the social and historical context of the individual speaking subject (A 39), facing its complexity and disorder, its strangeness, its uniqueness (Bakhtin and Medvedev 121). Briony equally admits that each individual utterance is two-sided, embedded in the relationship "between people" (A 39). Without knowing the social and the historical of the **contextualised reciprocal utterance**, it is "easy […] to get everything wrong, completely wrong" (A 39). In her puzzlement over the incident by the fountain, Briony anticipates that reality is subjective: "the only messages were the ones that people sent" (A 40). Consequently, instead of still denying the complexity and coexistence of "two billion voices" (A 36), she wants to approach them in prose form: "only in a story could you enter these different minds and show how they had an equal value" (A 40). Briony, unsettled, first contemplates a literary text which Bakhtin calls a polyphonic novel, a novel in which many voices meet.

The **polyphonic (heteroglot) novel** engages in dialogue of large scale: "it responds to something, objects to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on" (Bakhtin and Vološinov 95). This has consequences for (the functions of) the narrator: "in the polyphonic novel we find not an objective, authorial

voice presenting the relations and dialogues between characters but a world in which all characters, and even the narrator him- or herself, are possessed of their own discursive consciousness" (Allen, Intertextuality 23). Briony is forced to reconsider her central position of author-narrator and, as a result, ponders to become "a hidden observer" (A 40); this would allow her to de-centre meaning and to "write the scene three times over, from three points of view" without judging the different versions (A 40). Without any perspective dominating the moment by the fountain, Briony even considers ambivalence: "None of these three was bad, nor were they particularly good. She need not judge. There did not have to be a moral" (A 40). Indeed, she does not only allow for ambivalence but welcomes it: "her excitement was in the prospect of freedom, of being delivered from the cumbrous struggle between good and bad, heroes and villains" (A 40). Her current unhappiness does not result from "wickedness and scheming" but from "confusion and misunderstanding" (A 40); to avoid such unhappiness for herself and her readers, Briony wants to "show separate minds, as alive as her own, struggling with the idea that other minds were equally alive" (A 40). This dialogical approach might raise the awareness that misunderstanding results from monological approaches to fiction and reality – if realised.

Briony, however, does not implement her dialogical vision. She "finds herself unable to deal with contradiction and imposes an interpretative 'order' on events" (Marcus 89). **Since the polyphonic novel challenges Briony's identity of a centralising author-narrator, Briony Tallis's narrator mediates that Briony, in binarily contrasting child and adult world, postpones her insight into complexity and dialogue to avoid (literary) mayhem.** Briony Tallis's narrator mediates Briony's Bakhtinian insight in conjunctive mood: "she *could* begin now" (A 41; emphasis); indeed, Briony Tallis's narrator clearly states that Briony's Bakhtinian insight is just a "first, weak imitation" (A 39). Thus Briony chooses c*omplexity* to signify *adult* – "this was not a fairy tale, this was the real, the adult world" (A 40) – and hence introduces a binary opposition to bind and exile complexity: reality is now divided into child and adult reality with ambivalence being restricted to adult reality. "The very complexity of her feelings confirmed Briony in her view that she was entering an arena of adult emotion" (A 113). Child reality, in contrast, is associated with the non-conflicting and resolvable plot of fairy tales (A 113). Consequently, although guessing the freedom of a writerly text (A 113), in binarily opposing childhood and adulthood and associating the former with a readerly fiction of typical plot and stock character and the latter with a writerly moment of polyphonic reality, Briony does not only avoid the possibility that childhood and adulthood are ambivalently related but she also denies *heteroglossia* to the child's utterance and reality; the reality of children can hence be systemised, the adult world cannot (A 113). This distinction is necessary for Briony

to maintain the order of her reality: identifying herself as a child who does not and does not have to understand ambivalent aspects of adult life (A 39), she justifies her decision to postpone her involvement with the complexity of adult emotion (A 41); consequently, although she has a first presentiment of the polyphonic novel, "now was not the time to begin" (A 41).

Briony Tallis's narrator even mediates that Briony has naturalised her sense of order and perceives it to be part of her natural individuality. Briony is entirely controlled by her powerful "sense of obligation" and her powerful "*instinct of order*" (A 41; emphasis added) – for Briony order is an *instinct* like breathing. If orderliness, a monological *cultural* construct, is *naturalised*, order can be maintained (against better knowledge) since nature is not disputable: despite her insight into complexity, Briony cannot act against her natural instinct, cannot "betray herself completely" (A 41); hence, instead of embracing ambivalence, "she must complete what she had initiated" (A 41), the performance of *The Trials of Arabella*. Briony Tallis's narrative strategy hence indicates the danger of naturalising the cultural which renders monological and monologising thoughts and actions hardly criticisable. By mediating Briony's writing future and thus indicating that Briony will finally overcome her sense of order in impartial psychological realism (A 41), Briony Tallis's readers are overtly encouraged to not accept Briony's orderliness as an instinctive behaviour but as a cultural construct which can change; indeed, they are, furthermore, overtly encouraged to scrutinise *their* naturalised sense of order when Briony Tallis's omniscient narrator explains that a future Briony will be forced into unity by her readers: "like all authors pressed by a repeated question, she felt obliged to produce a story line, a plot of her development that contained the moment when she became recognisably herself" (A 41). McEwan's narrative constellation of acting writership inspires the reading that Briony Tallis's readers have just read this moment only to be told that this moment is constructed. "It was *possible* that the contemplation of a crooked finger, the unbearable idea of other minds and the superiority of stories over plays were thoughts she had had on other days" (A 41; emphasis added). Briony Tallis's omniscient narrator remains intentionally evasive about "reality" which is a subjective construct of those writing and reading (literary) structures: "whatever actually happened drew its *significance* from her published work and would not have been remembered without it" (A 41; emphasis added). Briony Tallis's narrator suggests that the life of an author is not meaningful in itself; it *is signified* by literary structures, texts and audiences. Consequently, Briony Tallis's narrative strategy, exposing Briony's monological and monologising reading and writing processes and confronting her own readers and thus McEwan's readers, severely criticises both the simplifying author *and* reader: it is not sufficient to criticise Briony, her readers need to criticise themselves.

Briony's attempt to postpone complexity into adulthood to maintain simplicity is unsuccessful; the encounter between Cecilia and Robbie is too present and too personal for Briony to stage her readerly play – she is deeply unsettled and cannot complete what she has initiated (A 55). **Contextualising Briony's development within Bakhtinian theory, Briony Tallis's narrator mediates how Briony, unable to adjust the complexity of adult reality in the abstracted reality of her readerly text, enters a crisis of identity which results in an inability to communicate.** When Cecilia meets her distraught sister in the hallway (A 43-44), Briony is hesitant to unburden herself when prompted (A 44): "'The cousins are stupid. But it's not only that. It's…' She trailed away, doubtful whether she could confide her recent revelation" (A 44). Briony lacks trust (she would have to reveal her watching to fully explain her distress) and the necessary linguistic signs to properly express her crisis. Entirely lost and desperate, she hence reverts to an authority which has already proven to be unreliable.

> "The whole thing's a mistake. It's the wrong…" She snatched a breath and glanced away, a signal, Cecilia sensed, of a dictionary word about to have its first outing. "It's the wrong genre!" She pronounced it, as she thought, in the French way, monosyllabically, but without quite getting the tongue round the "r". "*Jean*?" Cecilia called after her. "What are you talking about?" (A 45)

Briony entirely fails to communicate when she, seeking help, refers to the authority of her childhood which, however, has lost its power of clarifying. While Briony's usage of the dictionary has before caused "only" hauntingly inept linguistic constructions (A 6), it now even prevents her from communicating. However, as Briony Tallis's narrator explains by anatomically describing Briony's attempt to pronounce the noun *genre*, the misunderstanding is not caused in the signified of the linguistic sign but by Briony's failure to produce the signifier in pronouncing the phonemes according to convention. Had Briony correctly pronounced *genre*, Cecilia who can be assumed to be familiar with the definition of *genre* (she has studied literature at Girton College: A 64), who contextualises Briony's gesture as a signal for a dictionary word (A 45) and who has watched Briony rip the poster announcing her play (A 44) would have been able to understand at least Briony's distress over her play. The phonemic misunderstanding between Cecilia and Briony challenges Bakhtin and Medvedev's claim that meaning is *only* attained in context (121); the conventionalised link between a fixed sequence of phonemes and an abstract meaning pre-exists the linguistic sign's contextualisation and *needs* to pre-exist its contextualisation to facilitate communication. However, in the moment their claim is challenged, contextualisation is asserted to be the necessary counterpart to abstract meaning; after all, it remains unclear if Briony is indeed referring to drama as the wrong genre.

On the one hand, considering that she is ripping the poster for her play, one might conclude that she is referring to drama and its performance; on the other hand, considering that she hesitates to reveal her "recent revelation" (A 44), one can equally conclude that she is referring to *either* the readerly (if she acknowledges complexity) *or* the writerly text (if she unwillingly acknowledges complexity) or, equally possible considering her confusion, both. Briony, however, although Cecilia asks for an explanation (A 45), does not attempt to clarify and contextualise her dictionary word and hobbles away "on soft white soles across the fiery gravel" (A 45). Briony Tallis's narrator suggests that Briony has lost her footing in a reality in which dictionaries and readerly texts do protect as little as thin soles on hot gravel. Unable to communicate her anger and anxiety, Briony physically vents her irritation on nettles; however, as Briony Tallis's narrator remarks, "it is hard to slash at nettles for long without a story imposing itself" (A 73). Briony's irritation needs to be defined to be justifiable and hence Briony, in emotional disarray but "grimly content" (A 73), is not slashing at nettles but at nettles which metaphorically represent the (in)capacities of Lola, Jackson and Pierrot, play writing and childhood in turn (A 73-75).

Contextualising Briony's development within Bakhtinian theory, Briony Tallis's narrator mediates how Briony, feeling unable to mend and to avoid the complexity of adult reality in the abstracted reality of her readerly text, enters a crisis of identity which does not only result in an inability to communicate but first in a readerly daydream and then in monologically-passively awaiting her challenge. Briony, unable to approach her crisis of identity in language, becomes physically violent not only to revenge herself upon those who have initiated her crisis but also to purge herself of those identities which are in crisis: the child, the playwright and the author of readerly texts – "flaying the nettles was becoming a self-purification" (A 74). The dramatic text and its performance, instead of keeping meaning and value in check, signifies the disarray which Briony fears, "the shallowness, the wasted time, the messiness of other minds, the hopelessness of pretending – in the garden of the arts, it was a weed and had to die" (A 74). Instead of influencing reality into order, a play manifests the disorder of reality: in its performance, some voices (like Lola's voice) dominate other voices which are less assertive (like Briony's voice). Briony, accordingly, dissociates herself from her identity of playwright (A 74). A novel, however, can give equal room and value to all ambivalent voices when it arranges complexity and makes each voice heard (A 40); consequently, when attacking her childhood (A 74), Briony seems to dissociate herself from her identity of the author who bears the responsibility to morally guide her readers in typical character and plot (A 74). She daydreams an "adult" identity of authorship: "she was a *grand*

master, lost to the *intricacies* of her art" (A 75; emphasis added). This **daydream** allows Briony to start handling her crisis of identity. While Briony, the "child" author, claims her family's approval, Briony, the "adult" author who deals with the complexity of life, will not have to ask for her readers' approval as they will freely and gratefully bestow it (A 75). Contemplating this prospect, Briony can resign herself to approaching complexity since it will earn her appreciation and thus sustain her individual subjectivity. However, the identity Briony is envisioning is still monologically structured: a grand master, who is superior in her talent and skill, is sacrosanct and, lost to her art, she is unapproachable and does not enter into dialogue with her readers' readings; instead, interruption by inferiors is indulgently accepted with "good grace" (A 75). Briony's approach to complexity thus allows a new form of elitist centring which denies complexity its subversive for equalising potential. Indeed, her daydream, from being an Olympic heroine winning the gold medal in nettle slashing to being a grand master dealing with complexity (A 75), is readerly in monologically centring Briony: "it had all been her – by her and about her" (A 76). Dialogue is absent from her approach to complexity. Consequently, coming back from her daydream, Briony has difficulty to realign with "what had been before and now seemed a little worse" (A 76). While this is the cost of all daydreaming (A 76), this coming back is particularly bad since it seems to seal the impossibility of being an authorial centre, the Author-God of the readerly text (Barthes, MA[45] 493).

Briony Tallis's narrator mediates that Briony has lost "her godly power of creation" (A 76), her ability to simplify and to explain the overwhelming complexity of reality, when she is faced with the inadequacy of her daydream: "her reverie, once rich in plausible details, had become a passing silliness before the hard mass of the actual" (A 76). Briony begins to grasp that she is not the centre of reality or fiction (A 76); returning from her daydream, "she was back in the world, not one she could make, but the one that had made her, and she felt herself shrinking" (A 76). Briony is a product of the social and historical world, one product of many, and her attempt to adjust reality and to resolve its intricacies in the readerly text is futile since reality cannot be adjusted, only fictionalised and "infantilised." However, despite this insight, Briony Tallis's narrator mediates that Briony does not yet dialogically involve with the world; instead, she **monologically-passively awaits her challenge**: "she would simply wait on the bridge, calm and obstinate, until events, real events, not her own fantasies, rose to her challenge, and dispelled her insignificance" (A 77). Briony is an "empty" signifier waiting to be signified;

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[45] Barthes, Roland. "La mort de l'auteur." 1968. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 491-95. Print.

while she concludes that she cannot make the world just so, she expects the adult world of complexity to make *her* just so.

Unfortunately for Robbie but fortunately for Briony, the adult world of complexity is a world of taboos which are meant to keep complexity in check. **The event which rises to Briony's challenge and dispels her insignificance is Robbie's letter**: "In my dreams I kiss your cunt, your sweet wet cunt. In my thoughts I make love to you all day long" (A 86).[46] Robbie's lines, intended to give vent to his sexual attraction for Cecilia without forcing her into any form of action (A 85-86), are addressed to Cecilia although she is not meant to read it (A 94-95). Consequently, according to Bakhtin and Medvedev's concept of the individual utterance, only Cecilia can understand Robbie's lines, "a unit of meaning whose force and colour was derived from the single repeated word" (A 111), the linguistic sign *cunt*. Indeed, Cecilia, when reading and contextualising Robbie's letter within their social and historical background, can explain their awkward behaviour of late in a *mutual* sexual attraction: "*Of course, of course*. How had she not seen it? Everything was explained" (A 111). While both Cecilia and Robbie have been wondering at their actions, have misunderstood and felt misunderstood (cf. Cecilia's and Robbie's perspectives of the same event, e.g. A 27 and A 84), they finally share an additional context which explains and illuminates their individual utterances. The word *cunt*, a linguistic sign which is isolated in a dictionary, brings "force and colour" in a "unit of meaning" (A 111). Although Cecilia is perplexed by Robbie's "confession," she is not shocked but suddenly sighted: "*of courses, of course*" (A 111). Robbie's letter, however, is not only read by Cecilia but also by Briony.

Reading Robbie's letter and the linguistic sign *cunt*, Briony re-examines her reading of Cecilia's and Robbie's actions by the fountain and, concluding that her inability to understand did not arise from intricacies but from her failure to match Cecilia's and Robbie's actions to the right structure, is unburdened from complexity. Briony, still hoping to understand the incident by the fountain, reads Robbie's letter because "it

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[46] Ingersoll intriguingly explores Robbie's usage of the signifier *cunt* as a Barthesian *déjà lu* in the context of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (249-50). Richard Pedot, observing Briony's inability / unwillingness to speak and spell the word, argues that this signifier becomes the origin of Briony Tallis's *Atonement*: "the enigma of the word is the source of writing – inarticulation is a *call* for articulation – but Briony is as yet unable to translate it into an appropriate narrative, her memory and her writing being still shaped by fairy tale or nursery rhyme" (154). According to Pedot, Briony can erase her first crime of stealing the letter "not by dismissing word and letter from her memory, but by rewriting them from the original writer's or addressee's perspective" (154) – which she does and thus establishes "rewriting as working-through" (158). Both Ingersoll and Pedot analyse the signifier *cunt* as central to Briony Tallis's *Atonement*; however, in secondary literature the signifier is usually paraphrased or simply ignored – proving the power of the taboo which is circulated by non-mentioning. Analysing the taboo word *cunt* on several pages within my dissertation might cause a frown but, writing about a writer who constantly writes against taboo, I think it necessary to continue Ingersoll's and Pedot's approaches of de-tabooing the signifier *cunt* in academic writing.

was right, it was essential, for her to know everything" (A 113). Although she feels guilty of reading the letter against propriety (A 113), in Briony's mind, propriety is subordinated to control – only if she knows and understands, she will be *in* control. When reading Robbie's letter, however, Briony (mis)understands: she (mis)understands that she was unable to understand Cecilia's and Robbie's utterances while trying to relate their utterances to the "wrong" structure (love across social boundaries). Having read Robbie's letter, she can now relate them to the "right" structure: Robbie is sexually attracted to Cecilia. Indeed, Briony "*appropriates* a letter with tremendous power to damage those involved in this textual exchange" (Ingersoll 252; emphasis added). Appropriating Robbie's letter, it restores order; in the light of her new knowledge, the sequence of gestures which Briony has observed turns from illogical to logical. When Briony considers both Robbie and the sequence by the fountain afresh (A 113), she can classify him and her sister in the "correct" stereotypes: not woodcutter and princess but villain and damsel in distress (A 113-14). Briony, aware of the taboo status of sexuality[47] (A 114 and A 119), is vindicated in her view that Robbie is a threat to her sister.

Consequently, when sitting down to write her next narrative, Briony, having been "right" all the time, does not have to meet her recently formulated, momentarily soothing but actually burdening, insight to show the complexity of separate minds without judging them (A 40). Instead, **Briony introduces typical plot and stock character into the adult world.** "Surely it was not *too childish* to say there had to be a story; and this was the story of a man whom everybody liked, but about whom the heroine always had her doubts, and finally she was able to reveal that he was the incarnation of evil" (A 115; emphasis added). Briony will exile ambivalence and clearly judge. She is not beyond "nursery-tale ideas as good and evil" and "could never forgive Robbie his disgusting mind" (A 115). Although Briony is aware of an alternative approach to art which she has grasped in her recent experience, she is supported by social taboo to act despite her insights to minimise "the threat, or the confusion of feeling contradictory things" (A 116); as long as Briony's sense of order is felt to be instinctive, as long as understanding is felt to be essential for survival, "order must be imposed" (A 115). Robbie's letter allows Briony to match and hence to understand and thus she is justified in her patterns of order and classification – human beings can be clearly sorted, judged into good and evil:

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[47] Erin O'Dwyer analyses the signifier *cunt* within Lacanian theory and observes that "with the word 'cunt', Robbie commits his only crime" but "a crime against society, against proper protocol" (186). According to her reading, "the use of the word 'cunt' marks the entry of the Real" which "traumatizes the subject (Briony) and the Big Other of society, exposing the fallibility of the social constructs that the [Tallis] family clings to" (188); at the same time, however, the signifier transcends social constructs: "it is the use of the Real that turns this novel into a political novel" (189). Dobrogoszcz, too, analyses the signifier *cunt* within Lacanian theory and focuses on the word as *point de captiton*, a place where signified and signifier are knotted together (148-50).

"Briony, obsessed by form, blinds herself against terms of reference other than her own" (de la Concha 202). In consequence, "the narrative she fashions around her life and imposes on others […] works to dismiss anything unknown by carefully obscuring the mystery of otherness" (O'Hara 78). Robbie, having written his sexually explicit letter, is easily dismissed into stereotypical signification to be handled in his "otherness."

While Robbie's letter and the linguistic sign *cunt* unburden Briony from complexity, Robbie is destructively signified within Briony's simplified narrative. When Lola confirms Briony's perspective and even finds the appropriate linguistic sign to classify Robbie, the possibility of having misread Cecilia and Robbie's encounter is finally excluded: "A maniac. The word had refinement, and the weight of medical diagnosis. All these years she had known him and that was what he had been" (A 119). Robbie is – repeatedly and reactively – clearly and destructively signified; contemplating her day and writing while searching for the twins, Briony denies Robbie his first name and labels him *the maniac* within her thoughts (cf. Chapter 13). Tellingly, the signified *maniac* is turned into a transcendental signified. "Lola's word stirred the dust of other words around it – man, mad, axe, attack, accuse – and confirmed the diagnosis" (A 158). While the signified *maniac* turns into "a syntagmatic chain of signifiers" (L. Wells 104), it does not relativise signification but signifies concepts which only refer back to the centralising concept of *maniac*: "the filaments of connotation give weight to the word" (Serpell 85). Georges Letissier, analysing trauma in *Atonement*, argues that "the term 'maniac', used at regular intervals to evoke the girl's obsession with Robbie's presumed sexual deviance, has eerie connotation since it ironically points to Briony's own manic quest" (220). Caught within her narrative, the imploring repetition of the word signals Briony's "implacable determination to intrude upon some unsavoury scene that would confirm her verdict" (220; also Wolf 300). Indeed, Robbie's signification will justify Briony's narrative of Robbie's crime: "as far as she was concerned, everything *fitted*; the terrible present *fulfilled* the recent past" (A 168; emphasis added). Her narrative is – *naturally* – beyond doubt: "he was a maniac after all" (A 168). Werner Wolf, therefore, concludes: "im Einklang mit poststrukturalistischen Theorien von der Macht der Sprache, [können die Leser*innen] nun genau verfolgen wie mit geradezu unheimlicher Konsequenz aus Kategorien fiktionaler Literatur […] eine Realitätskonstruktion mit fatalen Folgen entsteht" (300). Briony is caught within the fitting and fulfilling logic of her narrative – a narrative in which the term *maniac* is not the only transcendental signified.

Briony's extensive engagement with the word *cunt* is striking. **While Briony circles the linguistic sign *cunt* via its context, Briony Tallis raises the linguistic sign *cunt* into the**

powerful position of a transcendental signified which centres Briony's thoughts and actions. When Briony considers the word *cunt*, Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that "*naturally*, she had never heard the word spoken, or seen it in print, or come across it in asterisks" (A 114; emphasis added). The adverb *naturally* clearly mediates that the taboo of sexuality, which is a cultural construct created and distributed by various ideologies, is naturalised and thus non-negotiable; therefore, "no one in her presence had ever referred to the word's existence, and what was more, no one, not even her mother, had ever referred to the existence of that part of her to which – Briony was certain – the word referred" (A 114). Although sexuality is tabooed, Briony knows which part of female anatomy the word *cunt* is signifying (A 114). Pedot emphasises the ambivalence of this knowing unknowingness: the signifier "stands out, at once opaque and significant in its dramatic materiality" (153). According to Saussurean linguistics, Briony's accurate reading of the word *cunt* is unaccountable; having never heard or read the word, she cannot know the conventionalised link between the linguistic sign's signifier (either the sequence of phonemes or the sequence of graphemes) and its signified (a synonym for *vagina*). Briony, however, knows which part of Cecilia Robbie is interested in for, as related by Briony Tallis's narrator, "the context helped" (A 114). If one considers the **specific context** of Robbie's letter, this observation is not convincing because, reading the letter without knowing the word *cunt*, the signifier might equally signify a different part of Cecilia's body, for example her lips; indeed, in the context of kissing this would have been the obvious conclusion since Robbie's usage of the idiom *to make love* cannot be known to Briony in a meaning beyond *courting* if sexuality is tabooed around her. However, Briony reads the letter within its **larger context**; her confrontation with Cecilia's "shocking near-nakedness" in which she was apparently forced by Robbie (A 41) and her relief when Cecilia does not take off her underwear (A 39) indicate how Briony correctly concludes the female body part which the signifier signifies.

Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises, furthermore, that "the context helped, but more than that, the word was at one with its meaning" (A 114). According to Saussure, a linguistic sign can never be "at one with its meaning" – there is always a gap between signifier and signified, even if this gap is obscured in convention; however, "allowing" Briony to close the gap between *signifiant* and *signifié* of the linguistic sign *cunt*, Briony Tallis raises it into the powerful position of a **transcendental signified** and centres Briony's immediate thoughts and actions (e.g. her regression to the readerly text) and her future thoughts and actions (e.g. her incrimination of Robbie) around this signified. A transcendental signified is created by those who want to control and restrict meaning and thus "its own meaning is not dependent upon any

other sign" (Allen, Intertextuality 228); consequently, a transcendental signified is "at one with its meaning" (A 114). Being a construct of ideological thought, it provides stability when all thoughts and actions of an individual subject eventually refer to the transcendental signified. Although shocked, Briony is stabilised by the transcendental signified *cunt* since it affirms her interpretation of Robbie and thus does not only restore order but also initiates and controls her future actions (A 114). Since Briony cannot know the vulgarity associated with the word *cunt*, it is its implication of sexuality which disgusts her. Briony considers sexuality a threatening aspect of human existence for it is part of the unruly moment of natural individuality which Briony identifies in Robbie; while ideological discourse naturalises cultural constructs like order to exercise control, it equally taboos natural aspects which are difficult to control and thus threaten authorised norm: "That the word had been written by a man confessing to an image in his mind, confiding a lonely preoccupation, disgusted her profoundly. […] Something *irreducibly human*, or male, *threatened the order* of their household, and Briony knew that unless she helped her sister, they would all suffer" (A 114; emphasis added). Briony, already suspicious of Robbie, can finally and with clear conscience attribute her confusion and unhappiness, the dooming disorder, to Robbie who violates the taboo of sexuality and thus social law and order; indeed, Briony's aversion to sexuality results in her falsely accusing him of the sexual assault on Lola (A 181).

Emphasising the impact the word *cunt* has on Briony, Briony Tallis raises the linguistic sign *cunt* into the powerful position of a transcendental signified by creating a graphemic onomatopoeia. Briony perceives the word *cunt* as "almost onomatopoeic" (A 114). According to Saussure, only an onomatopoeia functions beyond convention (102): an onomatopoeic linguistic sign is not arbitrary since the sequence of phonemes composing its signifier represents the sound the sequence is meant to signify, for example animal sounds (102). Since Briony has never heard the word *cunt* spoken, her onomatopoeic impression refers to the word's graphemes <cunt>: "The smooth-hollowed, partly enclosed forms of its first three letters were as clear as a set of anatomical drawings. Three figures huddling at the foot of the cross" (A 114). While the curved graphemes <c>, <u> and <n> indicate the anatomical form of the vagina itself, the grapheme <t> implies the symbol ♀ for femaleness. This detailed graphemic description serves ambivalent functions. On the one hand, Briony Tallis's readers are forced to visualise the linguistic sign *cunt* in their minds and thus to feel the powerful impact it has on Briony; like Briony, they cannot escape this dominant transcendental signified.[48] In

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[48] This passage is brilliantly directed by Joe Wright in his adaptation of *Atonement* (2007): the audience, like Briony and the reader of the novel, cannot "escape" the word *cunt* since Robbie's typewriter is shown in extreme

secondary literature, it is hence often argued that Briony Tallis's narrative strategy is meant to justify Briony's thoughts and actions (Margaronis 146-48; Müller-Wood 150; Wolf 306); indeed, it can be concluded that Briony Tallis, transcending the linguistic sign *cunt* beyond gap and convention by introducing a form of graphemic onomatopoeia, means to excuse her protagonist's future thoughts and actions. On the other hand, however, the graphemic onomatopoeia challenges the taboo of (female) sexuality: female sexuality is made approachable when Briony Tallis's narrator, comparing the first three letters to "anatomical drawings" and aligning them with the symbol for femaleness (A 114), implies female nature as an object of scientific study. It can also be argued, therefore, that Briony Tallis, showing her protagonist's monological and monologising thoughts and actions, means to raise her readers' awareness of the danger which lies in cultural constructs and taboos when they are naturalised *against* nature in order to determine the individual subject's thoughts and actions; after all, Briony's thoughts and actions are determined by the transcendental signified *cunt* with fatal consequences for Cecilia and Robbie. Indeed, intending to arm her readers against being determined by ideological construct and its transcendental signified, Briony Tallis even implies how to de-centre the transcendental signified *cunt* based on the (post)Saussurean theory of the anagram.

Briony Tallis raises the linguistic sign *cunt* into the powerful position of a transcendental signified, which centres Briony's thoughts and actions, only to de-transcendentalise it based on the (post)Saussurean theory of the anagram in the context of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. "The word: she tried to prevent it *sounding* in her thoughts, and yet it danced through them obscenely, a *typographical* demon, juggling vague, insinuating anagrams – an uncle and a nut, the Latin for next [*secundus*], an old English king attempting to turn back the tide [Cnut, in power from 1016 to 1035]" (A 114; emphasis added). The transcendental signified *cunt* and the taboo it implies are in control of Briony, phonetically and graphemically forming itself in her mind: on the one hand, such control is appreciated since it restores order in clearly signifying Robbie and justifying Briony's actions; on the other hand, the word *cunt* is unthinkable and unspeakable (in public) (A 119 and A 120). The transcendental signified *cunt* might have restored order, but sexuality remains a taboo; thus Briony tries to ban it from her thoughts. It is, however, omnipresent; when she tries not to let it sound in her mind, it suggests typographical anagrams and hence demonically occupies those sequences of

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close-up when the word *cunt* is typed; thus it is menacingly forced into the audience's field of vision. The menacing impact of the word is, furthermore, audibly reinforced when each grapheme is not only shown to be typed but accompanied by the forceful click of a keystroke. The word *cunt* becomes the centre of attention without Briony once mentioning it – exactly as in the novel.

graphemes which contain variations of the graphemes <cunt>; these signifiers are usually matched with very different signifieds, now they all signify the transcendental signified *cunt*. Even worse, the transcendental signified phonetically contaminates Briony's childhood: "rhyming words took their form from children's books" (A 114). However, in the context of intertextual theory, Briony Tallis's decision to instance anagrams implies the **(post)Saussurean theory of the anagram**. Analysing Greek and Latin poetry, Saussure argued that "groups of letters and phonemes (sounds), such as the first and last letters of consecutive lines, arranged themselves into deep textual units, often the names of Gods and heroes" (Allen, Intertextuality 43). On the one hand, this approach reinforces the reading of the word *cunt* as a transcendental signified; according to Saussure's theory, an anagram often indicates a God or hero (transcendental signifieds par excellence) which structure and centre the meaning of a (literary) text. On the other hand, poststructuralist theorists, especially Kristeva and Derrida, thought Saussure's approach an anticipation of their own ideas on *de-transcendentalising*. Saussure's work on the anagram "foreshadows their own work in the manner in which signifiers in the text exist in relation to chains of further signifiers, rather than in relation to transparent and stable signifieds" (Allen, Intertextuality 43). While Saussure focused his research on phonemic and graphemic combinations indicating one (transcendental) signified, Kristeva, combining Saussure's theory with the Bakhtinian theory of *heteroglossia* (MDR 89), implies a theory of the anagram which allows for unlimited meaning if the concept of the anagram is extended to the signified (MDR 89). An anagram is, in this approach, not only a transposition of signifiers (a sequence of phonemes or graphemes) but a transposition of signifieds (a sequence of meanings): if a sequence of meanings is newly combined, within a text or between texts, these meanings are combined into a new signifier which signifies new meaning.

An anagrammatic arrangement which initiates the de-transcendentalising of the linguistic sign *cunt* is the combination of its signified with the signified ***Lady Chatterley's Lover***. Readers familiar with the content and publication history of D. H. Lawrence's novel, which was banned because of explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse and the excessive appropriation of the words *fuck* and *cunt*, might read Robbie's letter and the linguistic sign *cunt* as a moment in which natural sexual attraction challenges, even destroys socially constructed taboo and class boundary (Robbie and Cecilia in relation to Mellors and Constance). This reading is encouraged by Robbie's attempt to evoke for Cecilia "a private moment of exuberance, a passing impatience with convention" when illegally reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (A 132). Such a reading de-centres the linguistic sign *cunt*: while the publication history of the novel makes Briony's aversion to sexuality understandable in socio-historical context, it

equally emphasises the subversive idea within the linguistic sign *cunt*. Sympathy is, consequently, initiated for both Briony, acting according to social convention, and Robbie, acting against it. Depending on the cultural constructs and taboos Briony Tallis's and thus McEwan's readers have accepted or rejected, some readers will share Briony's disgust when reading Robbie's letter, some might appreciate its liberating potential. Accordingly, the question "And what did the word contain?" is both Briony's and Briony Tallis's question (A 115) and thus an equally centralising and de-centralising question: depending on its context, the linguistic sign *contain* signifies both *to bind* and *to hold*. Briony's question What does the word *bind*? will start the monological reading of the word *cunt* as transcendental signified. C. Namwali Serpell, analysing "the little white square that contained the letter that contained the word" (A 115), indicates the "sense of boundedness" implied in this description (106). Briony Tallis's question What does the word *hold*? starts the dialogical approach of de-centring. The word *cunt*, therefore, *binds* meaning when it is monologised by author and/or reader, but it *holds* an infinity of meaning when it is dialogised by writer and/or reader. Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, aims at her readers' emancipation from monologue into dialogue; thus she does not only present the powerful, even fatal impact, transcendental signified and taboo have on her protagonist's thoughts and actions but she also encourages her readers in combining and thus rereading signifieds. Consequently, in the context of intertextual theory, Briony Tallis's narrative strategy is meant to explain, not to justify, Briony's thoughts and actions and to raise her readers' awareness of the consequences of monologising structures in society; indeed, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, undermines convention in challenging one of the greatest taboos of (English) language and society: the linguistic sign *cunt*.

Briony Tallis's intention to explain the working of an ideologically determined mind becomes most obvious in the description of Briony's false statement, evolving around the linguistic sign *cunt* and her narrative of logic, which is a condensed insight into monologised and monologising thoughts and the potentiating momentum of monologue. Briony, unable to see in the darkness of the countryside (A 169), understands that her conclusion, drawn from Robbie's written and physical "assault" on Cecilia and the impression that the rapist's size and body moving is familiar (A 169), requires sensual proof: hence, instead of being proven right by *seeing*, she hopes to be proven right by *hearing* Lola: "Briony wanted her so say his name. To seal the crime, frame it with the victim's curse, close his fate with the *magic of naming*" (A 165; emphasis added). Initially, she poses an open question, a question which is not implying an answer: "Lola. Who was it?" (A 165) However,

when this open question remains unanswered and Lola's silence is threatening Briony's logical narrative and the process of naming, of signifying the real and the truth, Briony, unable to think beyond her narrative of maniac, becomes suggestive in her questioning: "It was Robbie, wasn't it?" (A 166) Lola is – at first – not manipulated into the "right" answer, though, and thus Briony's suggestive question turns reply and seeing is replaced by knowing. "Briony said it again, this time without the trace of a question. It was a statement of fact. 'It was Robbie'" (A 166). She does not even consider an alternative offender. "The truth was in the *symmetry*, which was to say, it was founded in *common sense*" (A 169; emphasis added). Her **narrative of logic** replaces her sense of sight and thus her access to the real. Hence Finney summarises that "fiction determines fact for her" (Oblivion 79) and Birke concludes that "perception is always governed by preconceived ideas" (179). Knowing within simplified structure instead of seeing the perpetrator (A 169-70), Briony's thought is telling of a monologically determined mind: her narrative is fitted and fulfilled in constructed symmetry (villain and damsel in distress) and naturalising common sense. "So when she said, over and over again, I saw him, she meant it, and was perfectly honest, as well as passionate" (A 169). Nevertheless, having realised a difference in seeing and knowing when watching Cecilia and Robbie's encounter by the fountain, Briony feels slightly uneasy: "She would have preferred to qualify, or complicate, her use of the word 'saw'. Less like seeing, more like knowing" (A 170). However, neither does she seriously try to express this qualification nor is she tolerated to (A 169). Indeed, Briony is pushed by the police into "either/or grammar" (Serpell 89), the either/or of binary opposition: "*Either* she saw, *or* she did not see. There lay nothing in between; they did not say as much, but their brusqueness implied it" (A 170; emphasis added). Letissier observes that, among official authority, "each utterance has to be neatly classified into clear-cut, binary categories" (219). Hence Briony is not allowed to deviate from her statement, let alone withdraw it: "the burden of consistency was pressed upon her" (A 169). She is pushed as she tried to push Lola: first she faces an open question (A 180), then a suggestive question (A 181), then a reply: "they were impassive whenever she wavered, and firmly recalled her to her earliest statements" (A 170). Even physical facts are altered to fit Briony's narrative of *seeing* Robbie: "there was enough light, it was established, from stars, and from the cloud base reflecting street lights from the nearest town" (A 170). Although Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that Briony was never pressured and bullied in word (A 170), the monological is an underlying social force: in an institutional context, "so many decent people could not be wrong" (A 170).

Attempting to please and be appreciated (A 169) and afraid of becoming the reason for disorder instead of restoring order (A 170), Briony is caught in the **potentiating momentum**

of monologue – monologue produces further monologue: "Her doubts could be neutralised only by plunging in deeper. By clinging tightly to what she believed she knew, *narrowing her thoughts*, reiterating her testimony, she was able to keep from mind the damage she only dimly sensed she was doing" (A 170; emphasis added). Indeed, the monological works even in dialogically minded characters. Briony Tallis's narrator repeatedly implies that Cecilia and Robbie, when accusing Danny Hardman, are determined by normative opinions of the social class system (A 27 and A 345-47); no individual subject is entirely free of ideological determination (Bentley 154; de la Concha 204; and Puschmann-Nalenz 192), and "McEwan subtly suggests the invidious nature of a class system that permeates even those seeking to reverse its effects" (Finney, Oblivion 76). Hence James Phelan, considering those readers blaming Briony Tallis with a self-serving narrative, suggests a more moderate and less emotional reading of *Atonement*: "McEwan is asking us to understand and even be sympathetic toward Briony's misjudgements, even as he leaves no doubt that they are egregiously erroneous and likely to have major negative consequences for Cecilia and Robbie" (Experiencing Fiction 120; also Birke 188). Briony Tallis's narrator is neither a justifying instance nor a blaming instance (Jacobi 64-65) but an explaining instance in laying bare Briony's mind: showing, on the one hand, "how Briony's transgression was overdetermined" (Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 119) and, on the other hand, "how difficult it was for Briony to change her narrative once she had articulated it" (Experiencing Fiction 119). However, while Head argues that "the chief task in reading the novel – and certainly in rereading it – is to assess the degree to which the older Briony, as the writing persona, achieves a position of disinterestedness in her narrative perspective" and "to assess what this might contribute to the idea of atonement" (169), disinterestedness must not necessarily be the central issue of a (re)reading; instead, a (re)reading might equally assess to what extent Briony Tallis raises an understanding for destructive structures: in her function of acting writer for McEwan, she relentlessly exposes and criticises monological and monologising and thus destructive structures in the individual subject and in society. Her atonement is raising consciousness in taking a position against naturalising processes, monological ignorance and ideological oblivion.

Writing a novel about a writing process, Briony Tallis meets the reader's common expectation of authorship when she produces a moment in which her writing protagonist "became recognisably herself" (A 41); at the same time, however, she employs her narrator to quite plainly remind her readers that such a moment is a theoretical construct originating in a reader's wish for coherence (A 41). Briony Tallis thus attempts to encourage her readers'

critical self-reflection: while summarising her writing protagonist's development into one moment, within this moment she mediates the disastrous consequences of monological and monologising thinking, reading and writing structures which unify complexity into coherence.

When observing Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain without knowing the social and historical context of their communication or being the addressee of their visual utterances (*parole*) and thus unable to relate these to her abstract system of reality (*langue*), Briony has first insights into the possibilities of the polyphonic novel; the disorder of ambivalence and the impossibility to avoid or mend complexity unsettles her into a crisis of identity which, on the one hand, renders her helpless for speechless and, on the other hand, leads her to understand that she is unable to adjust deficiencies through fiction. However, Briony, whose sense of order is naturalised and thus felt to be essential for survival, is eager to restore order and does not hesitate to classify Robbie when his letter offers her the possibility to relate the sequence by the fountain to the order of a logical and simplified structure; in monologically judging Robbie into the category of villain, Briony overcomes her crisis of identity and testifies against Robbie based on the logic of her typical plot. Briony Tallis, introducing a graphemic onomatopoeia and anagrams within her protagonist's thoughts, raises the linguistic sign *cunt* into the position of a transcendental signified around which Briony's thoughts and actions are centred. However, considering the (post)Saussurean theory of the anagram, the transcendental signified *cunt* is introduced only to be de-transcendentalised in Kristeva's concept of poetic language which focuses on the signified as signifier; practically, Briony Tallis encourages her readers to de-centre the linguistic sign *cunt* in combination with the signified *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Applying Saussurean and Bakhtinian theory to *Atonement*, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, mediates the damaging consequence of monologue and furthers her readers' emancipation in engaging with a linguistic sign which is one of the greatest taboos in English language.

Briony's insight into the polyphonic and her reversion into a false statement implies the strength of mind it requires to forsake order and to dare dialogue. However, Briony Tallis, scrutinising monologised and monologising and hence destructive structures in the individual subject and in society, mediates that the authoritative word is not an option. Consequently, in the next subchapter, it will be analysed how the destructive quality of Emily's monologically determined mind causes her daughter's suffering; how Cecilia, torn between two ideological discourses (her mother's expectations of femininity vs. feminine independence), is unable to overcome her discursive restriction; and how Robbie, understanding the monological structure of the social, attempts to counter institutional authority.

3.2.2 Emily, Cecilia and Robbie[49]

Bakhtin distinguishes between *authoritative discourse* and *internally persuasive discourse*; the former is the monological word of ideology which *silences* the other and *veils* the word's heteroglossia, the latter is the dialogical word of ambivalence which *involves* the other and *unveils* the word's heteroglossia. Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs three characters which engage in Bakhtin's dialogue to varying degrees. Emphasising the restrictions of monological and the possibilities of dialogical thoughts and actions, Briony Tallis chooses her omniscient narrator to show, contrast and comment on the externally authoritative thoughts and actions of Emily (3.2.2.1 Emily), the internally persuasive thoughts and actions of Robbie (3.2.2.3 Robbie) and Cecilia's thoughts and actions which mediate both the narrowing of monologue and the difficulty to withstand such narrowing (3.2.2.2 Cecilia).

According to Bakhtin and Vološinov, each word (thought and action) needs to be understood in the specific *ideological context* of its social and historical situatedness: "We never say or hear *words*, we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. *Words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behaviour or ideology*" (70). Hence Emily's, Cecilia's and Robbie's words are monological and/or dialogical responses to ideological structures in society. Choosing different focalisers to construct the first part of her novel, Briony Tallis mediates that Emily, Cecilia and Robbie associate different, even *ambivalent contents and meanings* with the same (linguistic) sign or cultural construct, for example with the concept of *motherhood*: while *mother* is an authoritative and excluding word within Emily's monological concept of femininity, Cecilia and Robbie are internally persuaded by their notion of motherhood which is including instead of excluding upcoming identities for women.

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[49] The textual analyses of this subchapter and subchapter 3.4.1 Briony and Emily, Cecilia and Robbie were partly published in

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Forsche*nde* Frauen offers postgraduate students of Bamberg University to publicly introduce and then publish part of their PhD research project.

3.2.2.1 Emily

Emily's identities of *mother*, *housewife* and *hostess* are defined by the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity; indeed, conveying Emily's perspective, Briony Tallis's narrator implies that Emily has internalised the feminine norm of her parents' generation. Emily is introduced when she retreats to her darkened bedroom to forestall a migraine (A 63). Her beginning migraine is metaphorically pictured in the form of a sleeping predator which must not be provoked into awaking and attacking: in a corner of her brain (A 63), Emily feels "a heaviness, the inert body weight of some curled and sleeping animal" (A 63); once this animal is awake, it will attack and move "from the peripheries to the centre" where "the knifing pains" will "obliterate all thought" (A 63). Significantly, the predator is aroused by a specific kind of thought: her daughter's higher education and her sister's divorce (A 65). When she thinks of her daughter's higher education, for example, she feels "the black-furred creature begin to stir" and changes the subject (A 65). Emily avoids those ideas which challenge her Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity; inconvenient for dissenting thoughts would make her incapable of acting within her proper identities of *mother*, *housewife* and *hostess*: "there would be no chance of dining with Leon and the family tonight" (A 63), no chance of representing her family in the absence of her husband (A 70) and welcoming Leon's friend (A 70). Emily, whose education has been informed by Victorian values of sternness, restriction and economy (A 50 and A 64), maintains those customs associated with the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity in Middle class *public* and *private spheres*.[50] Having internalised the values of Victorian femininity introduced by her parents' generation, Emily confuses nature and nurture (Barthes, M 690) and hence believes *her* feminine values beyond negotiation. The new ideas represented in her daughter (educated woman in the position to have her financial independence) and sister (divorce initiated by a housewife and mother) are unnatural and thus abnormal and, consequently, simply ignored: in order to avoid the pain of the migraine, the pain of disorder, Emily does not "let Hermione into her thoughts" (A 65); indeed, divorce is *unthinkable* to Emily who sustains her Victorian identities of *mother* and *housewife* and strongly disapproves of her sister who has never adhered to their parents' norms (A 65). According to Emily, divorce does not befit a woman and neither does higher education; hence Emily harshly criticises her daughter for having read English literature at Girton College:

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[50] Detailed introductions to ideological contents of the Victorian Age, including the distinction between public and private sphere and the "proper" identities and values associated with this binary opposition, are provided in *Key Concepts in Victorian Literature* written by Sean Purchase; *The Victorian Literature Handbook* edited by Alexandra Warwick and Martin Willis; and *Victorian Literature: A Sourcebook* (including annotated influential texts published in the Victorian Age) edited by John Plunkett and colleagues.

while higher education might make her, at worst, an "impossible prospect" for marriage (A 64), higher education is at least counterproductive to her finding a husband and hence her function in society. "They weren't even awarding girls proper degrees.[51] When Cecilia came home in July with her finals' result – the nerve of the girl to be disappointed with it! – she had no job or skill and still had a husband to find and *motherhood to confront*" (A 65; emphasis added). The two major duties of a woman (marriage and motherhood) are clearly defined by Emily and, being justified in her position by official university regulation, she devalues the (intellectual) experiences Cecilia made at Girton College (A 64-65); in consequence of Cecilia's "pointless" higher education, Emily considers her daughter "too wrapped up in herself, too much the intellectual to bother with children" (A 66), to perform simple errands (A 67) and her duties as hostess (A 70). Following the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity, it is impossible for Emily to accept a subjectivity which is comprised of *mother*, *housewife* **and** *intellectual*; she is shrinking from this subverting, predatory ambivalence and its (physical) consequences in avoiding inconvenient thought about both her sister and her daughter: "she was not in pain, not yet, but retreating before its threat" (A 63).

Emily, having internalised the feminine norm of her parents' generation, becomes incapable of thought and action when she fears the disorder of ambivalence originating in alternative approaches to femininity. Emily is afraid that the pain caused by ambivalence will "obliterate all thought" (A 63) and make her incapable of acting in line with her duties (A 63 and A 70). Briony Tallis's narrator, however, clearly indicates that it is not ambivalence but Emily's *fear of ambivalence* which makes her incapable of thinking and acting. Upgrading Emily's fear to terror by associating mortal danger, Briony Tallis's narrator mediates that the attempt to conserve a status quo means permanent anxiety of its disintegration: Emily is "held at knife point" by ambivalence (A 64); afraid to make a move, to have a thought which might destroy order, Emily's "only hope was in keeping still" (A 64). Hence it is not ambivalence which *will keep* Emily from thinking and acting; it is her fear of ambivalence which *already keeps* Emily from thinking and acting. Emily, fearing ambivalence, eventually drifts away, "not quite into sleep, but *out of thought* into *invalid nullity*" (A 66; emphasis added). Briony Tallis's construction of Emily implies the impossibility to ultimately avoid ambivalence in a conscious state of existence (subjectivity) when Emily's attempt to evade ambivalent thought wipes out *all* thought and action; those caught within monological structures will never awaken into the full potential of subjectivity. Emily, living within ideological structures, prefers thought and

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[51] Women attending the University of Cambridge "had to wait until 1948 before they were given membership of the University" (McWilliams-Tullberg 13).

action specified for her. Consequently, she is nostalgic for the duties and routines of motherhood (bathtime, teatime, bedtime) which, when she was able to exercise them (A 66), always comforted her with the "soothing" and "fixing" order they established (A 68). According to Emily, motherhood, unlike higher education, is natural and thus existential to a woman's existence (A 71); hence her love for Briony is rather self-interested (A 71): "to love her was to be soothed" (A 65). Indeed, being a woman determined by the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity, marriage and motherhood are the only possibilities for Emily to have a valuable position in society; however, with her husband being constantly absent (A 70) and with Leon independent, Briony is Emily's only and fading self-worth; unsurprisingly, Emily desires to have another child to maintain order and her function in society (A 68). Emily's concept of motherhood is rather restricted, though: "she would attend to her nephews only out of duty" since "they were not her own" (A 69). She is averse to discussing or rethinking her concept of motherhood which is beyond compromise: "it was as simple as that" (A 69) – any complexity of and within motherhood is ignored. Consequently, although she severely disapproves of her sister for forsaking her children (A 69), she is unwilling to take her sister's place and be a mother to children who, according to Emily, cannot be classified: "they had diluted their identities, for she had never found this missing triangle of flesh" (A 69). Jackson and Pierrot, who can hardly be distinguished, defy Emily's wish for order and are hence unwanted. Briony Tallis, however, contrasting Emily and Cecilia in their motherly behaviour, harshly criticises Emily for her restrictive concept of motherhood when she designs Cecilia as the "proper" mother – despite her higher education.

Having passively accepted and internalised the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity and its identities of *mother*, *housewife* and *hostess*, Emily monologically repeats ideological phrases which devalue, silence and ignore non-compliant thought and action; as a result, Emily cannot perform, defend and reconsider her feminine norms when she is confronted with divergent values. Hence it is to Emily's disadvantage that she does not live among individual subjects who unreservedly agree with her concept of femininity. Her husband, although having strict rules about feminine behaviour in the public and in the private sphere (A 46-47), supports his daughter's higher education, expects her to find a job (A 103) and would be pleased if she entered the Civil Service (A 108); Leon encourages Cecilia to take up employment (A 108); and Betty does not consider Cecilia's management skills impaired by her higher education (A 105). **Briony Tallis's narrator, approaching Emily from her children's perspective, observes that Emily, despite clearly distinguishing between those identities for women which are right (*mother* and *housewife*) and those which are wrong**

(*intellectual*)**, is incapable of being *mother* and *housewife* and is thus not accepted in either identity.** Both Briony and Emily are incapable of acting without systemising their actions: "Emily lay back against the pillows for another several minutes, her creature having slunk away, and patiently *planned*, and *revised* her plans, and *refined an order* for them" (A 70; emphasis added). However, Emily's planning, revising and refining ends in theory in which she cannot be opposed. According to Cavalié, Emily, refusing to open the curtain to the outside and to commit (124), is not the matriarch who "represents the centre of the house, a protecting force which takes care of her husband and children" but "a disincarnate presence, powerless when it comes to influencing the course of events" (124). Indeed, in practice, her children maintain Emily's position in the Tallis family out of filial obligation: they fulfil their mother's functions and uphold her self-perception. Unable to perform her duties because of illness, other persons have accepted Emily's responsibilities: Cecilia and Leon have been brought up by Grace Turner whom they adore (A 87-88); once old enough, Cecilia assumed the position of "everyone's mother" (A 107) and, in particular, of Briony's mother (A 44). Consequently, neither Leon nor Cecilia nor Briony consider biological motherhood an imperative or reason for filial love; having hardly experienced maternal care at Emily's hands (A 66), her children have "always called her by her first name" (A 66). Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that Emily's authority is an illusion maintained by her children not out of filial affection but out of filial duty: whenever "Mrs Tallis exercised authority in the absence of her husband, the children felt *obliged* to protect her from seeming ineffectual" (A 127-28; emphasis added).

Being the eldest *daughter*, the primary responsibility of maintaining her mother's order lies with Cecilia. While Emily considers herself the person who understands and orders the daily routines of her family and the domestic staff (A 66 and A 70-71), her (in)actions suggest that Emily is neither performing her identity of mother nor her identities of housewife and hostess: when Emily means to soothe her household (A 70) or to present her family (A 70 and A 102), she is incapable of doing so without Cecilia's assistance. "Leon, who had the pure gift of avoiding responsibility, would not assume his father's role. *Nominally*, it would pass to Mrs Tallis, but ultimately the success of the evening would be in Cecilia's care" (A 102; emphasis added). **Briony Tallis's narrator, underlining that Emily's responsibility is merely symbolic, mediates that Emily's responsibility is practically maintained by Cecilia's conscientiousness.** Consequently, Cecilia is approached by the domestic staff when her mother, instead of soothing the household, is unsettling it (A 105). Despite Emily's presence, Betty appeals to Cecilia, the person effectively in charge, to make her mother re-consider her impracticable instructions for dinner (A 105). Cecilia, who is caught in the familiar dilemma of

"how to keep the peace and not humiliate her mother" (A 105), successfully mediates between Betty and Emily (A 105). Emphasising Cecilia's routine when dealing with Betty's appeal (A 105) and Betty's confidence in Cecilia's negotiation skills (A 105), Briony Tallis's narrator indicates that Cecilia is well experienced in settling dispute between her mother and the domestic staff.

Being surrounded by individual subjects who do not share her monological concept of femininity, Emily is incapable of exerting the authority of the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity; consequently, Emily, threatened to be permanently replaced by her daughter, must deny that Cecilia, despite her higher education, successfully fulfils "feminine" duties. Emily, who has hardly succeeded in meeting her duties associated with the Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity, cannot possibly accept that her daughter is not only meeting them but that Cecilia is fulfilling them *despite her higher education*; if she did, she would admit to her own replaceability. Much to her daughter's misery (A 20), she is hence "distant, even unfriendly" (A 20) and devalues her educational achievement (A 64-65); furthermore, putting obstacles in Cecilia's way, Emily shares "only tiny frets about the household" (A 20). Until Cecilia marries and starts her own family, she poses a risk to Emily's position in the Tallis family. On this account, Emily must not only ignore that Cecilia successfully manages the household but also that Cecilia shows maternal care and concern for both Briony and the twins. Having been raised by Robbie's mother, Cecilia's concept of motherhood is not restricted; in consequence, she feels guilty when she finds Jackson and Pierrot neglected (A 100). While Emily only fulfils her family duty towards her nephews (A 63 and A 70), Cecilia sets aside her personal interests to help her cousins feel less troubled (A 99-102). Briony Tallis, constructing a narrative situation which allows her to contrast Emily and Cecilia, stultifies Emily's monological approach to femininity. Cecilia's performance of her "feminine" duties is not impaired by her higher education; instead, Emily's authority is impaired by her retreating from divergent thought. Only when Briony, by showing Robbie's letter to the police and, in consequence, to her mother (A 177-79), creates an environment in which her family and the public unreservedly share Emily's Victorian norms, she gains authority and hence the ability to take decisive action based on the monological discourses of her Victorian education.

Emily becomes capable of performing her identities when Cecilia publicly fails to "function" and both her family and the public share Emily's monological and thus restrictive concept of femininity. In the hours after the assault on Lola, Briony, who is used to Cecilia's management skills, notices Cecilia's unusual inaction (A 175). While Cecilia,

absent in her mind, hovers "on the peripheries" (A 175), Emily re-gains presence. The "proper" family constellation is restored when Cecilia, facing her family's prejudgement of Robbie, is "unable to help, or even speak" (A 175). Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that "*normally*, she would have taken control of a situation like this, directing the care of Lola, reassuring her mother, listening to the doctor's advice, consulting with Leon" (A 175; emphasis added); instead, Briony Tallis's narrator implies that Cecilia's wretchedness is Emily's elevation: she "actually grew as her older daughter shrank into private misery" (A 175). Cecilia stops being a threat to Emily's position when she ceases to be in charge of the family; watching how Cecilia fails to comfort Briony and Lola, to manage the household and to approach the doctor and the detectives (A 175-79), Emily feels reassured in her opinion of Cecilia's incompetence and, consequently even if untypically (A 175), rises "to the crisis, *free of migraine* and the need to be alone" (A 175; emphasis added). Emily, furthermore, is proven to be "right" about female higher education. When Robbie is accused of raping Lola and Cecilia of having enabled his crime by remaining silent about his letter and their encounter in the library, Emily's scepticism of Cecilia's higher education is publicly "validated." Having read Robbie's sexually explicit letter, which is to everyone proving his guilt, she accuses her daughter of negligence. "If you had done the *right* thing, young lady, *with all your education*, and come to me with this, then something could have been done in time and your cousin would have been spared her nightmare" (A 179; emphasis added). Emily, emphasising that she would have correctly acted had she read the letter, elevates herself while disgracing her daughter. Cecilia's higher education, according to Emily's satisfaction and self-affirmation, does not grant her any superiority of mind (A 179); on the contrary, her higher education is proven to be insignificant for it does not assist (and even prevents) Cecilia in making "correct" decisions. Emily, therefore, can deny the ambivalence she fears when she is strongly confirmed by society and law in her notion of *right* and *wrong* and the futility of female higher education in distinguishing the one from the other. Cecilia is held partially at fault for Robbie's crime, and when she finally, in his defence, accounts their consensual intimacies in the library, her testimony is considered "far more shocking than Briony's" statement (A 181); her explanation does not only confirm the general opinion of Robbie being a "morbidly over-sexed" and thus dangerous man (A 204 and A 181) but also Cecilia's improper for "un-feminine" behaviour (A 179). Emily's authority originates in the public "failure" of Cecilia's higher education and the tabooing of (feminine) sexuality in (English) society.

Unfortunately for Robbie, **Emily's authority is not only based on her restrictive concept of femininity; it is, furthermore, based on the monological English class system**

which is most prominent in Emily's ideological thought. Emily dismissively considers Robbie a hobby of her husband (A 151), his "living proof of some *levelling principle*" (A 151; emphasis added); indeed, only (the funding of) Robbie's (higher) education, which she thinks socially inappropriate and "unfair on Leon and the girls" (A 151), gives rise to a short moment of sympathy with her daughter: Robbie's first makes "things harder for Cecilia with her third" although "it is preposterous of her to pretend to be disappointed" (A 152). She accuses him of elevating himself at Cecilia's "failure" (A 152); nevertheless, only shortly after this thought, Emily elevates herself at Cecilia's "failure" (A 175 and A 179). Cecilia is not allowed to have intellectual ambitions; Robbie, a son to servants, is not allowed to have any ambitions. According to Emily, funding Robbie's (higher) education is "meddling" with nature (A 151); since she has passively accepted and internalised constructed class difference to be natural, it is unnatural to assist Robbie to rise from the working class (A 151). However, not being internally persuaded by class difference, Emily is incapable of convincing her husband against funding Robbie; instead, she monologically repeats the ideological denial that "nothing good will come of it" (A 152). While her husband does not accept her "argument" (A 152), Robbie's crime proves her husband publicly "wrong" and Emily "right" – despite his (higher) education, Robbie has not managed to overcome his "uncivilised" working class background (A 152); considering his birth, Emily is neither surprised by his letter nor by his supposed abuse of Lola and she is firmly supported in her view when the authoritative monologue of the English class system is publicly executed by the police who do not even think of suspecting anyone but Robbie (A 175). Jacobi observes that "Briony is successful with her accusation against Robbie because, as a member of a well-to-do family, her *ethos* puts her in a much stronger position in class-conscious England than the position of Robbie" (60; also de la Concha 202 and 205; O'Hara 79; and Phelan, Narrative Theory 327-28). In this institutionalised context, "these terrifying authorities, these uniformed agents, had been lying in wait" and "knew what they wanted and how to proceed" (A 169). Finney even suggests that Briony's "rage for order […] mirrors a similar insistence on order by the ruling classes in prewar Britain" (English Fiction 89). Robbie does not stand a chance and is "damned as much by a national as by Briony's narrative" (English Fiction 97).[52]

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[52] The theme of class is returning throughout Briony Tallis's and McEwan's novel. A detailed insight into this theme is offered by Ian Fraser's article "Class Experience in McEwan's *Atonement*" in which he analyses "the notions of class experience and class consciousness, class struggle and class hegemony, and fetishism" based on E. P. Thompson's concept of class (466).

Constructing Emily to be the adult version of Briony – living within monological structures and thus appreciating order and fearing ambivalence, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, criticises Emily for her hostile treatment of Cecilia who lives a life which Emily considers unnatural. Briony Tallis emphasises the danger of ideological thought and action when Emily commits the same crime which Briony commits: monologically passing a judgement. Emily's restricted and restrictive approach to femininity and class difference results in Cecilia's and Robbie's denunciation; while this outcome, which originates in the monologue of authoritative discourse, is necessary for Emily to re-establish order and thus to maintain her position within her family and society, its consequences are (mentally and physically) fatal for both Cecilia and Robbie.

3.2.2.2 Cecilia

Bakhtinian dialogue dissolves restrictive binary opposition in internally persuasive discourse when each utterance is dialogised in context and produces new possibilities and meanings; in this dialogue, the authoritative word is resisted. "Bakhtin's dialogic vision of human consciousness, subjectivity and communication is based, then, on a vision in which language embodies an on-going dialogic clash of ideologies, world-views, opinions and interpretations" (Allen, Intertextuality 27). However, dialogue is hard to implement, and its *dialogical clash* is exhausting for the individual subject involved in its process; indeed, **Cecilia suffers from an *internal dialogue* in which unthought-of possibilities for women collide with her mother's Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity.** According to Chalupský's reading of Cecilia, Cecilia is a "progressive woman with independent if not feminist ideas and opinions" (108) since "Cecilia applies for Cambridge in order to break free from the constraints of her home where she is permanently reminded that a university education for women is just a redundant if not harmful distraction" (107). However, Cecilia does not actively apply for Cambridge; it is her father's decision to finance his daughters a higher education and college places are reserved for Cecilia and Briony (A 108). Indeed, before leaving for Cambridge, Cecilia performs her mother's duties and is unaware of social alternatives for women – she does not leave for Cambridge with the purpose of breaking free. While Chalupský argues that "Cecilia makes her choice against her mother's will and in defiance of her manifest disapproval" and that she "thus shows her courage and independent spirit" (108), Cecilia becomes dissatisfied with her mother's traditional viewpoint only after studying and growing familiar with social alternatives for women. Arguing that Cecilia has always been favouring

social progress, Chalupský's reading ignores Cecilia's deeply felt conflict between the old and the new. **While Briony Tallis personates restrictive authoritative discourse in Emily, she personates both the narrowing of monologue and the difficulty to withstand such narrowing in Cecilia.**

Briony Tallis, constructing Cecilia's language within college sociolect, implies Cecilia's identification with female higher education and student life. Contrary to Emily's suspicion that Cecilia is pretending, Cecilia's disappointment with her third is deeply felt (A 27 and A 107); she is irritated with her failure *although* women are not officially awarded degrees (A 27). Cecilia is disappointed because her higher education and student life have "changed her fundamentally" (A 103) – even to the core of her consciousness: language. Adapting a sociolect, an individual subject signifies identification and belonging (Barthes, PT 150). During her time at Girton College, Cecilia has adopted vocabulary distinctive of English students (Halls, Little-Go); she even continues using it at home when talking about her time at college (A 64). However, Emily, attempting to deprecate Cecilia's identification with higher education and student life, devalues Cecilia's experience in using her college sociolect against her.

Illustrating the opposition and hostility Cecilia is confronted with, Briony Tallis chooses to approach Cecilia's student life and higher education from Emily's perspective who deprecates her daughter's college sociolect. Emily devalues Cecilia's student life and higher education in denouncing "the *cosy jargon of Cecilia's Cambridge* – the Halls, the Maids' Dancing, the Little-Go" (A 64; emphasis added). Emily's choice of wording – *Cecilia's Cambridge* – is expressive. On the one hand, it indicates that female Cecilia is denied access to all Cambridge (be it university or not); on the other hand, it indicates that Cecilia socialises in spheres which are strange to Emily and which she (therefore) rejects. Both readings, the former indicating the uselessness and the latter indicating the impropriety of Cecilia's student life and higher education, deny any worth to Cecilia's college days. Emily's wording of *cosy jargon*, the former term implying privacy and the latter signifying a sub-language exclusive to a specific group, indicates that Cecilia's vocabulary is specific to those parts of Cambridge society which she socialised with; while, according to Emily, such jargon can be expected from a person enjoying colloquial slumming (A 64), it is inappropriate for the social circles Emily expected Cecilia to mix with: the linguistic signs *cosy* and *jargon* imply that Emily thinks Cecilia's language entirely unsuitable for the public sphere and she faults her daughter's female lecturers who are taking a stand for equality and independence.

Focussing on marriage and motherhood, Emily derisively concludes that Cecilia's "*bluestocking* teachers" are unable to teach any woman the essential knowledge of femininity (A 65; emphasis added). Indeed, Emily fears these women since they pose a threat to her Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity. **Comparing Cecilia's lecturers to *bluestockings* voices Emily's bewilderment and anger that the informal bluestockings of Elizabeth Montagu have finally gained official and influential positions in society.**[53] In defence of her authoritative discourse, she is hence monologically debasing this achievement by snidely degrading their actions: "Those self-important women gained *local* immortality for the blandest, the most timid of eccentricities – walking a cat on a dog's lead, riding about on a man's bike, being seen with a sandwich in the street. A generation later these *silly, ignorant ladies* would be long dead and still revered at High Table and spoken of in lowered voices" (A 65; emphasis added). Emily is indignant that these women, despite their social uselessness and despite their ignorance of "proper" feminine behaviour, are held in high esteem and "unleashed" on her daughter's generation. Pejoratively calling Cecilia "young lady" when criticising her dealing with Robbie's letter (A 179), Emily classifies her daughter among these *silly, ignorant ladies* who have, according to her, no value for society. Hence Emily is not envious of her daughter's higher education (A 64); she simply perceives it to be inappropriate. Emily asserts that the idea of "women at the *'Varsity*" is not to be taken seriously (A 64-65; emphasis added): it is "childish really, at best an innocent lark, like the girls' rowing eight, a little *posturing* alongside their brothers dressed up in the *solemnity* of social progress" (A 65; emphasis added). Using the scornful *posturing*, the ironic *solemnity* and Cecilia's colloquial term *'varsity* (instead of *university*), a term strange to her own vocabulary, Emily continues to deride her daughter's life and sociolect. She considers female social progress in education a masquerade proposing status unfounded in reality: women will never stand equally beside men.

Briony Tallis, choosing her narrator to approach Cecilia's student life and higher education from Emily's perspective, emphasises and criticises Emily's restrictive approach to femininity which hurts and reduces her daughter. Cecilia, hoping for "intimate conversations" with her mother (A 20), is met with Emily's distancing and "wan silence" (A 20) – Cecilia's experiences and values, dangerous to Emily's Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity, are to be ignored. Cecilia, returning home, hence faces a conflict typical of women at the beginning of the 20th century.

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[53] In the 1750s, Elizabeth Montagu established the Blue Stocking Society in which educated women informally met to discuss and upgrade their education.

College-educated women pioneered in this drive toward greater female autonomy, seeking out new jobs, forming new institutions, and playing an increasingly important role in the public sphere. Yet even as they took up professional careers, most women felt a *deep conflict* between the *old social expectations* of marriage and children, and the *new opportunities* for independence and personal fulfilment. *They were caught between old ideologies and behavior patterns and new ambitions and public careers.* (Vicinus 603; emphasis added)

Cecilia, strongly influenced by the strengthening discourse of female higher education but equally by her mother's still widely accepted Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity, experiences a "deep conflict" (603), an *internal dialogue* which involves "old social expectations of marriage and motherhood" (hereafter: the old) and "new opportunities for independence and personal fulfilment" (hereafter: the new) (603); however, instead of dialogising femininity, instead of producing a new and independent, her own internally persuasive idea of femininity by (re)reading femininity within ever-changing context, Cecilia is about to dissolve into nothingness.

Cecilia is conflicted between the old and the new. Having lived "feminine" values all her life before Girton College, Cecilia is strongly determined by her mother's discourse of femininity. Instead of "abandoning herself to a luscious summer's night" (A 102), she would attend to her family's needs because she "simply had to" and "it was wrong not to" (A 101). Cecilia has internalised her "feminine" responsibilities and she is thus, despite her experience and to her own astonishment (A 103), not immune to her family's "habitual expectations" (A 103): her duties are "not worth struggling against" (A 102). She is not even distressed by her responsibilities and enjoys performing them (A 23 and A 103). Attending to the twins (A 99-102), "first one then the other put his hand in hers and she was surprised to find herself so *gratified*" (A 99; emphasis added). Cecilia appreciates being appreciated in her motherly identity. When she approaches Briony to comfort her (A 44), her kindness is hence equally self-interested as her mother's benevolence: "such stroking and soothing murmurs would have been a release for Cecilia after a frustrating day" (A 44). Her "feminine" duties provide Cecilia with a sense of happy satisfaction *and* purpose: "addressing Briony's problems with kind words and caresses would have restored a sense of control" (A 44). Although Cecilia returns home fundamentally changed (A 103), the old is not replaced by the new: her relationship with her family is unbroken (A 103). However, knowing about new possibilities, old expectations are still dear but no longer sufficient to Cecilia: "she had come to be with *the* family, and make amends for being away" (A 109; emphasis added). While the old in Cecilia obliges her to do

penance for studying in staying with her family, the new in Cecilia voices itself in distancing: using *the* family instead of *her* family implies a first emotional separation. Having learned about possibilities beyond marriage and motherhood, her life is lacking: "since coming home, her life had stood still, and a fine day like this made her impatient, almost desperate" (A 18). Longing for intellectual challenge and social entertainment, Cecilia is irritated by the familiar (A 19) and the injustice of her family's restrictive expectations: "her mother had *always* lived in an invalid's shadow land, Briony had *always* required mothering from her older sister, and Leon had *always* floated free" (A 103; emphasis added). The repetition of *always* emphatically conveys Cecilia's annoyance with her family. She even accuses Emily of "nurturing her migraines" (A 20). Unnoticed and unappreciated in her new values and identities (A 103), Cecilia understands that she needs to leave her family if she wants to defy being narrowed to the old (A 103). However, although Cecilia is offered various possibilities for an "adventure" (A 103), she is unable to leave (A 110). Her intense struggle between the old and the new manifests itself in her conflict between staying and leaving. Hence Briony Tallis introduces Cecilia in a state of indecisiveness: "she could not remain here, she knew she should make plans, but she did nothing" (A 21).

Being equally determined by *both* the old and the new, Cecilia is unwilling to choose. However, neither encouraged by her family nor by society to live her diversity, Cecilia is unable to accept her ambivalence and to dialogise her femininity; in consequence, she dissolves into nothingness. Staying with her family will limit Cecilia's prospects; however, leaving her family will equally limit Cecilia's prospects: entirely removing her from her "feminine" responsibilities, all her possibilities of leaving are "equally unpressing" (A 21). Cecilia's ambivalence is not provided for in either staying or leaving (A 21); hence "the thought of packing a suitcase and taking the morning train did not excite her" (A 22). Cecilia is fundamentally changed since she *equally* values the old and the new; however, the monological structure of *either* the old *or* the new which is permeating society and narrowing the individual subject (Vicinus 603), insinuates choice and keeps Cecilia from accepting her ambivalence. Unable to endorse her ambivalence since her diversity is not provided for in family and/or social context, she perceives her values to be contradictory and incompatible (A 44). Cecilia's situation is even worse since, according to her mother and father, she is neither fitted for the old nor for the new. While Cecilia's father, despite his authoritative ideas on femininity (A 46-47), has no objection to Cecilia's higher education, her father's idea of the new is rather restricted and his high demands disappointed: with her third, she cannot please him and enter the Civil Service (A 108). Cecilia is, consequently, officially spoiled for both the old, expected

by her mother, and the new, expected by her father. Although Cecilia needs to be needed and thus re-assumes her domestic responsibilities (A 21-22), her situation turns from bad to worse when her support is not appreciated (A 21-22): with Emily fearing Cecilia's ambivalence and Briony growing up, "no one was holding Cecilia back, no one would care particularly if she left" (A 21). When Cecilia returns home, she is, theoretically, "more" (the old and the new); however, denied any appreciation, she is, practically, "less" (neither the old nor the new). Hence Cecilia stands still and is caught in her "cross-currents of feeling" (A 44): as long as she is not accepted in her ambivalence, it is neither forward nor backward for Cecilia who is unable to accept her own ambivalence. Considering the old and the new an alternative instead of an ambivalence, Cecilia is unable to dialogically approach her femininity and to create her own internally-persuasive discourse of femininity which reveals "ever newer *ways to mean*" depending on her individual context (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.); in consequence, she dissolves into nothingness. Briony Tallis's narrator observes "desperation in all she said, an *emptiness at its core*" (A 109; emphasis added). Cecilia is losing herself, is going mad (A 107). Unable to face monological restriction but equally unable to dare dialogue and accept (her) ambivalence against family and society, Cecilia disintegrates.

Only within nature, Cecilia can find some peace of mind: "dripping coolly onto her sandalled feet, the untidy bunch of rose-bay willow-herb and irises brought her to a better state of mind" (A 20). Cecilia is comforted since nature, in contrast to society, does not require her to choose. Thus Briony Tallis, writing Cecilia "into" nature, emphasises that ambivalence is "natural" and that monological limitation of thought and action is "unnatural." Cecilia observes that there is "really no point in arranging *wild flowers*" (A 23; emphasis added); when she tries to arrange the "untidy bunch" (A 20), the flowers tumble "into their own symmetry" (A 23). And it is equally pointless to arrange Cecilia's values and identities.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, focuses on Cecilia's conflict between the old and the new to explain the difficulty of the individual subject to accept (its) ambivalence and dialogise (itself) in face of monological and monologising social structures. Cecilia suffers from her family's narrowing but, unsupported by family and society, is failing to accept her ambivalence while remaining reluctant to choose. Cecilia, in consequence, becomes incapable of acting and faces her dissolution into nothingness. However, suggesting nature as an environment of ambivalence, Briony Tallis, approaching Cecilia from Robbie's perspective, chooses the element of water to endear Cecilia's ambivalence to Robbie.

3.2.2.3 Robbie

Choosing her narrator to take multiple perspectives, Briony Tallis illustrates different stages of dialogical involvement within her characters. Emily, fearing her replaceability, defies any ambivalence. Cecilia is unwilling to choose between the old and the new but, unsupported by family or society, she is unable to dialogise her femininity. Being unable to accept her own ambivalence, Cecilia is irritated by Robbie's carefree inconsistency: "since coming down, landscape gardening was his last *craze* but one" (A 19; emphasis added). She adopts her mother's flouting tone to degrade Robbie's various interests; rolling his cigarettes is "a *hangover* from his Communist Party time – another abandoned *fad*, along with his ambitions in anthropology, and the planned hike from Calais to Istanbul" (A 22; emphasis added). Cecilia devalues Robbie's fluent movement "among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values" (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.) and thinks them insolent: "now there was talk of medical college, which after a literature degree seemed rather *pretentious*" (A 19; emphasis added). While Cecilia is physically attracted to Robbie's natural ambivalence – "intelligence and sheer bulk" (A 26), she is not attracted to his cultural ambivalence since Robbie seems to constantly elude her (A 22). Indeed, he is elusive because, **in contrast to Cecilia, Robbie understands ideological structure (simplification, generalisation and naturalisation) which he can thus withstand.**

Before entering university, Robbie was patronised (A 91); he was not allowed to make his own decisions: the University of Cambridge was chosen for him by his "ambitious headmaster" (A 91) and even his subject was chosen for him by his "charismatic teacher" (A 91). Having graduated, however, Robbie enjoys a freedom from institutional and ideological structure which he gained during his time in Cambridge (A 91). **Robbie understands ideological structure within society and is hence guarded against monological claims on his values and identities.** While Finney argues that Robbie has "absorbed" the ideology of his lecturer Frank Raymond Leavis (1895-1978) who taught English literature at Cambridge University from 1927 until 1962 (Oblivion 73), Robbie, indeed, developed scepticism towards monological claims on society and the individual subject – including those of Leavis. Summarising Robbie's thoughts on his career, Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that Robbie severely criticises those who try to propagate the authoritative words of their ideological monologue.

Despite his first, the study of English literature seemed in retrospect an absorbing parlour game, and reading books and having opinions about them, the desirable adjunct to a civilised existence. But it was not the core, whatever Dr Leavis said in his lectures. It was not the necessary priesthood, nor the most vital pursuit of an enquiring mind, nor the first and last defence against a barbarian horde, any more than the study of painting or music, history or science. (A 91)

Anne Samson, introducing Leavis's cultural theory, summarises his monological approach to culture: for Leavis culture is not a "network of practices and beliefs that go to make up a society" but only "what he sees most valuable within that society" (41) – great literature. In Leavis's theory only the great writer is capable of judging and changing the world (41). Robbie, however, is not impressed with Leavis's authoritative discourse that writing and studying literature is the *core* of a civilised existence. Although enjoying reading and discussing literature, he denies it any essentiality: it is neither a *necessary priesthood*, nor a *vital pursuit*, nor a *first and last defence* of a civilised existence. Möller precisely argues that "Robbie is aware that the study of literature does not provide him with a singular master narrative" (78; also Schemberg 58-59). While Möller argues that "Robbie's dismissal of English literature is partly due to the fact that it was not his own choice to pursue this field of study" (78), Briony Tallis's narrator implies that Robbie's critical distance originates in his observation that culture is compiled of many practices and beliefs, of many disciplines and that each discipline equally advocates its claim to essentiality: "at various talks in his final year Robbie had heard a psychoanalyst, a Communist trade union official and a physicist each declare for his own field as passionately, as convincingly, as Leavis had for his own" (A 91). Whereas Schemberg reasons that "Robbie is disconcerted by the insight that different, incommensurable frameworks of belief can be defended with equal logic and coherence" (59), this insight is rather liberating than disconcerting since Robbie understands and criticises that the core of a civilised existence is in the ideologised and ideologising eye of the beholder. Hence contrary to the assumption of his fellow students, it is not "innocence, or ignorance of the world" which keeps Robbie from harm but understanding (A 86). Briony Tallis's narrator observes that, having understood the ideological texture of society, Robbie can be "without social unease" (A 86), although many who are monologically promoting normative class behaviour consider his behaviour inappropriate (A 86).

Understanding ideological structure within society and hence guarded against monological claims on his values and identities, Robbie criticises de-contextualised practical criticism and favours a holistic approach to medical treatment. Robbie, criticising

a de-contextualised approach to literature, wishes to holistically contribute to a human being's welfare (A 91). After having studied medicine, he expects to "have skills far *more elaborate* than the ones he had acquired in *practical criticism*" (A 91; emphasis added). The human body needs to be understood in context because a body is made up of dialogue between its different parts and because a body is engaged in dialogue with its (natural and artificial) environment. Accordingly, medical skills are *elaborate* if they equally consider a whole and its diverse but dialogical parts in an environmental context; and medical skills are *more elaborate* than the skills of practical criticism since practical criticism considers the literary text a self-contained unit independent of its contexts.[54] According to Bakhtin and Vološinov, such isolated reading is impossible. The literary text "is *calculated* for active perception, involving attentive reading and inner responsiveness" (95; emphasis added); and it is calculated for processing in various written form, for example "book reviews, critical surveys, defining influence on subsequent works" (95). Indeed, practical criticism, accordingly and according to Robbie, is not only impossible but also irresponsible due to its monological approach barring any context (A 91); obviously, the skills of practical criticism are impractical in social context: Cecilia, facing her authoritative father's strict ideas of feminine behaviour in the public and private sphere (A 46-47), realises that "nothing that great literature might have done to modify her sensibilities, none of the lessons of practical criticism, could quite deliver her from obedience" (A 47). A modified and/or modifying sensibility does not necessarily feature dialogical awareness and implementation, and hence practical criticism does not automatically assist (and, thinking of Leavis's *The Great Tradition*, does not intend) the literary student and scholar to defend themselves against authoritative discourse. Hence Robbie, observing and understanding ideological proceeding in society, is alert: he knows that he needs to re-enter institutional structures to become a doctor (A 26) and that he will be faced with expert knowledge and, accordingly, yet another "core" of civilised existence (A 91). Robbie, however, in contrast to his famous lecturer, enters the discourse of literature and the discourse of medicine, two complex practices, into dialogue.[55]

Favouring a holistic approach to medical treatment, Robbie dialogises literature and medicine. Möller, as Schemberg before her (58-61), observes that in Robbie's view

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[54] Practical criticism, a close reading of a literary text without knowing its contexts, was first introduced by Cambridge scholar Ivor Armstrong Richards (1893-1979). Richards wanted his students to focus on the literary text instead of "relying on preconceived or received beliefs about a text" (Faculty of English n.pag.). Leavis continued the process of close reading but added a moral dimension: "in the work of F.R. Leavis the close analysis of texts became a moral activity, in which a critic would bring the whole of his sensibility to bear on a literary text and test its sincerity and moral seriousness" (Faculty of English n.pag.); thus Leavis thought he could distinguish between those literary texts belonging and those not belonging to the Great Tradition of English Literature.
[55] For a precise summary of the "Two Cultures"-conflict between C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis, cf. Möller (72-73).

literature (humanities) and medicine (science) "are not two competing, irreconcilable ways of interpreting the world" but offer the possibility for a "fruitful interaction" (78). Being *two* approaches *within one* culture (Schemberg 61), literature and medicine, according to Robbie, treat the same patient – the individual subject: "Birth, death, and frailty in between. Rise and fall – this was the doctor's business and it was literature's too" (A 93). Hence once having studied literature *and* medicine, Robbie hopes to holistically understand the physical *and* psychological complexity of his patients. Holistic medicine focuses on the dialogue of mind and body in the individual subject's context and Robbie, having engaged with innumerable and ambivalent minds while reading, will be well prepared for his diverse patients and thus "a better doctor for having read literature" (A 93). Möller, offering an alternative to Cormack's reading in which Robbie's reasoning attacks the imagination (79-80), argues that Robbie thus "effectively aims at bridging the gap between" literature and medicine (78). Indeed, his choice of studying medicine is a liberating act (Puschmann-Nalenz 193); however, it is not, as Birke suggests (196), a liberating act in choosing one over the other but in bringing dialogically together. His modified sensibility in dialogue with his medical knowledge will qualify him for closely reading "human suffering" and contextualising "the self-destructive folly or sheer bad luck that drive men towards ill-health" (A 93). According to Robbie, literature, full of different biographies and perspectives (potentially if not necessarily within one literary text but always between literary texts), teaches the humbleness and open-mindedness necessary to consider the patient's context (A 93).

Considering such emphasis on dialogue and contextualisation within and beyond the literary text, Cecilia and Robbie's conversation about *Clarissa* is more than "an undergraduate debate on eighteenth-century literature" in which the Richardson-Fielding debate is simply reprinted (A 26).[56] Indeed, their conversation implies the monologising (Samuel Richardson) and dialogising (Henry Fielding) function of the literary text. Bakhtin and Vološinov argue that the literary text is calculated for the dialogical process of active perception (95). Samuel Richardson's readers were not invited to actively perceive. In his foreword of *Clarissa*, the patronising, generalising and naturalising intention of the novel is openly explained: "for this work being addressed to the public as a history of life and manners, those parts of it which are proposed to carry with them the *force of an example*, ought to be *as unobjectionable as is consistent with the design of the whole, and with human nature*" (n.pag.; emphasis added). D'Angelo, engaging with reader response theory in *Atonement* and Iser's reading of the

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[56] For a detailed discussion of Samuel Richardson's and Henry Fielding's novelistic approaches and their (literary) relationship, read Hubert McDermott's *Novel and Romance:* The Odyssey *to* Tom Jones (1989).

Richardson-Fielding debate (90-91), observes that Samuel Richardson "does not invite his readers to participate in shaping the novel's meaning" (90) and that his is "a didactic[57] fiction posed to a receptive readership" (90). Samuel Richardson's novel is meant to monologically and authoritatively naturalise a specific mindset and thus to undo ambivalence; even in her will, Clarissa asks Mr Belford and her cousin *to construct consistency* if her will is inconsistent and doubt remains (n.pag.). Samuel Richardson did not calculate for his readers' active perception. However, he did not calculate for Henry Fielding's strong verbal communication either; nevertheless, Henry Fielding's novels dialogically engage with Samuel Richardson's monological and monologising structures and contents and thus his novels are dialogised. By claiming that *Shamela* is "necessary to be had in all FAMILIES" (n.pag.), he ironically defies Samuel Richardson's attempt at generalising and patronising (English) society. Henry Fielding, in contrast to Samuel Richardson, "invites his readers to participate actively in constructing the novel's meaning" (D'Angelo 90). Consequently, independent of the author's intention, each literary text, even a novel monological in intention, is dialogised by its (changing) contexts and/or by its (changing) readers: "the life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from one generation to another generation" (Bakhtin, DP[58] n.pag.). And in the context of Cecilia's restlessness, *Clarissa* turns into a symbol for restrictive social structures.

Inviting Cecilia to actively perceive Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* within her individual context, Robbie criticises practical criticism for its impracticability. "How's *Clarissa*?" (A 25) Robbie's inquiry is provokingly ambivalent. Cecilia, who cannot "hear" the italics marking the novel, is tricked into giving an ambivalent answer. Unable to know whether Robbie is referring to the novel *Clarissa* or the protagonist Clarissa, Cecilia's answer is double: Cecilia considers *Clarissa* and Clarissa's life "boring" (A 25). At first sight, Robbie's reply is unexpectedly authoritative: "we mustn't say so" (A 25). Considering his literary studies under Leavis, his statement can be read as a criticism of Cecilia who fails to argue according to the standard of practical criticism which requires textual proof for a specific emotion within the reader (Faculty of English n.pag.). At second sight, however, his reply is undermining authoritative structure. Considering Robbie's critical approach to Leavis, Robbie's statement

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[57] D'Angelo's statement implies that *didactic* is equated with *monological / monologising*. Considering my teaching experience and didactic work in higher education, the most successful and responsible didactic approach is one of dialogue in which each content is taught in critically challenging it. Equating *didactic* with *dialogical / dialogising*, McEwan's novels are profoundly didactic.
[58] Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. 1963. Trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1984. e-book. Theory and History of Literature 8. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* was originally published in Russian entitled *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (1963).

can be read as a criticism of practical criticism which requires the impossible: isolated reading. Robbie is perfectly aware of Cecilia's restlessness and confinement (A 80); having read *Clarissa* (A 25), he contextualises *Clarissa* / Clarissa within Cecilia's situation. Consequently, while he appeals to Cecilia's knowledge of practical criticism and, recalling their lecturers' authoritative approach of *must not*, reminds her that she needs to explain *why* a literary text triggers a specific emotional reaction, he does not restrict her, contrary to their lecturers' approach, to the text of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (A 25). Hence Robbie's apparently authoritative statement – "we mustn't say so" (A 25) – is defying monological structure. On the one hand, accepting Cecilia's higher education and intellectual achievements, Robbie emphasises their shared identity in the pronoun *we* and appreciates the new within Cecilia (A 80). On the other hand, he implicitly turns the authoritative word *must not* into the internally persuasive word *you can* in *omitting* any specific and restrictive instruction for her reading and in *encouraging* her to reflect those social structures which cause her emotional reaction. Indeed, Cecilia is reading *Clarissa* in the *context* of her own situation and understands Clarissa to be a character who, if she does not want to be forced into social constructs which she cannot identify with (in Clarissa's case a marriage with Roger Solmes), needs to leave her family behind: "I wish she'd get on with it" (A 25). Clarissa's situation is "intractable, tragic, and likely to be life-threatening" (Vermeule 162). Cecilia's situation is intractable, tragic and likely to be mind-threatening if she fails to act. Trapped between the old and the new, Cecilia transfers her own indecisiveness and inaction to Clarissa. Aware of Cecilia's restlessness, Robbie's answer is, consequently, meant to implicitly encourage and comfort Cecilia: "She does. And it gets better" (A 25).

Briony Tallis does not only challenge the feasibility of practical criticism within Cecilia and Robbie's conversation about *Clarissa*; she, furthermore, implies the Richardson-Fielding debate to scrutinise Leavis's authoritative reading of literature. Cecilia, unwilling to make her internal dialogue external because she is wary of Robbie (A 27), attempts to stop him from discussing *Clarissa*: "I'd rather read Fielding any day" (A 25). However, naming a preference of Henry Fielding over Samuel Richardson is rather uncommon within a Leavisian-shaped academic environment and Cecilia feels uncomfortable deviating from common opinion: she immediately thinks her statement stupid and inappropriate (A 25). She, furthermore, fears that Robbie might (mis)understand her preference for Henry Fielding to be suggestive of "her taste for the full-blooded and sensual" (A 25-26 and A 81). Based on Cecilia's distress, Vermeule analyses Cecilia's and Robbie's references to Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding to be "important social signals – signals whether it is okay to have sex"

(152). D'Angelo, too, argues that "Cecilia seems aware that marking oneself as a certain kind of reader carries larger cultural, ideological, and even sexual, implications" (90). However, while Cecilia's thought might indicate such reading, neither Robbie's countenance nor his reply confirms Cecilia's fear. Indeed, if Cecilia and Robbie's verbal exchange were meant to explore the option of a sexual relationship, Robbie's reply to Cecilia's "consent" would be rather discouraging: "there's more life in Fielding, but he can be psychologically crude compared to Richardson" (A 26). Instead of being sexually implicit, Robbie's response is, thus Cecilia's impression (A 25-26), the expectable answer of a student who has read literature under Leavis. Leavis did not hesitate to declare Henry Fielding wanting in plot and authorial skill: "*We haven't to read a very large proportion of Tom Jones* in order to discover the limits of the essential interests it has to offer us. Henry Fielding's attitudes, and his concern with human nature, are simple, and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind, that is, demanding more than external action)" (n.pag.; emphasis added). According to Leavis, intellectual and psychologically interested readers need to read Samuel Richardson's "impressive" novel *Clarissa*: "*we* all know that if *we* want a more inward interest it is to Richardson *we must* go" since "Richardson's strength in the analysis of emotional and moral states is in any case a matter of *common acceptance*" (n.pag.; emphasis added). Leavis is patronising his readers. The pronoun *we*, the auxiliary verb *must* and his suggestion of arguing within common sense are telling – he must not be contradicted. Leavis's account is simplifying, generalising and condescending. Neither Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* nor Leavis's "analysis" is promoting independent and critical thought in dialogue. Considering this passage from Leavis's *The Great Tradition*, Robbie's reply appears to be a precise summary of Leavis's arguments. Hence Birke, analysing Cecilia's vehemently rejecting response to Robbie's preference of Samuel Richardson, argues that "Cecilia dismisses [his] view as a stereotype of 'undergraduate debate'" which originates in and promotes institutionalised reading (191 and 195). However, in her reading, Birke does not consider that Robbie severely criticises Leavis's monological and monologising approach to literature (A 91). By thinking for himself and broadening his mind and interests (A 91), Robbie learned to withstand the readerly (literary and non-literary) text and its monologising intention (A 92-93).

Although criticising Leavis's authoritative reading of literature *within* Cecilia and Robbie's conversation about *Clarissa*, Briony Tallis explicates Robbie's criticism of Leavis's monological and monologising approach only *after* Cecilia and Robbie's conversation; thus she invites her readers to reread the conversation considering this new context. Without being contextualised within Robbie's scepticism of Leavis's authoritative

approach to literature and culture, Robbie's statements by the fountain are primarily condescending. Constructing insight into Robbie's critical approach to Leavis only *after* Cecilia and Robbie's conversation about *Clarissa*, Briony Tallis challenges her readers into the dialogical experience that "reading over time allows one to remember prior scenes while reading later ones, and attend to those scenes differently" (Harold 135). She thus encourages her readers to reread Robbie's authoritative reply – "we mustn't say so" (A 25) – and his exemplary Leavisian answer within this new context. Learning about Robbie's critical approach to his lecturer (A 91), even readers unfamiliar with (Leavis's) practical criticism are encouraged to critically reflect Cecilia and Robbie's conversation which evolves around contents and structures gained while studying. Reread in the context of Leavis's ideological fervour, Robbie, reproducing Leavis's authoritative content to encourage Cecilia's self-reflection, provokes her first moment of anti-institutional contradiction: "she didn't think Fielding was crude at all, or that Richardson was a fine psychologist" (A 26). Consequently and in contrast to Vermeule's argument, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding are not "just tools" in Cecilia's and Robbie's "game of emotional adjustment" (153). Within Cecilia and Robbie's conversation, Briony Tallis intentionally refers to Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding to approach nothing less than the liberating function of dialogue. However, while Robbie understands the value of dialogue and hence tries to engage Cecilia into thought and debate, he underestimates the strength dialogue requires (A 26). Cecilia thinks Robbie "tenacious in argument" (A 26) and, irritated, refrains from discussing any further: "She wasn't going to be drawn in, defending, defining, attacking. She was tired of that" (A 26). Cecilia neatly summarises the major process of dialogue and its internally persuasive word: *defining* is flanked by *defending* and *attacking*, indicating that definition (and hence rest), even if attempted, is unattainable; the infinite and intense "*struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses" (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.; emphasis added), indicated by the "belligerent" verbs coming to Cecilia's mind, is exhausting. Robbie, observing Cecilia's distress caused by ideological determination and internal dialogue (A 80), wants to liberate her from the ideological contents and structures confining her (A 80); however, while Henry Fielding, trying to make his readers think, meant "to laugh Mankind out of their favourite Follies and Vices" (Tom Jones 6), Robbie does not *laugh* but *loves* Cecilia out of her crisis in realising and understanding her agitation and in accepting her ambivalence.

Making use of "nymphean" literary tradition, Briony Tallis signifies Cecilia's ambivalent femininity and dialogises the stereotypical *femme fragile* and the stereotypical *femme fatale* – a dialogue dared by Robbie. Cecilia, emerging from the fountain's water after retrieving pieces from the vase, is compared to a "frail white *nymph*" (A 30; emphasis added).

On the one hand, Briony Tallis's intentional reference is meant to highlight Cecilia's confinement. In Greek mythology, nymphs are distinguished according to their dwellings: nymphs of the mountains (*oreads*), nymphs of the trees (*dryads*), nymphs of the springs, rivers and ponds (*naiads*) and nymphs of the sea (*okeanids* and *nereids*) (Hansen 241-43). They live "a life of freedom in one of the uncultivated places of the earth, away from human habitation" (239). Although Cecilia is not compared to a specific nymph, she is associated with a nymph of the sea when rising in front of the statue of Triton; furthermore, the nereid is famous for her rosebud face (Monaghan 228), and Robbie is charmed by Cecilia's "glistening *rosebud* mouth" (A 79; emphasis added). Comparing Cecilia to a nereid, Briony Tallis symbolises Cecilia's ideologically determined mental and social confinement: a nereid who is freely moving in the *natural* sea, far away from human habitation and thus not limited by cultural restrictions and expectations, implies infinite freedom in ambivalence; in contrast, however, a nymph of the sea who is limited to an *artificial* fountain, an ornament in which water and its inhabitants are cultivated and constrained, associates imprisonment. The stagnant water of the fountain, leaving "a glistening dark green stain" of decomposing (A 18), suggests Cecilia's mental and physical stagnation and decay (A 18). On the other hand, Briony Tallis's intentional reference is meant to highlight and appreciate Cecilia's ambivalence. While stagnant water indicates decay, moving water symbolises life, birth and re-birth (Stamer 10). Cecilia, plunging into the fountain's water, is "re-born" in her ambivalent femininity. When Robbie observes water cascading from the "frail white nymph" (A 30), he perceives both the nymph's sexual "overindulgence" and "underindulgence" (Hansen 240). Robbie is startled by Cecilia's white skin which is unblemished and symbolises her innocence and virginity (A 79); at the same time, however, he is intrigued by those aspects of her body, highlighted by wetness (A 79), which imply sensuality: "a glimpse of the triangular darkness her knickers were supposed to conceal" (A 79), "the deep curve of her waist" (A 79) and her pelvic bones which are stretching "the material clear of her skin" (A 79).

Briony Tallis's narrator, when mediating the encounter by the fountain from Robbie's perspective, indicates that Cecilia ambivalently pairs and thus dialogises two monologising perceptions of women, the **stereotypical *femme fragile*** and the **stereotypical *femme fatale***, the former fair and frail, innocent, gentle and benevolent, the latter dark and fiery, seducing, passionate and dangerous. Robbie observes these ambivalent qualities and does not attempt to reconcile them in unity; indeed, they enjoy equal rights in Robbie's thoughts: "a simple daisy, sewn between the cups of her bra" (innocence) highlights Cecilia's "breasts wide apart and small" (sensuality) (A 79). Cecilia is ambivalently still and wild (A 79), gentle and passionate:

her rosebud mouth is small, but full and glistening (A 79). Unable to show her inner turmoil, Cecilia's "statuesque look" hides her complex emotions and thoughts (A 79-80): while her eyes, expressing reflectiveness, are "dark and contemplative" (A 79), her movements, expressing need for action, are "quick and impatient" (A 80). Cecilia's ambivalence is not irritating Robbie; indeed, Cecilia's "strange beauty" is particularly intriguing (A 79-80).

Nevertheless, Cecilia's ambivalence is a threat to society. Recalling Cecilia's behaviour by the fountain and contemplating her anger (A 78-81), Robbie realises the overthrowing moment originating from Cecilia's ambivalence: her strength (A 81) – "she was not mere sweetness, and he could not afford to condescend to her, for she was a force" (A 80-81). Cecilia's ambivalence shakes the traditional foundation of society: the binary opposition. While a woman who is **either** *femme fragile* **or** *femme fatale* is controllable, a woman who is both is not categorisable and thus not manageable. Cecilia's dialogical femininity, furthermore, challenges monological masculinity; although he rationally knows monological masculinity to be a construct (cf. his cinema fantasy: A 80 and his Freudian reading of Cecilia: A 81), Robbie feels momentarily humiliated and emasculated by Cecilia's "un-feminine" behaviour by the fountain (A 80-81): even if the individual subject rationally understands its ideological determination, the individual subject does not instantaneously and not necessarily succeed in unfettering its emotions, thoughts and actions from internalised constructs. However, Robbie anticipates that Cecilia's strength has not only the potential of destroying him but also of raising him above himself: "she was a force, she could drive him out of his depth *and* push him under" (A 81; emphasis added). Criticising those unable to overcome their monologue, Robbie is ready to **"dare"** and accept Cecilia's ambivalence and thus to challenge himself: "It would be worse, but he still wanted it. He had to have it. He wanted it to be worse" (A 81). Cecilia is inexplicable and elusive in her ambivalent femininity and, nevertheless, the appreciated centre point of Robbie's thoughts.

Making use of "mermaidian" literary tradition, Briony Tallis signifies Cecilia's ambivalent femininity – a dialogue necessary to Robbie. When Cecilia finally decides to wear her green evening dress, a mermaid rises "to meet her in her own full-length mirror" (A 99). Mermaids can be distinguished into various sub-categories, each presenting a specific aspect of complex femininity. Some mermaids primarily display motherly traits (Stamer 31-33); others suggest seduction and infatuation (33-35); still others ensure love and felicity (35-37); some need salvation (37-41). This diversity is contradictory at first sight (9) but, at second sight, each type of mermaid is part of a dialogical whole: "die vielen verschiedenen Figuren stellen nur Teilaspekte des *Großen Weiblichen* in seiner Ambivalenz dar" (9). Cecilia

dialogically combines different "mermaidian" and thus feminine identities in her individual subjectivity; she cares, she infatuates, she loves, and she needs salvation. She is, furthermore, intelligent and educated. Cecilia's complex femininity is confirmed when *the intellectual* and *the mother* finally become co-existing facets of her individual subjectivity. The "mermaidian" evening dress Cecilia is wearing is her "post-finals gown" (A 98), worn to celebrate her education; at the same time, she is wearing this dress when caring for Jackson and Pierrot (A 99-101). Crucially, when wearing the gown, Cecilia feels "sleekly impregnable, slippery and secure" (A 99). Being both instead of (n)either, she is immune to social expectations and determined identities which slip off her mind and body; finally, she is secure and able to elude simplification. Briony Tallis's narrator observes that, for the first time, Cecilia does not feel restless but excited (A 103): she is "animated by this new certainty" that her aspirations to the new must not replace her appreciation of the old and that she may continue to live her maternal qualities (A 103).

Significantly, Cecilia's maternal identity is as meaningful to Robbie as it is to Cecilia herself. Dragging himself to Dunkirk, Robbie, based on Cecilia's letters, imagines Cecilia in the maternity ward: Cecilia is directly involved in giving birth and protecting life (A 207). Describing birth and the maternal and paternal love she observes, Cecilia keeps Robbie from despair in foreshadowing their parental future (A 207). Facing desolation and death, Cecilia's ability to give birth and thus to bestow Robbie with a new identity (father) maintains his desire to live when his individual subjectivity has been reduced to acronyms and numbers in the army and thus been wiped "clean" of all identities (A 206). His desire to live is equally maintained by Cecilia's sexual attraction: "in truth, his thoughts dwelled less on birth than conception" (A 207). Cecilia's ambivalence is **necessary** to Robbie's survival. However, Cecilia is not reduced to the loving mermaid which is meant to love and fulfil her lover (Stamer 35); indeed, Cecilia, in need of salvation, requires Robbie's acceptance and support as much as he requires Cecilia's backing. A mermaid usually lacks a soul and only love can save her from a soulless existence (37). Cecilia is not accepted in her ambivalence; only Robbie understands Cecilia's confinement and restlessness and offers salvation in not only accepting but also appreciating her ambivalence.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, constantly shifts perspective among her characters; indeed, she "includes so many shifts that some readers find it disconcerting" (Harold 87). However, this agitation is intended. Writing a polyphonic novel to imply the ethical dimension of (narrative) perspective (Möller 87) and applying Bakhtinian

theory within Briony's, Emily's, Cecilia's and Robbie's thoughts and actions, Briony Tallis mediates both the necessity for the individual subject to enter into dialogue and the effort it takes to abandon monological structure; writing four characters who accept dialogue and its ambivalence to varying degrees, Briony Tallis encourages her readers and thus McEwan's readers to read against monologue by showing the severe consequences which Cecilia and Robbie are facing when they are "unnaturally" monologised by Briony and Emily.

In Briony, Briony Tallis constructs an individual subject of monological structure and monologising intent. Briony, who reads Cecilia's and Robbie's *paroles* by the fountains against the *langue* of her simplified reality and thereby ignores the social and historical situatedness of the two-sided utterance, fails to understand. Although Briony, in consequence, momentarily doubts her *langue* and contemplates the advantages of the polyphonic novel, she postpones ambivalence in favour of order to protect her authorship and individual subjectivity. Reading Robbie's letter and the linguistic sign *cunt*, she reverts to monological classification, abandons her newly gained insight into the complexity of a polyphonic life and induces fatal consequence for both Cecilia and Robbie; indeed, Briony Tallis raises the word *cunt* into the position of a transcendental signified which structures Briony's thoughts and actions. However, intending to write against monological structure, Briony Tallis instantaneously exposes the transcendental signified in anagrammatic and intertextual form and thus severely criticises Briony for her simplifying thoughts and actions.

In Emily, Briony Tallis constructs an individual subject of monologue, the adult version of Briony: clinging to order, ignoring complexity and resisting change. Her identities of *mother*, *housewife* and *hostess* are determined by her Victorian authoritative discourse of femininity; in order to maintain stability in her life, she shuns ambivalence as forcefully as Briony and derisively denies new approaches to femininity which she faces in Cecilia's university education. Cecilia, successfully performing her "feminine" duties despite her university education, (indirectly) questions Emily's position in family and society and is, therefore, negated by her mother; in not accepting Cecilia's ambivalence, Emily contributes to Cecilia's internal struggle between old expectations *of* women and new opportunities *for* women.

In Cecilia, Briony Tallis constructs an individual subject in inner turmoil: on the one hand, Cecilia is unwilling to restrict her individual subjectivity to either the old or the new; on the other hand, she is unable to accept her ambivalence against her family and society. Hence Cecilia becomes inactive and grows restless in her inaction. In contrast to Robbie, she does not understand the mechanism of ideological determination and is thus, although feeling the

inadequacy of being restricted, incapable of asserting her diversity against authoritative discourse.

In Robbie, Briony Tallis constructs an individual subject of dialogue who doubts monological content and structure. Robbie criticises ideological fervour in general and a Leavisian authoritative and restrictive reading in particular and dialogises two major approaches to the individual subject: literature and medicine. Explicating Robbie's criticism of (Leavisian) authoritative discourse only after Cecilia and Robbie's conversation by the fountain, Briony Tallis invites her readers to reread this conversation in which Robbie, at first sight, is patronising Cecilia within the authoritative discourse of practical criticism and great literature but, at second sight, encourages Cecilia's self-reflection and provokes her into a first anti-institutional thought. Robbie, in contrast to Cecilia understanding ideological proceeding in society, succeeds in appreciating Cecilia's ambivalence against himself and society.

Personalising Bakhtinian ideas within her characters and showing the fatal consequences the authoritative word of ideology may cause, Briony Tallis continues to encourage her readers' emancipation into dialogue. Mathews precisely concludes that, due to the narrative strategy of *Atonement*, "each new chapter forces the reader to revise his or her understanding of what was revealed earlier, sowing seeds of doubt that make the text blossom into a set of irreconcilable uncertainties" (147). Contextualising Cecilia and Robbie within the tradition of practical criticism and criticising practical criticism for its de-contextualised approach, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, inspires her readers and thus McEwan's readers to read *Atonement* in their own context. The multiple perspectives which Briony Tallis's narrator takes to mediate contradictory thoughts and actions disrupt the readers' (consuming and monologising) reading flow and hence the utterance – be it a movement, a word, a letter, a novel – is made the readers' utterance to dialogise. "While one reads, one can simultaneously recall earlier chapters or scenes, and these recollections may take a different emphasis than the original experience. One often pauses in reading to dwell on these memories, turns back pages to re-read, and re-interprets the perspective one has already enjoyed while one reads on" (Harold 140).

Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, equally contextualises his protagonist within Bakhtinian theory. In Serena, the narrating I, he constructs a reader who dwells on memories of her past self and who re-interprets the individual subject Serena in narrating and criticising a version of herself who was entirely opposed to dialogising literature and herself; indeed, Serena, the narrated I, welcoming authoritative discourse which is relieving

her from complex thought and action, even monologises novels which actually welcome the readers' dialogical involvement. Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena is, therefore, established as Briony's ideal reader and Robbie's reading foil; she is, furthermore, introduced as a historical continuation of Cecilia.

3.2.3 Serena

In *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan constructs acting writers who write "in defiance" of monological thought-systems (PMA xi) and encourage readers into actively admitting and producing ambivalence (interv. with Gonzáles 59); constructing them, furthermore, in different social and historical settings, he imparts that the monological structure of ideological discourse remains the same to be resisted even if ideological contents change. This is made rather explicit in a comparison of Cecilia and Serena, the narrated I. The plot of *Sweet Tooth* is set a generation later than the plot evolving around Cecilia in the first part of *Atonement*. Cecilia and Serena are at the same age, the former in the late 1930s and the latter in the early 1970s, and both are subjected to their mothers' notions about female higher education. Cecilia's life is destabilised when she returns home, fundamentally changed, and faces her mother's old expectations. Serena's life is destabilised when she plans to leave home, fundamentally avoiding change, and faces her mother's new possibilities. Serena is surprised to discover the "hardy little seed of a feminist" deeply buried under her mother's "conventional exterior" (ST 3). Mrs Frome forcefully argues that it is Serena's "*duty as a woman* to go to Cambridge to study maths" (ST 3; emphasis added); and, making use of her husband's social status and connection, arranges her daughter's place at university (ST 4). While Serena, the narrated I, is intimidated by her mother's authoritative discourse of feminism (ST 3), Serena, the narrating I, is impressed by her mother's daring: "As a woman? In those days, in our milieu, no one ever spoke like that. No woman did anything 'as a woman'" (ST 3). Retrospectively, she realises that her mother's relentless persistence "implied dissatisfaction" with only being "a slightly better educated housewife" (ST 4).

Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Cecilia and Serena face ideological determination at their mothers' thoughts and actions; while the ideological content which is defining Mrs Frome differs from the content defining Emily, each daughter suffers from the authoritative discourse which determines her mother's expectations. Mrs Frome, who is of the same generation as Cecilia, was exposed to the same conflict between the old and the new and, considering her present situation in life, was

eventually determined into old expectations. Giving up major identities of her individual subjectivity, she started compensating this lack with overdoing her duties towards her husband and daughters (ST 3-4). With hindsight, however, Serena, the narrating I, wonders if her mother, instead of living "the quintessence" of a Bishop's wife, lived its "parody" (ST 3) – a hidden form of resistance since open resistance was still inconceivable. Although the education system is changing (Serena, in contrast to Cecilia, will be awarded a proper degree) and women become established in the public sphere (ST 4), Mrs Frome's reluctance to publicly sympathise with the feminist cause indicates that ambivalence remains unthinkable in society (ST 3); instead of publicly being a feminist *and* a housewife *and* a mother, Mrs Frome conceals her feminist identity under the surface of the perfect "Bishop's wife" (ST 3). While the authoritative content determining social behaviour constantly changes in prominence, the ideological mechanism working in and on society and its individual subject remains the same: simplification and labelling in either/or. Both Emily and Mrs Frome[59] argue monologically; each generation of mothers denies their daughter's wishes: Emily expects marriage and motherhood, Mrs Frome expects "a proper career in science or engineering or economics" (ST 3). Although attempting to liberate the next generation of women, represented by her daughter, from old social expectations, Mrs Frome argues within ideological parameter and confines her daughter within new social possibilities: Serena "is manipulated into her future by her mother who feels dissatisfied with her own life and projects onto her daughter [her] ambition" (Chalupský 108). Unpractised in internal and external dialogue and hence unable to argue for studying literature and against studying math (ST 2), Serena accepts Mrs Frome's imperative without being committed to her cause (ST 4). Unconvinced of her mother's authoritative discourse but frightened by her ideological certainty (ST 3), Serena's life becomes instable; consequently, she tries to restore order – by being indifferent to any discussion and by welcoming monological and monologising contents which she encounters in literature, in Cambridge and in MI5.

Tom Haley constructs, by means of his narrating I, a narrated I which is unpractised in internal and external critical dialogue and, keen on maintaining order, practices indifference in avoiding any (inner) conflict; she even publicly devalues her opinion. Thus it is unexpected that Serena's choice of literature is subversive when she, in front of her college friends who are studying English literature, appreciates a literary text of

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[59] Chalupský argues that in both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the patriarchal hierarchy within the family and "the father's authority is supported 'from below' by the dutiful and caring housewife, a pragmatic woman whose life is devoted to her husband's career and the well-being of her children at the cost of her own suppressed aspirations" (107). However, the previous reading of Emily Tallis suggests that she is devoted to her husband's career but neither is she pragmatic nor is she suppressing aspirations; although incapable of performing her duties, Emily has internalised the content and order of the Victorian discourse of femininity.

Jacqueline Susann as much as a literary text of Jane Austen (ST 6). Serena's friends, amused by such unrefined opinion (ST 6), uncritically uphold the elitist distinction between high and low culture which binarily labels Jane Austen's novels superior to those of Jacqueline Susann. Serena, on the contrary, is not "impressed by reputations" (ST 6) and reads "pulp fiction, great literature and everything in between" (ST 6). However, "her taste may appear democratic and pluralistic […], yet her credulous, headlong, selective and self-projective reading is in fact inconsistent with the postmodernist distrust of a narrative authority and its emphasis on the reader's active collaboration in producing meaning" (Chalupský 109). Indeed, Serena's apparently de-ideologising approach is immediately reduced into the absurd: Serena is not conscious of the subversive potential within her egalitarian reading but gives all novels "the same rough treatment" for thoughtless entertainment and oblivion (ST 6). While Serena, the narrating I, is aware of her college friends' uncritical dismissal of Jacqueline Susann's novel (ST 6), Serena, the narrated I, **avoiding any (inner) conflict**, is indifferent (ST 6). Lacking, according to her friends and according to herself, any standard expert knowledge, she accepts and even welcomes not to be entitled to publicly voice an opinion. "Who really minded about the unformed opinions of a failing mathematician? *Not me*, not my friends" (ST 6; emphasis added).

Enjoying her freedom from informed and responsible opinion (ST 5), Serena is perfectly suited to write the column "What I Read Last Week" for her friend Rona Kemp's weekly magazine. Rona's magazine is "ahead of its time with its high-low mix" (ST 6) and Serena is expected to be "chatty and omnivorous" and, first and foremost, without any opinion (ST 7). Considering her reading background, Serena does not need to rise to this "challenge." "Easy! I wrote as I talked, usually doing little more than summarising the plots of the books I had just raced through, and, in conscious self-parody, I heightened the occasional verdict with *a row* of exclamation marks" (ST 7; emphasis added). Serena is happy not only to publicly consume literature but also **to publicly devalue her opinion**; indeed, her hollow approach to the (literary) text is highlighted in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* when the noun *row* implicates Robbie's cynical approach to the exclamation mark. Robbie thinks the exclamation mark "the first resort of those who shout to make themselves clearer" (A 85). According to Robbie, an individual subject whose statement is internally persuasive does not need to be emphasised by either volume (when spoken) or the exclamation mark (when written); while a dialogical statement is replete with content, the lacking content of a monological statement needs to be compensated by volume or exclamation mark. Robbie forgives "this punctuation only in his mother's letters where *a row* of five indicated a jolly good joke" (A 85; emphasis

added). Unpractised and disinterested in any kind of "relevant" statement, Serena's occasional verdict, highlighted in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, is *a jolly good joke* and neither taken seriously by her readers nor by herself.

Unpractised in internal and external critical dialogue, Serena, the narrated I, is easily externally persuaded; outside of indifference, she needs to either preach or serve to maintain order. Serena's "indifferent" column, "light-headed" and "alliterative" (ST 7), makes her successful and popular in times of ideologically charged (political) discourse (ST 7); unsurprisingly, her popularity dwindles when, enjoying her superior position of "student fame" (ST 7), Serena succumbs to the temptation of lecturing her readers about communism and life in the Soviet Union (ST 7-8). Uninterested in (political) debates developing around her (ST 8), she does not realise that anti-communism is by then criticised for its institutional and hence normative character (ST 9); instead, she publicly *idealises* the notions communicated in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (ST 8-9). Not only is she influenced and cultivated by her real-life partners (Chalupský 109), she is equally susceptible to popular thinkers: "I was a girl with untutored tastes, I was an empty mind, ripe for a takeover" (ST 7). Neither at home nor at school nor at university has Serena, the narrated I, learned to develop, defend and discuss ideas of her own; when reading Solzhenitsyn's novels, she is inexperienced in critical dialogue and thus *externally persuaded* by his notions: she becomes a **preaching** enthusiast for anti-communism and freedom of thought (ST 7). However, while Serena enthusiastically claims this human right, she is not *internally persuaded* by it; indeed, unthinkingly repeating Solzhenitsyn's ideas, she does not exert her own freedom of thought. Instead of critically engaging with communism and Solzhenitsyn's examination of this political concept, she uncritically accepts his judgement. Backed by the Swedish Academy, an important institution not to be contradicted (ST 9), she considers it her "*vital* public service" (ST 7; emphasis added), her "*mission to persuade*" her readers of Solzhenitsyn's notions (ST 7; emphasis added). Retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, sarcastically realises the ideological fervour of her political mission: "I knew my popular appeal would dwindle, but I didn't care. The dwindling proved my point, it was the heroic price I knew I must pay" (ST 7). Indeed, considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, becomes one of those preachers whom Robbie severely criticises for their attempt at persuading the public of their monological approach to life and individual subjectivity (A 91).

However, Serena, the narrated I, is not only criticised in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*. Tom Haley, constructing Serena in the difference between narrated I and narrating I, criticises the former's monological approach to communism and anti-communism by

accumulating ideologically connotated language within the latter's narrative to describe her past action: the noun *enthusiast*, the adjective *vital*, the noun *mission* and the verb *to persuade* are Bakhtinian authoritative words which silence dissent and imply the rejection of any divergent opinion; indeed, the adjective *vital* indicates the ideological process of naturalising a cultural construct (cf. *vital pursuit* in Robbie's criticism of Leavis's monologue). Serena, the narrating I, thus describes her past enthusiasm for Solzhenitsyn in terms of strictest monologue. "*He* was God. Who could match him?" (ST 9) *God* is *the* Derridean transcendental signified and *the* Bakhtinian authoritative word used by clerical institutions to substantiate their truths and powers. Serena satirises her past **subservience** when she compares Serena, the narrated I, to Mary Magdalene washing, even licking her saviour's feet. "Gazing at his photograph, I wanted to be his lover. I would have served him as my mother did my father. Box his socks? I would have knelt to wash his feet. With my tongue!" (ST 9) Thus Tom Haley's readers may observe a major point about ideological structure and order: Serena, the narrated I, if not performing indifference, needs to be in a position of superiority (instructing her readers) and/or in a position of inferiority (being instructed) to maintain order and stability: if she cannot preach, she prefers to serve.

Indeed, the biting satire Serena, the narrating I, is drawing of her younger self is harsh but telling: eye level, symbolising the equality of individual subjects and their (ambivalent) identities and ideas, is destructive to authoritative and thus orderly discourse – and Serena, the narrated I, would have been ready to *voluntarily* kneel. Ideological monologue is not only imposed *on* but desired *by* Serena, the narrated I, in order to maintain order; her wish for stability blinds her to any criticism of Solzhenitsyn's person, texts and ideas and to any divergent discourse in society (ST 7-9). **Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Robbie and Serena, the narrated I, are thus established as thinking and reading foils**: Robbie's approach to Leavis's theory and reading exemplifies that, independent of the reader's position in society, it is the reader's power and responsibility to dialogise and question influential thinkers; Serena's reading of Solzhenitsyn's novels, however, exemplifies a monological and monologising reading which does not admit any critical engagement. Indeed, Tom Haley's and thus McEwan's intentional reference to Solzhenitsyn's *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitsch* is particularly remarkable. In his preface to *A Move Abroad*, McEwan argues that Solzhenitsyn's novel was written "in defiance of a thought-system" (xi). He does not, however, propound "a politics" or "a total system to replace the one he attacks" (xi); neither does he deliver "a set of instructions by which we should live" (xi). Serena, nevertheless, corrupts his novel by monologising it and making it a tool of instruction which is, according to

McEwan, "the ineradicable human sickness" (xi). Consequently, considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both authorial author (Briony) and readerly reader (Serena) can monologise the written word into instruction and obedience.

Serena, the narrated I, is externally persuaded by Solzhenitsyn's anti-communism: since she has not learned to scrutinise his notions in contexts of new materials and conditions (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.), she can only reproduce his arguments; in consequence, when meeting resistance, she cannot defend his concepts. Eager to avoid "ongoing dialogic clash of ideologies, world-views, opinions and interpretations" (Allen, Intertextuality 27), she soon distances herself from Solzhenitsyn's subject and returns to her old recipe for order: non-committing indifference. While Chalupský argues that Serena, meeting Tony Canning, changes from a state of "childlike indifference to mature adulthood" (104) in which she, reading and discussing newspapers and history books (104), realises that "every single act bears strong personal responsibility, one in which the personal is inseparable from the public" (104), **Serena, the narrated I, does neither take personal responsibility nor dialogically involves with historical and social issues** – before or after meeting Tony. Only if she pleases, her life is orderly and stable and hence harmonious. Instead of thinking for herself, she adopts opinions which best suit the situation she is in. When being questioned about nuclear weapons, she repeats a phrase that she has read "somewhere" (ST 13): "nuclear weapons would have to be managed, not banned" (ST 13). Serena, the narrating I, emphasises her embarrassment and impatience with Serena, the narrated I, when sarcastically concluding: "so much for youthful idealism" (ST 13). She admits that she had "no particular views on the subject" (ST 13) and that, in another context, she "could have spoken up for nuclear disarmament" (ST 13). Serena, the narrated I, is neither externally nor internally persuaded by a specific approach to nuclear armament and adopts (normative) opinions "to please, to give the right answers, to be interesting" (ST 13). Such "flexibility" qualifies her for a career in the Secret Service and, being prepared for her job interview by an MI5 agent who learned to blend into various contexts for achieving his ends, is further practiced in inconspicuousness. When she is questioned, during her job interview, about current political affairs, she echoes "patrician, thoughtful-sounding opinions that could hardly be opposed" (ST 35).

Not internally persuaded of any career, Serena, the narrated I, is easily guided and determined by Tony's mindset and *his* plan for *her* future: "Nothing, I was doing nothing. I didn't know. A chance had come my way and I was taking it. *Tony wanted it so I wanted it* and I had little else going on. So why not?" (ST 24; emphasis added) Serena is particularly susceptible to Tony's suggestions because he aims at maintaining the order of a stable Western

civilisation. **Being instructed by Tony Canning, Serena, the narrated I, learns to appreciate the stability of Western institutional power and starts to adopt Tony's opinions.** Only retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, ironically criticises her attraction to "the great and good" who make "the world seem orderly and rich" by maintaining and enforcing efficient rules (ST 11-12). While Serena's sister Lucy, arguing within Bakhtinian scepticism of "the word of the fathers" (DI n.pag.), realises that social constructs, institutions and men originating in authoritative discourses of the past do not necessarily have a right to the present (ST 38), Serena, the narrated I, unquestioningly adopts Tony's admiration for past achievements.

> <u>Thanks to Tony I now knew</u> with what trouble it had been assembled, **Western civilisation**, imperfect as it was. *We* suffered from faulty **governance**, *our* freedoms were incomplete. But in this part of the world *our* **rulers** no longer had absolute **power**, **savagery** was mostly a private affair. Whatever was under my feet in the streets of Soho, *we* had raised *ourselves* above **filth**. The cathedrals, the parliaments, the paintings, the courts of law, the libraries and the labs – far too precious to pull down. (ST 38; all emphases added)

Serena monologically reproduces Tony's history lesson; she does not think about Tony's arguments but simply accepts them: she is subservient and grateful for now knowing (cf. underlined emphasis). The usage of the first-person plural (cf. italicised emphasis) indicates the extent to which she has internalised Tony's ideas. In Tony's best politician's language, she emphasises the importance of cultural achievements and constitutional institutions: the church, the government, the law, the arts and the sciences. Tony and Serena value exactly those institutions which, according to Barthes, propagate ideological content (TT 1212). Indeed, Serena's "lecture" on great Western civilisation is as patronising and monologising as Leavis's great tradition: the word *filth* others all who are not civilised within one of the major institutions, and the first-person plural does not allow for dissenting opinion and, without asking, comprises every member of Western society, including Tom Haley's and thus McEwan's readers. However, Tom Haley's construction of this passage is not only a warning in content but also in language: the usage of the first-person plural is that excessive and the accumulation of ideologically connotated words (cf. bold emphasis) that dense that readers are encouraged to stumble over the language of this passage and to *individually* consider their position in relation to Western civilisation and its institutions. Serena, the narrated I, personifies those who are comfortable with their ideologised mind and, to protect this mind, refrain from exploring the "uncivilised" world: "I didn't want history put to the torch. Come travelling? I wanted to travel

with civilised men like Tony Canning, who *took for granted the importance of laws and institutions* and thought constantly of how to improve them" (ST 39; emphasis added). According to Bakhtin and Barthes, ideological monologue settles and thrives where (past) institutions and discourses are taken for granted instead of being scrutinised; although Tony does want to improve society, he does not question the institutional and thus ideological structure of society itself which would endanger the power of the élite to which he belongs.

Being instructed by Tony Canning, Serena, the narrated I, does not only adopt Tony's opinions but also Tony's identities to please and establish herself in an environment of authoritative power. Seeking stability and thus intending to find her place among the élite, Serena, in her job interview, does not only reproduce her uncritical readings and Tony's opinions (ST 35-36): "And beyond university, the self I invented was derived entirely from my summer with him. Who else did I have? Sometimes I *was* Tony" (ST 35). Serena, groomed by Tony into the "kind of Englishwoman they would want to take on" (ST 23), pleases "the great and good," to whom Harry Tapp belongs, in thinking their contents and speaking their language. "My voice was Tony's. I spoke like a *master of a college*, the *chairman of a government committee of inquiry*, a *country squire*" (ST 36; emphasis added). While these individual subjects uphold order and stability in divergent fields of society, they all share a position of authoritative power which is necessary to maintain a stable Western civilisation.[60] Hence Serena is pleased with her performance of pleasing (ST 36); Serena, the narrating I, however, criticises a society in which ignorance is easily glossed over by social status: by speaking like institutional representatives, Serena, the narrated I, could give her "ignorance on any matter a certain shine" (ST 36).

Being averse to complexity and conflict, Serena, the narrated I, prefers to focus on one (major) identity at a time. When she is taught by Tony, she is hence rather irritated by his schoolmasterly behaviour: "These oral exams happened during walks in the woods, and over glasses of wine after the suppers he cooked. I resented his persistence. *I wanted us to be lovers, not teacher and pupil*" (ST 22; emphasis added). Serena's unwillingness and inability to simultaneously focus on more than one identity, which is an attempt to maintain order, turns into a disruptive moment when the identity which she is offered (junior assistant officer, i.e. office girl) is not the identity which she aspired (secret agent and, in the foreseeable future,

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[60] Laura Savu Walker intriguingly analyses power in *Sweet Tooth* and observes that "the order that characterizes Serena's work environment reflects the elite, class-based, and masculinist logic of the British Intelligence" (501). She concludes that "McEwan's novel draws together the interests of women and the working class in its social critique, questioning not so much the idea of difference as the political uses to which it has been put to justify an unequal distribution of power" (501).

director general).[61] Although she is disappointed, offended and desolate (ST 37-39), the identity of office girl is Serena's only possibility to "have order and purpose in [her] life and some independence" and to "leave behind Cambridge and its association with Tony" (ST 39). On the one hand, Serena accepts to become faceless and means to lose herself in the crowds of London (ST 39); on the other hand, however, **considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, adopts Briony's adjusting function of the literary text: while Briony writes literature to correct reality, Serena, the narrated I, reads literature to have reality corrected for her.** Serena, the narrated I, without a plan (ST 37) and without Tony guiding her (ST 39), craves "a form of *naive* realism" (ST 65; emphasis added); while reading novels, she does not mean to explore the unfamiliar, she wants to recognise and move within *her* world: "I paid special attention, I craned my *readerly* neck whenever a London street I knew was mentioned, or a style of frock, a real public person, even a make of a car" (ST 65-66; emphasis added). In the difference between narrating I and narrated I, Tom Haley's narrating I severely criticises her past reading practice which she came to understand as being *naïve* (for ignoring that fiction is always an interpretation of the physically perceptible) and *readerly*. Contextualising her past reading practice within the Barthesian theory of the *readerly*, she explicates her younger self's restrictive (and rather mathematical) approach to the literary text: measuring, gauging, aligning and thus being improved. The familiar in the literary text is Serena's measuring instrument to "gauge the quality of the writing by its accuracy" (ST 66); counter-checking the familiar, she is in control and can judge the literary text "by the extent to which it *aligned* with" her impressions of the real or by the extent to which it "*improved upon* them" (ST 66; emphasis added). Serena is not actively improving the familiar; she wants her impression of the familiar to be improved for her. In the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, is thus confirmed to be readerly Briony's counterpart: a narrative is expected to align and improve reality. Hence both protagonists perceive the polyphonic novel, replete with dissenting voices which cannot possibly be united, as dangerous.

Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Serena, the narrated I, perceive the polyphonic novel as a threat; to the disapproval of Serena, the narrating I, who sees through her past readerly consumption, Serena, the narrated I,

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[61] Ksiezopolska argues that Serena is offered a position at MI5 only because of her relationship with Tony and that each task she is charged with is meant to test whether she is loyal to the British government or a double agent. Hence she concludes that "it may be plausible that the actual goal of Sweet Tooth is to entrap not Tom, but Serena" (423). She reasons her argument with the surveillance of Serena, Tom's unsuitability as writer but suitability as Serena's love object (422-23) and Tony's storyline (426-29). This is an interesting reading of *Sweet Tooth* which I did not think of before reading Ksiezopolska's article. It proves once again that McEwan is a writer of abeyance and ambivalence who values the reader's contribution to continuing his text.

ignores the dialogical space which she is offered when reading a novel of ambivalence.
Serena, the narrated I, torn between improving reality and escaping reality, is not only reading for her familiar identity but for an ideal version of herself: "it was my best self I wanted, not the girl hunched in the evenings in her junk-shop chair over a cracked-spine paperback, but a fast young woman pulling open the passenger door of a sports car, leaning over to receive her lover's kiss, speeding towards a rural hideout" (ST 65). With hindsight Serena, the narrating I, admits that her best self was a stereotyped character: "I would not admit to myself that I should have been reading a lower grade of fiction, like a mass-market romance" (ST 65). However, having absorbed snobbery in Tony's education (ST 65), Serena, the narrated I, is not content to encounter her best self in "inferior" novels: it is finally Jane Austen over Jacqueline Susann (ST 65). The polyphonic novel which Serena is thus approaching is an excellent space for readers to negotiate their identities in internal dialogue (Bakhtin and Vološinov 95). Instead of presenting a flat heroine to "slip inside" (ST 65), these novels offer Serena a dialogical space: "sometimes my *alter ego* shimmered fleetingly *between the lines*, she floated towards me like a friendly ghost from the pages of Doris Lessing, or Margaret Drabble or Iris Murdoch" (ST 65; emphasis added). However, while Serena, the narrating I, retrospectively understands the possibilities the polyphonic novel was offering her, Serena, the narrated I, is unwilling to read *between the lines* and explore the potential of her individual subjectivity: "their versions were too educated or too clever, or not quite lonely enough in the world to be me" (ST 65). Habitually, she does not dare to enter into dialogue with her alter egos who are eliminated by *measuring* them against her "real" self: *too* educated, *too* clever, *not* quite lonely *enough*. The other and its altering moment in polyphonic novels are thus silenced and dissolve between the lines when Serena fears to engage them in a signifying process. Serena's active resistance against active involvement prevents her reading from becoming a means of negotiating and establishing the ambivalence of her identities. Serena is thus as unwilling as Briony to explore her identity while reading: "I would not have been satisfied until I had in my hands a novel about a girl in a Camden bedsit who occupied a lowly position in MI5 and was without a man" (ST 65). Analysing this passage, Booth pointedly concludes that "this view of literature idealises representation as 'natural' reflection, mimesis as the flawless mirror surface, without any distorting angle or perspective" (861). Reflecting her past reading practice, Serena, the narrating I, hence cannot but resignedly admit that she was consuming literature in a "*mindless way*" (ST 65; emphasis added).

In their function of acting writers for McEwan, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, having already implied the impossibility of a stable relation between signifier and signified by contextualising their protagonists within (post)Saussurean theory, continue to personify the development of intertextual theory in processing Bakhtin's ideas on *langue* and *parole*; on the social and historical situatedness of the individual subject's two-sided utterance; on externally authoritative and internally persuasive discourse; and on the polyphonic novel.

Briony Tallis deprecates Briony's monological approach to reality and fiction which originates in her aligning complex individual utterances to a simplified *langue* and which fatally de-contextualises Cecilia and Robbie's encounter by the fountain. Briony Tallis, therefore, subverts Briony's attempts at imposing structure and dialogises Briony's transcendental signified *cunt* into an intertextual signifier. Briony Tallis, furthermore, criticises Emily's authoritative discourse of femininity which monologises her daughter; sympathises with Cecilia who is incapable of action in the unaccepted ambivalence of old expectations and new possibilities; and depicts a dialogical alternative to Briony's and Emily's monologue in Robbie's dialogical approaches to reading (Leavis) and to reading Cecilia (nymph).

Tom Haley emphasises the difference between monological and dialogical reading processes by constructing a narrative situation which allows him to distinguish between Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, who reflects her past actions and harshly criticises her younger self for her compulsive orderliness which is restrictive to her individual subjectivity. Her focus on order makes Serena, the narrated I, blind to ideological simplification and institutional generalisation and thus vulnerable to external (authoritative) discourses and concepts of which she is not internally persuaded: her mother's feminism, Solzhenitsyn's ideas on politics, and Tony's praise of Western civilisation. Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, impressed by her mother's feminism, is established as a historical continuation of Cecilia; Serena and Robbie are established as reading foils when the former is monologically thinking and consuming literature and the latter is dialogically thinking and daring the reading of those who think themselves superior; and Serena is confirmed as Briony's reading counterpart: both refrain from the polyphonic novel which can destabilise their monological individual subjectivity and orderly life.

Writing characters and narrators who accept dialogue and its ambivalence to varying degrees and showing the severe consequences of monological thought and action, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley encourage their readers and thus McEwan's readers to read against monologue; thus they continue to assist their readers' emancipation from readerly monologue into writerly

dialogue. Both Saussure's systematic and Bakhtin's social approach emphasise the impossibility of the (linguistic) sign respectively the individual utterance to have a meaning outside of value and context: outside of dialogue. Kristeva, dialogising and theorising Saussure's and Bakhtin's concepts, focuses on the textuality of writing and reading subject which meet within the text to construct the author. Undergoing Kristevan ideas, both Briony and Serena start doubting the author's authorial power and the revelation of the readerly text.

3.3   Kristeva's Text

Kristeva's theory on text and intertextuality is complex and furthers Bakhtin's struggle for freedom in supporting his disclosure of monological discourse in society. "If we accept Bakhtin's vision of society as always exhibiting a conflict between monologic and dialogic forces, then the monologic forces will argue for what it takes to be logical $(0-1)$, whilst dialogic forces, for Kristeva 'poetic language', will constantly struggle to express the nonlogical $(0-2)$" (Allen, Intertextuality 44). Monological forces are those which centre on a transcendental signified (the church, the government, the author etc.); dialogical forces are those resisting, visualising and transgressing authoritative discourse in the dialogical and, according to Kristeva, intertextual process of poetic language. Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, attempt poetic language and personalise Kristevan ideas on dialogue and intertextuality within their protagonists. In the first subchapter (3.3.1 Briony, Cecilia and Robbie), it will be analysed how Bakhtin's and Kristeva's denotative and objectified discourse, mediating the authority of monological forces in society, restrict Briony to the identity of nurse; how Briony focuses on Bakhtin's and Kristeva's ambivalent discourse to protect her individual subjectivity and, finally, decides to unfinalise her narrative to guide her readers into dialogical engagement; and how Briony Tallis visualises the process of intertextuality in her leitmotif *Come back.*, in which Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's readings and contexts are absorbed, levelled and transformed. In the second subchapter (3.3.2 Serena and Tom), it will be shown how Tom Haley constructs Serena to be a reading protagonist who, about to meet the author and involved in an unwelcome signifying process, experiences a Kristevan reading practice which implies the difficulty to define the author and authorial intention based on the author's narrative; and how Tom Haley constructs Tom to be a writer who impedes Serena's readerly consumption and encourages her to consider ambivalence and independent thought. However, intertextual theory is not only considered a means of liberation,

but it is equally linked to existential fear. Hence in the third and fourth subchapter (3.3.3 Robbie / 3.3.4 Tom), it will be shown how the anxieties linked to intertextual processes are personalised within Robbie and Tom.

3.3.1   Briony, Cecilia and Robbie

When first considering ambivalence and its significance, Briony displaces her insight into the equality of "different minds" and the possibility to show the "equal value" of those different minds in a polyphonic novel (A 40). However, the value of this approach is remembered when Briony trains to become a nurse. **Briony Tallis, contextualising her protagonist within Bakhtinian and Kristevan theory, chooses her narrator to observe Briony's development towards dialogue when Briony experiences for herself the destructive force of order and its denotative word.** Intending to join "the war effort" (A 275), Briony, instead of taking her place at Girton College (A 275), starts nurse training. She quickly realises that her trainers are interested in one identity only. On her first day of training, Briony approaches her supervising sister "to point out courteously that a mistake had been made with her name badge" and that "she was B. Tallis, not, as it said on the little rectangular brooch, N. Tallis" (A 275). In consequence of her remark, Briony is publicly reduced to her identity of *nurse* (A 275). The word *nurse*, in this context, can be read as *denotative*. Bakhtin names three categories of discourse (DP n.pag.) which are paraphrased by Kristeva when introducing her idea of intertextuality (MDR 93-94). Both Bakhtin and Kristeva distinguish between the *denotative* word/discourse (*le mot direct/denotative*), the *objectified* word/discourse (*le mot objectal*) and the *double-voiced*/*ambivalent* word/discourse (*le mot ambivalent*). A *denotative* word indicates the "direct, unmediated discourse directed exclusively toward its referential object, as an expression of the speaker's ultimate semantic authority" (Bakhtin, DP n.pag.). Authors employ this discourse to denote stable meaning and hence to establish authorial authority over their characters and readers (Kristeva, MDR 93). Briony is *denoted* by her supervising sister in terms of her profession: "You are, and will remain, as you have been designated. Your Christian name is of no interest to me. Now kindly sit down, *Nurse* Tallis" (A 275; emphasis added). Her supervising sister does not only denote her status quo by reducing Briony's consciousness to her profession, she also denies her any future development; hence she signifies her power over Briony's and her fellow trainees' individual subjectivity (A 275). This subjectivity is monological in input and output: "it was the time of adapting to unthinking obedience" (A 275). The trainees are forced to uncritically memorise several imperatives which

are listed in their handbook (A 272); one of the major commandments is to keep professional and hence anonymous distance: since a nurse must only be perceived in her function, "in no circumstances should a nurse communicate to a patient her Christian name" (A 272). Consequently, Briony's life at the hospital is a life of order; strict rules and routines dominate her days (A 270-77). However, instead of appreciating this order and life within a community which expects her, in contrast to her family, to maintain this order, Briony feels restricted and reduced: "this narrowing […] was above all a stripping away of identity" (A 275); in her daily routine, the individual subject which she was before her training is fading: her previous life is "becoming indistinct" (A 276). While Briony, the child, tried to extinguish Leon's previous life to norm him, Briony, the adolescent, is now herself normed. "The uniform, like all uniforms, eroded identity, and the daily attention required – ironing pleats, pinning hats, straightening seams, shoe polishing, especially the heels – began a process by which other concerns were slowly excluded" (A 276). However, although Briony realises the restriction of her individual subjectivity to the identity of nurse, she does not fight this restriction; with her mind emptied by routine (A 276), she and her fellow trainees are vulnerable to external and ideological persuasion: "their defences were down, so that they were easily persuaded of the absolute authority of the ward sister" (A 276); indeed, "there could be no resistance as she filled their vacated minds" (A 276).

Briony's vacated mind is filled and thus determined by a specific school of nursing, established by Florence Nightingale, which is based on military discipline (A 276). Physical and psychological drill reduces her language to the language of nursing (A 269-77). The language Briony is allowed to use is comprised of *objectified* words. Hence **Briony does not only experience the destructive force of order and its denotative word but also the destructive force of order and its objectified word.** This second category of discourse describes the "discourse of a represented person" (Bakhtin, DP n.pag.) and signifies objects in the characters' discourses (Kristeva, MDR 93): gentian violet, aquaflavine emulsion, painted lead lotion (A 227). According to Bakhtin and Kristeva, the denotative and the objectified word are both univocal (MDR 93). They are monological and they monologise. Briony, who tried to author her world to establish order, is now herself authored. She is denoted and her discourse is objectified. Holquist, in his discussion of Bakhtin's theories, notes that "there is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood: they both exist in order to mean" (Dialogism 23).[62] Consequently, monological language (the denotative and

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[62] Holquist devotes a chapter each to "Existence as Dialogue" (Dialogism 14-39) and "Language as Dialogue" (Dialogism 40-66) and is thus foregrounding the epistemological and ontological aspects of dialogism.

objectified, i.e. the authoritative word) reduces and restricts both meaning in language and meaning in individual subjectivity. While Briony, the child, attempted to force her simplified structure and authoritative language on her family in order to be recognised and thus meaningful, she realises the insufficiency of authoritative language, simplified structure and normed identity when the language of nursing is forced on her. She finally grasps that individual subjectivity and language, if meaningful, are "a shared event" (Dialogism 28): they exist in dialogue only.

However, **in a "military" context of authoritative language, Briony is denied any (internal) dialogue and is reduced into monological subjectivity.** During teatime, Briony and her fellow trainees are too tired to converse let alone discuss (A 274); furthermore, the home sister supervises the trainees to "ensure *decorum*" (A 274), univocal norm and order. Considering the progressive obliteration of her previous life and identities, Briony is furthermore kept from internal dialogue with her former identities; hence "in those early months, Briony often thought that her only relationship was with Sister Drummond" (A 274). Sister Drummond is omnipresent, determining Briony's thoughts and actions (A 270-74), and Briony is "*abandoning herself* to a life of strictures, rules, obedience, housework, and a constant fear of disapproval" (A 276; emphasis added). According to David K. Danow, the distinction between self (Briony) and other (Sister Drummond) is fundamental to Bakhtin's thought (59): "the sense of the other in relation to the self is accorded striking affirmation as *a formative influence*" (59; emphasis added). Ideally, the other initiates "dialogical interaction" and "assists in the ongoing process of determining the self" (59-60) in internally persuasive discourse which is always "half-ours and half-someone else's" (Bakhtin, DI n.pag.). However, if the formative influence of the other is, like in Sister Drummond's case, clearly authoritative, the self's language and subjectivity are at risk of being monologised. Zima, in his discussion of Bakhtinian theory, pointedly observes that the other is both chance and danger (Theorie 376). Considering that the other is even necessary to establish consciousness, as "the other is formative of the self in the sense that one is not able to know oneself without the interacting presence of the other" (Danow 60), Briony's relationship with Sister Drummond reduces her indeed to monological subjectivity: she is recognised only when following or (involuntarily) not following Sister Drummond's rules.

Furthermore, **Briony is not only reduced to a state of monological subjectivity; Briony's training is also a regression into a state of individuality**: normed by routine, her subjectivity is little by little deactivated into instinctive action. This process is accelerated by "physical discomfort" which "helped close down Briony's mental horizons" (A 275): a raw

neck, chilblains and hurting feet diminish her to physical experience of pain and tiredness (A 275-76). In contrast to studying at Girton College, "there were no tutorials here, no one losing sleep over the precise course of her intellectual development" (A 276); instead, "she was a maid, a skivvy and, in her hours off, a crammer of simple facts" (A 277). On the one hand, Briony is happy that she is kept from thinking about the war (A 277) and her guilt (Pastoor 208); on the other hand, the learning method expected of the trainee nurses, a monological process of *cramming* facts which will usually result in *disgorging* facts (ST 2)*,* is, as in *Sweet Tooth*, strongly criticised and shown to be thwarting personal dialogical development.

Experiencing the destructive force of order when her language and individual subjectivity are systematically denoted and objectified, Briony's writing, written for *self-protection*, develops into unstructured fragments. While Pastoor argues that Briony is *sacrificing herself* in order to atone (208), only when *saving herself* in writing, Briony succeeds in initiating processes of atonement. Influenced by the modernist novel, particularly the writing of Virginia Woolf which offers her new insights into unstructured human consciousness (A 282), Briony's approach to literature is changing to safe herself.[63] In her present situation, she does not write to norm reality; indeed, even the cover of her notebook, which has "*marbled* cardboard covers" (A 280; emphasis added), indicates Briony's new understanding of writing: the pattern of marble is random and so is Briony's textual production. "Her entries consisted of artistic manifestos, trivial complaints, character sketches and simple accounts of her day which increasingly shaded off into fantasy" (A 280). This fragmented writing portrays herself: "here, behind the badge and uniform, was her true self, secretly hoarded, quietly *accumulating*" (A 280; emphasis added). Her individual subjectivity is not structured; it is a mosaic of impressions, sketches and imaginations. Facing the determination of her identity in her daily life, Briony refrains from establishing order: "she rarely read back over what she had written" (A 280). She does not enforce an artificial structure on her writing and thus on herself. However, she loves to flip through the pages "covered in her own handwriting" (A 280). Intentionally separated from friends and family, Briony needs to recognise herself through her unique handwriting which proves that she remains, despite her training, an individual subject which lives consciously and, furthermore, awakens to the *ambivalent word*.

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[63] Briony's engagement with the modernist novel and the impact of modernist contents, forms and ethics on *Atonement* have been thoroughly discussed in secondary literature (e.g. Apstein; Birrer; Bentley; Cormack; D'Angelo; Finney, Oblivion; Marcus; Pedot; Phelan, Experiencing Fiction; and Wolf). Please read Robinson's article "The Modernism of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*" for the most comprehensive discussion of modernism including the contents and forms of various modernist authors and critics (Cyril Connolly, Virginia Woolf, Rosamond Lehmann, Henry James and James Joyce).

Briony first tries ambivalent discourse, a "discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse" (Bakhtin, DP n.pag.; cf. Kristeva MDR 93), within her episodic notes. A discourse transgressing the self and involving the other requires empathy and imagination (McEwan, interv. with Appleyard n.pag.), processes which Briony practices on "her" patients. "She liked to write out what she imagined to be their rambling thoughts. She was under no obligation to the truth, she had promised no one a chronicle" (A 280). Imagining different minds and accepting their equal value liberate her from a denotative and objectified language and from her monological setting: "the journal preserved her dignity: she might look and behave like and live the life of a trainee nurse, but she was really an important *writer* in disguise" (A 280; emphasis added). While writing per se offers a moment of comforting continuity (A 280), her writing has changed: she is no longer an author bound to guidance, plot and character (A 281) but a writer focussing on "thought, perception, sensations" (A 281). This becomes most obvious in her novella *Two Figures by the Fountain*. **Within her novella, Briony chooses the ambivalent word within a symmetrical design to protect herself through writing.** In writing, she can compensate her own lack of consciousness in describing "the conscious mind as a river through time" (A 281) and in focussing on those moments in which the conscious mind is growing by the dialogical influence of the other and, meeting impediment, is often monologically and unnaturally focused in one direction: she would write "its onward roll, as well as all the tributaries that would *swell* it, and the obstacles that would *divert* it" (A 281-82; emphasis added). She can, furthermore, "enter a mind" and "show it at work [actively thinking], or being worked on [passively being influenced]" (A 282). According to Briony, the equality and ambivalence of conscious minds are written and asserted "within a symmetrical design" (A 282). Apparently, symmetry is pure order and thus detrimental to dialogue; *symmetrical*, however, designates that which has several parts of equal size (and form) and thus importance. A symmetrical design, therefore, allows for equality and ambivalence: in Briony's novella *Two Figures by the Fountain*, the same event is told from three different but equal and ambivalent perspectives (A 311-15).

Symmetry is thus a form of order which implicitly initiates doubt since neither of the versions is pointed out to be the correct one. Briony is excited by her achievement of *abeyance* (cf. 2.2.1 Dialogue), by "its design, the pure geometry and the *defining uncertainty*" (A 281; emphasis added). Symmetry also furthers the orientation towards the discourse of the other: in symbols like the vase, which are so prominent in modernist writing, the voices and their discourses are connected and rewritten in different meanings. The signifier /vɑːz/ is one of the most transgressing signifiers Briony Tallis includes in her novel. According to Bakhtin, an

author can intentionally choose either to create a monoglot utterance or to evoke dialogue through ambivalent discourse; in the latter case, "the writer makes use of another's word – already permeated with an initial, original intent – by incorporating his own specific intentions within it" (Danow 28). The ambivalent word thus dialogically transgresses the 0-1 interval of denotative and objectified words in signifying at least two different meanings in the continuum of 0-2: 0 signifies 1 and 2 transgresses 1 (Kristeva, MDR 90). The signifier /vɑːz/ signifies a jar in which picked flowers are kept in water for decorative reasons; considering the history of the Tallis family, however, this meaning is transgressed when the vase is valued "for Uncle Clem, and the lives he had saved, the river he had crossed at midnight, and his death just a week before the Armistice" (A 24). Briony Tallis incorporates even further intentions: the vase symbolises the awkwardness between Cecilia and Robbie and Briony's monologising reading of the utterances evolving around the vase. Retrospectively read, the vase suggests the disintegration of a family and, bearing in mind Uncle Clem, foreshadows Robbie's military life. **Briony Tallis thus transgresses the signified of a linguistic sign in not only doubling but deferring meaning.**[64]

Bakhtin himself notes that his classification of discourse is "somewhat abstract in character" (DP n.pag.). A discourse which is in one context used to denote and objectify can in another induce dialogue: "a concrete discourse may belong simultaneously to different varieties and even types" since "interrelationships with another person's discourse in a concrete living context are of a dynamic and not a static character" (DP n.pag.). This is perfectly exemplified in the various possibilities how to read the word *cunt*: *cunt* is a *denotative* word when it is raised into the position of a transcendental signified; it is an *objectified* word in the discourse of Robbie; and it is an *ambivalent* word when read in its social and historical and literary usage. Accordingly, depending on the context, "all utterances contain within them the dialogic force of competing interpretations, definitions, social and ideological inflections" (Allen, Intertextuality 219). Kristeva, therefore, eventually denies the possibility of ideological discourse since each word, even the monoglot word, can be dialogised. This is visualised in Briony Tallis's "modernist" leitmotif by which she, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, links Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's voices and discourses. According to Robinson, the phrase is "the author Briony's cry to Robbie the dead soldier and Cecilia the dead sister" (473); however, while this reading is perfectly valid, the phrase is more comprehensive. Before

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[64] Finney offers an intriguing reading of the symbol *vase* (Oblivion 77).

exploring the phrase, it is necessary to recall the various and varying utterances and contexts of the phrase *Come back*.

1.	When meeting her distraught sister in the hallway, Cecilia *remembers* using this phrase to comfort Briony after nightmares:

    When she was small and prone to nightmares – those terrible screams in the night – Cecilia used to go to her room and wake her. *Come back*, she used to whisper. *It's only a dream. Come back.* And then she would carry her into her own bed. (A 44)

2.	Briony *remembers* Cecilia using this phrase in the moment in which she returns from a daydream:

    The cost of oblivious daydreaming was always this moment of return, the realignment with what had been before and now seemed a little worse. Her reverie, once rich in plausible details, had become a passing silliness before the hard mass of the actual. It was difficult to come back. *Come back*, her sister used to whisper when she woke her from a bad dream. Briony had lost her godly power of creation, but it was only at this moment of return that the loss became evident […]. (A 76)

3.	Robbie *remembers* this phrase from Cecilia's last letter:
    And there was hope. *I'll wait for you. Come back.* There was a chance, just a chance, of getting back. (A 202-03)

4.	Robbie *remembers* this phrase from a letter which Cecilia wrote before his relocation to France:

    "I'm not going to go away," she wrote in her first letter after Liverpool. "I'll wait for you. Come back." She was quoting herself. She knew he would remember. From that time on, this was how she ended every one of her letters to Robbie in France […]. (A 210)

5.	Robbie again *remembers* this phrase from Cecilia's last letter:
    Must dash. You're in my thoughts every minute. I love you. I'll wait for you. Come back. Cee. (A 213)

6. Robbie *remembers* this phrase from Cecilia's letters while feverish:

> Turner found himself too afflicted by impressions, too fevered, too exhausted to sleep. Through the material of his coat he felt for the bundle of her letters. *I'll wait for you. Come back.* The words were not meaningless, but they didn't touch him now. It was clear enough – one person waiting for another was like an arithmetical sum, and just as empty of emotion. (A 261)

7. Robbie *remembers* the first time Cecilia spoke this phrase to him:

> Now that he himself was calm, of course he saw how fine it really was that she was waiting. Arithmetic be damned. *I'll wait for you* was elemental. It was the reason he had survived. It was the ordinary way of saying she would refuse all other men. Only you. *Come back.* He remembered the feel of the gravel through his thin-soled shoes, he could feel it now, and the icy touch of the handcuffs on his wrists. […] Then she put a finger on the handcuffs and said she wasn't ashamed, there was nothing to be ashamed of. She took a corner of his lapel and gave it a little shake and this was when she said, "I'll wait for you. Come back." She meant it. Time would show she really meant it. (A 264-65)

8. Cecilia uses this phrase to recall Robbie from his agonising memories:

> With a tenderness that Briony remembered from years ago, waking in the night, Cecilia said, "Come back … Robbie, come back." (A 343)

9. Briony contemplates Cecilia and Robbie's love and *remembers* Cecilia's love for her as expressed in this phrase:

> Their love. Neither Briony nor the war had destroyed it. This was what soothed her as she sank deeper under the city. How Cecilia had drawn him to her with her eyes. That tenderness in her voice when she called him back from his memories, from Dunkirk, or from the roads that led to it. She used to speak like that to her sometimes, when Cecilia was sixteen and she was a child of six and things went impossibly wrong. Or in the night, when Cecilia came to rescue her from a nightmare and take her into her own bed. Those were the words she used. *Come back. It was only a dream. Briony, come back.* How easily this unthinking family love was forgotten. (A 349)

The phrase *Come back.* is primarily remembered. Briony Tallis thus emphasises a major aspect of intertextual theory: language is non-referential. Since a linguistic sign's social and historical

origin is lost (Bakhtin, SG[65] 93), Bakhtin argues that it does not refer to reality but to the contexts in which it was previously uttered (SG 93). Consequently, "the object, as it were, has already been articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways" and "various viewpoints, world views, and trends *cross, converge, and diverge* in it" (SG 93; emphasis added). **By means of the phrase *Come back.* Briony Tallis crosses Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's converging and diverging voices without privileging one of them.** Hence neither Cecilia, nor Briony, nor Robbie can lay claim to an original context and thus meaning of the phrase *Come back.* Although Robbie, desperate to survive, pinpoints the first time Cecilia spoke the phrase to him (context 7), and although Robbie asserts that Cecilia, when writing her letters, is quoting herself from this moment when she first uttered the phrase and its promise (context 4), Briony Tallis's readers and thus McEwan's readers know that Cecilia has spoken the phrase before to comfort Briony. While Cecilia is indeed quoting herself to remind Robbie of the promise she gave when first speaking the phrase to *him*, Cecilia is already quoting herself when speaking the phrase to Robbie for the first time; consequently, Cecilia's love and care for both Briony and Robbie cross, converge and diverge in this phrase. Based on Bakhtin's theory that an utterance is referential only in terms of (con)text, Kristeva concludes that a (con)text is a mosaic of previous (con)texts which are absorbed and transformed within the text (MDR 85); this (con)text is then again absorbed and transformed with every textual production. When Robbie remembers the phrase *Come back.* (contexts 3 to 7), Briony's loss of authorial influence (context 2) is absorbed and transformed within it; however, this loss has already absorbed and transformed Cecilia's care for Briony (context 1). When Cecilia recalls Briony from a nightmare, a dream which Briony is unable to control, *Come back.* is a phrase of protection which returns Briony to a reality which is at least partly controllable. In her daydreams, however, Briony is in full control of what is happening, since she creates those daydreams: "it had all been her – by her and about her" (A 76); hence the process of *coming back* is associated with returning from an authorially controlled daydream to the nightmare of chaotic reality. In her moment of epiphany, the process of *coming back* even turns into Briony's worst nightmare: "Briony had lost her godly power of creation, but it was only in this moment of *return* that the loss became evident" (A 76; emphasis added). The phrase *Come back.* is ambivalently transformed into a threat and into the nightmare the phrase once protected from: a loss of power. Her inability to deal with this loss accounts for Robbie's nightmares and destroys the joyous

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[65] Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. 1979. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1986. Print. University of Texas Press Slavic Series 8. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* was originally published in Russian entitled *Éstetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (1979).

freedom he feels "in his life and in his limbs" (A 91). When Robbie remembers the phrase *Come back.*, it implies all his ordeals caused by Briony's monological and monologising action. The phrase *Come back.* is thus rewritten into an appeal: authorial responsibility is a dialogical responsibility.

In Robbie's context, the phrase *Come back.* gains an appellative function and simultaneously resumes its protective moment. Although Robbie momentarily abandons hope and reduces the phrase *Come back.* to a signifier-signified relation bare of all emotion (context 6), the phrase nevertheless implies Cecilia and Robbie's hope that he will return from his nightmare and that Briony has not authored all his / their life into misery (A 234). However, the phrase *Come back.* does not only relate to physical but also to social survival (A 212-13 and A 228-29); learning about the possibility of being acquitted, Robbie might *come back* to continue the life of freedom which Briony destroyed: "To be cleared would be a pure state. […] His business was simple. Find Cecilia and love her, marry her, and live without shame" (A 228). Robbie knows, however, that even if he is cleared from a crime he did not commit, he is by now "truly" guilty of crimes against humanity. Hence *coming back* is no longer a linear forward movement (finding Cecilia) but equally a movement into the past.

> So he would *go back* the way he had come, *walk back through the reverses* of all they had achieved, across the drained and dreary marshes, past the fierce sergeant on the bridge, through the bombed-up village, and along the ribbon road that lay across the miles of undulating farmland, watching for the track on the left on the edge of the village, opposite the shoe shop, and two miles on, go over the barbed-wire fence and through the woods and fields to an overnight stop at the brothers' farm, and next day, in yellow morning light, on the swing of a compass needle, hurry through that glorious country of little valleys and streams and swarming bees, and take the rising footpaths to the sad cottage by the railway. (A 262; emphasis added)[66]

Coming back will necessarily be a confrontation with traumatic experiences in which the question of guilt[67] will be approached: Robbie needs to go back and "ask the Flemish lady and

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[66] Although its contents are not discussed in detail and its full length is not necessarily required to illustrate Robbie's mental backward movement, the urgency of this backward movement is implied in the length of this sentence which is neither interrupted by semicolons nor colons. Hence it is quoted in full.

[67] According to Head, Briony Tallis "allows Briony's crime to be subsumed in – and overshadowed by – the larger movements of twentieth-century history" (171). I would like to suggest a different reading. Indeed, "the larger trauma of the war merges in his [Robbie's] mind with the personal disaster of Briony's false accusation" (Head 171); however, instead of reading this as a relativisation of Briony's guilt, it can be read as the suggestion that guilt – be it on personal or (inter)national scale – is always resulting from of a lack of dialogical engagement with the other.

her son if they held him accountable for their deaths" (A 263). **In the movement of *coming back* chronology is intertextually abandoned and a movement forwards is simultaneously a movement backwards.** However, while *coming back* is the only hope left for Robbie, forgiveness and thus purity are only a possibility: the Flemish lady "*might* say no" (A 263; emphasis added). The phrase *Come back.* is thus an ambivalent phrase designating opposing movements and ambivalent possibilities.

When Briony contemplates Cecilia and Robbie's love (the last context), the phrase *Come back.* absorbs all its previous usages and crosses the speakers' contexts: it incorporates several intentions and each meaning is equal. **The phrase *Come back.* indicates that Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's lives are, ambivalently, inextricably separated: they converge and they diverge.** Cecilia is recalling both Briony and Robbie from their nightmares: Briony when she was a child, Robbie when he was in prison and war; when Cecilia recalls Robbie from his nightmare and stops him from attacking Briony, she also recalls Briony from her new worst nightmare of having destroyed Cecilia and Robbie's love. The phrase implies motherly, sisterly and romantic love in different contexts, and they merge into family love as practiced by Cecilia, imagined by Robbie and hoped for by Briony. Several hopes are interrelated in this phrase: hope that Robbie will survive the war to live happily with Cecilia; hope that Cecilia and Robbie will forgive Briony and sisterly love might be restored; hope that Robbie might be cleared from all guilt. However, Briony's last remembering of *Come back.* is, in line with Bakhtin's argument, in danger of becoming a denotative word. Considering the context of Briony's loss of authorial power (context 2), the phrase might express hope that authorial power can be reinstated to allow for atonement in literature: "She knew what was required of her. Not simply a letter, but a new draft, an atonement, and she was ready to begin" (A 349).

According to Anja Müller-Wood, Briony Tallis's *Atonement* is a "cunning and manipulative tale" (157) – a prolonged non-atonement (148). She argues that Briony Tallis's narrative strategies are meant "to assert her dominance" (146) when she strategically blames herself to defend herself (146-48) – for example by collapsing the difference between innocence and guilt (153) and claiming to change the outcome for her readers' sake (149).[68] In this reading of Briony and Briony Tallis, the last sentence of Briony Tallis's novel, in which Briony aims at narrative atonement, does indeed imply a regression to authorial power and monologising

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[68] Approaching *Atonement* from a didactical perspective, Müller-Wood argues that "the task of the teacher is to embarrass the narrator" and her manipulating narrative strategies to incite the students' "readerly resistance" (157). While Müller-Wood surely aims at emancipating her students from authorial influence, her (teaching) approach is, nevertheless, inhibiting dialogue, for she does not allow for the possibility that her students might disagree with her reading of *Atonement* and, especially, Briony Tallis.

manipulation. However, in the context of intertextual theory and development, Briony's explicit decision to write a *draft* is a pragmatic move to encourage her readers' dialogical involvement with her literary text. A draft is a dialogical concept: structured but never final (*OED*, def. 4).[69] Briony Tallis does not only draft her novel in form, though; she also drafts and unfinalises her novel in content.

Briony Tallis, accepting her writerly responsibility of explicitly addressing dialogue, unfinalises her text in visualising the absorbing and transforming moment within textuality in her leitmotif *Come back*. When Briony is visiting Cecilia and Robbie, the experimental form of her novella has only recently been criticised by Cyril Connolly and his colleagues for focusing on the "crystalline present moment" and hence lacking "forward movement" (A 312). Indeed, she is explicitly warned: if she does not choose to write poetry (A 312), her readers will expect "the backbone of a story" (A 314) because even the "most sophisticated readers […] retain a childlike desire *to be told a story*" (A 314; emphasis added).[70] Briony, at this point beyond this childlike desire, is now faced with her readers' desire for the author – not the author's natural person but the author's centralising and guiding function (Barthes, PT 1508). Reading Connolly's letter, Briony apprehends that her readers are rather prone to commit the crime which she herself committed to such disastrous consequences: passive in their reading process, they want *to be told a story* – Connolly describes and Briony imagines Serena, the narrated I. Serena, however, is no longer Briony's ideal reader since Briony, intending to encourage the ambivalence of dialogue, means to avoid the denotative and objectified word. Unfortunately, her readers' monological desire for the author will not cease just because she ceases to include any narrative and ethical guidance in her literary text; indeed, being confronted with Connolly's pragmatic and disillusioning assessment of the reading public, Briony understands that she has abdicated her foremost *writerly* **responsibility**: trusting in the implicit dialogue of modernist technique, she might succeed in evading her reality and guilt (Birrer 169), but she will fail to sufficiently encourage dialogical thought and action within her readers. She cannot egoistically, that is monologically, "drown her guilt in a stream – three streams! – of consciousness" and thus put her reader at risk to continue within monologue (A 320).

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[69] Briony Tallis's *decision* to write a draft will be discussed in 3.4.4 Briony Tallis and Tom Haley.

[70] Read Apstein and Birrer for a detailed analysis of Connolly's criticism and Briony's engagement with modernist techniques. Read Head for a detailed analysis of Connolly's criticism, his aesthetic approach to literature and McEwan's involvement with Connolly and Iris Murdoch. Read Worthington for a discussion whether Connolly urges Briony "to have sufficient moral courage […] to confess the truth" or "to *create* a 'truth,' a 'crime,' that will provide the pull of narrative" (158-59). Read D'Angelo for the question whether Connolly's criticism alerts Briony to her "mis"reading of Virginia Woolf's aesthetics (98-100).

Phelan, observing Briony's development from judging in binary category (good vs. bad) to "another stark alternative, that is, no judgement at all" (Experiencing Fiction 116), summarises her newly gained – dialogical and responsible – understanding: "representation without judgement is a less desirable ethical and aesthetic achievement than representation with nuanced judgements" (Experiencing Fiction 116). Instead of merely theorising and implying the ambivalent word of dialogue in symmetrical design, Briony needs **to explicitly address dialogue** and write a story which inspires and reassures her readers into dialogical approaches to themselves and their others. "Briony's memoir-novel may be regarded as 'ethical' insofar as it reveals a sense of responsibility about the effect of one's own actions on the life of others, and, more specifically, about the representations, the stories, and the evaluations one produces" (Birke 186). Briony thus needs to show backbone and muster the courage to openly mediate the destructive consequences of her monological and monologising reading[71] and she needs to write the backbone of a story to capture her readers' attention (A 320). Briony, consequently, chooses to write a story but she chooses to draft it; indeed, contrary to Müller-Wood's argument, Briony Tallis's *Atonement* is full of techniques which prevent her literary text from being finalised and finalising the reader: contradictions, rereadings and references (cf. the textual analysis of this dissertation).

Rather strikingly, Briony Tallis visualises intertextual processes in her **leitmotif *Come back.*** to prepare her readers for their writerly task of continuing her draft. Intertextuality is a quality which is hardly ever noticed by the speaking/writing and the listening/reading subject in the moment of textual production. While her characters are aware only of their individual contexts when employing the phrase *Come back.*, Briony Tallis crosses all contexts and thus visualises the phrase's transformations for her readers. Within the phrase *Come back.* Briony's, Cecilia's and Robbie's contexts coincide; if a phrase is thus freed from any single intention and from a defining social and historical context – if it is drafted instead of interpreted for the reader, it cannot (at least in the long run) be occupied by one voice and its authoritative discourse; instead, all voices and discourses interactively level (Orr 28). In thus showing the absorbing and transforming process of intertextuality in her writing, Briony Tallis diminishes her authorial

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[71] Hence Briony Tallis, against Connolly's explicit advice that artists are "wise and right" to ignore the war (A 314), includes detailed depictions of war and suffering in her novel, of "Britain's social and political history" (Robinson 473). According to Robinson, "the reconstruction of the Dunkirk retreat in the second section thus acts as a kind of reproach to unhistoricized modernism" (474). Ana Mitrić, observing that literary scholars usually analyse Connolly's stylistic advice for Briony (717), focuses on his contentual advice which is, tellingly, ignored by both Briony Tallis and McEwan. She brilliantly and in intriguing detail analyses Connolly's theoretical input to writing as a major intertext to *Atonement* which introduces the "what" instead of the "how" of the novelist (721). Contrary to Connolly's aesthetic position, "*Atonement* indicates that the talents or virtues required of an artist can – and perhaps even should – be cultivated while engaging with, rather than retreating from, the world" (730).

influence and, nevertheless, explicitly encourages her readers into dialogue when they understand that focusing on only one context of the phrase *Come back.* is restricting complex textual construction. Visualising intertextual processes is, therefore, highly dangerous to ideological and ideologising forces: "from its beginning the concept of intertextuality is meant to designate a kind of language which, because of its embodiment of otherness, is against, beyond and resistant to mono(logic)" (Allen, Intertextuality 44). Briony Tallis's and thus McEwan's phrase *Come back.* openly embodies multiple others and resists the authoritative word of monologue.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs a writing protagonist who undergoes Bakhtinian and Kristevan theory. Experiencing first-hand the destructive force of monologue and its denotative and objectified word, Briony protects her individual subjectivity in trying ambivalent discourse which transgresses the self and dialogically involves the other. However, when her novella *Two Figures by the Fountain* is criticised for lacking plot, Briony accepts her writerly responsibility to more explicitly guide her readers, whom she fears to commit her crime of passively and monologically reading, into dialogical engagement: she chooses to write a story to capture her readers' attention but decides to draft it, that is to unfinalise it, to inspire and reassure them into dialogue. Briony Tallis, in order to unfinalise her literary text, visualises intertextuality in her leitmotif *Come back.* to call attention to the absorbing and transforming moment within textuality which denies final interpretation. Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Briony, developing towards the writerly responsibility of dialogue, stops being Serena's ideal author; Serena, however, equally undergoes Kristevan theory and starts to grasp the impossibility of clearly defining the author and authorial intention.

3.3.2 Serena and Tom

Momentarily awed by Solzhenitsyn's anti-institutional approach, Serena, the narrated I, commends his warning, communicated when being awarded the Noble Prize, that woe comes "to the nation whose literature is disturbed by the intervention of power" (ST 84). However, without being internally persuaded by Solzhenitsyn's approach, his values are easily replaced; indeed, it is exactly the ideological intervention Solzhenitsyn rejected which Serena unthinkingly welcomes to dump her unloved identity of office girl. Indeed, retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, critically observes that **Project Sweet Tooth allowed Serena, the**

narrated I, to stage the identity which her mother denied her; when reading in order to prepare her mission, Serena is finally a student of English literature: "I had a pencil at the ready, as though preparing for a tutorial. My dream had come true – I was studying English, not maths. I was free of my mother's ambitions for me" (ST 99). The secret service's attempt to propagate authoritative discourse in form of literature releases Serena from her mother's ideological aspiration of a female / feminine / feminist mathematician. "I was reading, I was doing it for a higher purpose that gave me professional pride" (ST 99). Serena's reading becomes institutionally relevant and thus of value. Serena's freedom, however, is false; she merely replaces her mother's regime with another ideologised and ideologising system which leads her to believe in the order of the binary opposition. Peter Nutting and Tapp, having realised that the present political conflict between West and East is "not just a political and military affair" but "a culture war" (ST 91), recruit Serena because she is "rather well up on modern writing – literature, novels, that sort of thing" (ST 88); their dismissive attitude indicates that literature is not considered valuable art but merely an instrument of propaganda. Consequently, and unsurprisingly, they welcome Serena's monological attempt at literature when she ranks Kingsley Amis, David Storey and William Golding from "best to worst" (ST 89). Tellingly, however, she ignores Nutting's warning that "it's not straightforward to deduce an author's views from his novels" (ST 92); instead, looking forward to meeting the author (ST 99), she is shocked when (the expectation of) meeting the author skews her reading process.

Serena, the narrating I, retrospectively admits that she was "the basest of readers" (ST 104) – always intent on spotting the familiar in fiction: "all I wanted was my own world, and myself in it, given back to me in artful shapes and accessible forms" (ST 104). Hence, unsurprisingly, Serena, the narrated I, initially enjoys reading Tom's short story "This Is Love," which features a church, a rectory and a bishop: "the ecclesiastical trappings *entranced* me" (ST 104; emphasis added). She equally enjoys reading Tom's short story because Edmund Alfredus, the "great and good" MP, reminds her of Tony (ST 104). Edmund Alfredus, however, is broken by his religiously obsessive partner / wife. Having finished reading "This Is Love," Serena, angry and hurt, accuses Tom of "wilful narrative sadism" for having deliberately destroyed his protagonist: against her expectation, he is not a "necessary" man (ST 104), a "clever, amoral, inventive, destructive" and "single-minded, selfish, emotionally cool, coolly attractive" man who provides order and stability in building and protecting law and civilisation (ST 104). **Tom's short story impedes Serena's readerly consumption in featuring a character which is constructed beyond familiar stereotype.** While Briony, deciding to write a draft (A 349), embraces the writer's responsibility for (unpleasant) dialogue, Serena claims

for herself the author's responsibility for monologue. Arguing that authors owe their readers "a duty of care, of mercy" (ST 105), she assigns the author a hierarchical parental role: with the child / reader being dependent on and inferior to the author / parent, the author is responsible for the reader's emotional and intellectual "readerly" well-being. Hence Serena feels violated when Tom's short story does *not* provide the setting for a readerly consumption of the familiar (ST 104). Her memory of home and Tony are tainted; Tom's short story frightens and repels her (ST 109).

Serena's situation is further aggravated: instead of finalising authorial guidance, the prospect of meeting the author in person pluralises her reading. Hence **Serena, the narrated I, perceives Tom's short story to be particularly transgressive: his short story does not only impede her readerly consumption of the familiar; about to meet the author, Serena first suspects the difficulty to know the author and authorial intention.** Serena cannot fast-read Tom's short story because she will probably have to detail it once meeting him. In consequence, from Serena's perspective, disorder and instability are inevitable; instead of fast-reading to take in surface impressions, she starts wondering "if every sentence *confirmed* or *denied* or *masked a secret intention*" (ST 109; emphasis added). Retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, appreciates that she was "discovering that the experience of reading is skewed when you know, or are about to know, the author" (ST 109). Thinking about Tom's short story beyond the surface of the signified and, therefore, unable to draw a straightforward conclusion about Tom's intention, Serena, the narrated I, can only draw one conclusion: she does *not* know the real author and his real intention from reading his narrative. She apprehends that a reader can only imply the author; indeed, the author is formed in the dialogue of fusing contexts. Both the subject of narration (Tom) and the subject of reading (Serena) are inserted and rewritten within the past, present and future discursive universe of the text ("This Is Love") (Kristeva, MDR 94). Having finished reading "This Is Love," Serena, the narrated I, concludes that the author is a man "who knew that the wealthy stocked their moats with carp and the downtrodden kept their stuff in supermarket trolleys" (ST 108). And Serena, the narrating I, explicitly emphasises the social context which she once worked into reading Tom: "both supermarkets and trolleys were recent additions to life in Britain" (ST 108-09).

Confronted with the difficulty to know the author and authorial intention, Serena, the narrated I, attempts and fails to pinpoint the author by the information available in his protagonist. "I needed an instrument, some measuring device, the narrative equivalent of movable compass points with which to gauge the distance between Haley and Edmund Alfredus" (ST 109). Indeed, in the process of writing, one of the codes in which the subject of

narration is inscribed is the literary character: "a partir de cet anonymat, de ce zéro, où se situe l'auteur, le *il* du personnage va naître" (Kristeva, MDR 95). However, Edmund Alfredus is a character of highly ambivalent output and constructed to defy unambiguous interpretation (ST 108-09). Lacking her standard measuring device of familiar reality, Serena is confused and turns hypothetical: "*Perhaps* Alfredus […] represented the kind of person Haley feared he could become. Or he *may* have punished Alfredus in the spirit of moral primness for adultery and presuming to impersonate a pious man. Haley *might* be a prig, even a religious prig, or he *could* be a man with many fears" (ST 109; emphasis added). The conjunctive mood suggests Serena's uncertainty and she wonders: "if I hadn't wasted three years being bad at maths at Cambridge, I might have done English and learned how to read" (ST 109). While studying literature would have offered her several literary and cultural theories to measure author and authorial intention and to gauge the distance between author and character, it is a mistake to think that studying literature would have provided her with *one* correct way of "how to read." Reading and studying literature is, after all, a rather disorderly and instable process with abeyance and ambivalence being – ideally – the daily fare; literary and cultural theories, even if attempting to pinpoint author and authorial intention in isolation (Barthes, TT 1682), in comparison unfold ambivalences. Hence Serena's statement on reading is appropriately doubled in the presence of Serena, the narrating I, and her retrospectively reflective question: "If I hadn't wasted three years being bad at maths at Cambridge, I might have done English and learned how to read. *But would I have known how to read T.H. Haley*?" (ST 109; emphasis added) The author is an intertextual construct to be read, reread, rewritten and inserted in his narratives to an extent known and unknown to his readers and himself – even in denotative and objectified words. Reading Tom's journalistic texts to decipher his literary texts, Serena finally admits that there is more than one author and authorial intention to the subject of narration.

Tom Haley constructs a reading protagonist who apprehends that the author is the reader's (multiple) construction. When reading Tom's short story beyond surface impression, Serena, the narrated I, does not only perceive conflicting and ambivalent details (ST 108) but, with the prospect of meeting him, she apprehends in practice what Kristeva describes in theory: *the* author is *her* version of the author (ST 138). The subject of narration, pre-existent to the text, is transformed into the author within the process of reading: "c'est le destinataire, l'autre, l'extériorité […] qui transforme le sujet en *auteur*" (MDR 95). Hence Nutting's interpretive approach to Tom's literature is doomed to fail. Having chosen a writer who pens both literary (ambiguous) and journalistic (straightforward) texts, Nutting wants Tom's "sound" journalistic texts to function as a decryption code for his literary texts (ST 92). Serena, however, is even

more confused after reading Tom's journalism: "unlike the fiction it was sensible, sceptical, rather schoolmasterish in tone, as if he'd supposed he was writing for ideological fools" (ST 138). Although his content and style are straightforward, Serena fails to read Tom's short stories in the light of Tom's articles: "I didn't know if Haley was right, or how to reconcile his plain-speaking journalism with the crafty intimacy of the fiction, and I assumed that when we met I would know even less" (ST 138). Tom's journalism and Tom's literature offer *at least* two different authorial versions of Tom. Nutting's idea of using Tom's "plain-speaking" journalistic texts as a key to his "crafty" literary texts is thus doubted by Serena's "failure" to reconcile his literary and journalistic writing. Instead of guiding his readers' reading, his articles, comprised of denotative and objectified words, are "intertextualised" by his short stories: knowing his narratives, Serena is sceptical about the plainness of his non-literary texts and thus Tom's political statements – the opposite of what Nutting hopes might happen. Kristeva, moreover, departing from Bakhtin's distinction of the denotative, objectified and ambivalent word, argues that even the denotative and objectified words are at least double in the process of reading. Both subject of narration and subject of reading are signifiers to the text and thus the text, even if apparently consisting of clearly denotative and objectified words, is always intertextualised in the dialogue between subject of narration and subject of reading: "dans le va-et-vient entre le sujet et l'autre, entre l'écrivain et le lecteur, l'auteur se structure comme signifiant, et le texte comme dialogue de deux discours" (MDR 95). If either is willing to consciously write or read between the discourses of author, reader and context and thus to question the authoritative word of ideology, the (literary) text loses its propagandistic value and power.

In the prospect of meeting the author, Serena, the narrated I, understands that "his" identities and "his" intentions are multiple and partly originate in herself: "in the past weeks I had become intimate with *my own private version* of Haley, I had read his thoughts on sex and deceit, pride and failure" (ST 137-38; emphasis added). The phrase *my own private version* emphasises the extent to which the reading subject contributes to the author's construction. Hence Serena does not expect *her* version of Tom to withstand her standard measuring device of reality which can be reinstated once meeting him; she assumes that her version will be adjusted – corrected in the light of the real person: "We were on terms already and I knew they were about to be *reformed* or *destroyed*. Whatever he was in reality would be a surprise and probably a disappointment" (ST 138; emphasis added). Indeed, Serena is surprised and disappointed, but neither is her version reformed nor destroyed: **Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs a writing subject which defies any readerly authorisation.** Tom is beyond stereotype. Neither is he a person of authority nor is he a person

which is easily authorised by the reader into an authorising instance: his slight and slightly stooped figure signifies insignificance – all the more since Serena notices the effort it takes Tom to straighten his back (ST 139). Furthermore, he is ambivalent and thus not definable within standard categories: "the voice from such a delicate frame was deep, without regional accent, pure and classless" (ST 139). Tom is not "readable" by stereotypical decryption codes like sex, class and regional background. His "delicate" female look, which is implied in his slender figure, narrow wrists and small and soft hands (ST 139), is not compatible with his "deep" male voice. Tom defies the most naturalised binary opposition of society and Serena hence wonders if she had "missed a trans-sexual element in the stories" (ST 139). Without obvious sexual, regional or social identity, Tom is a nothingness, "un anonymat, une absence, un blanc" (Kristeva, MDR 95), even outside the structure of his text. Accordingly, meeting Tom does not offer Serena a measuring device: instead of counteracting ambivalence, reality furthers ambivalence. "But here he was, twin brother, smug vicar, smart and rising Labour MP, lonely millionaire in love with an inanimate object" (ST 139). Tom is simultaneously unlike and like his characters and, in consequence, Serena remains "confused by him" (ST 139).

Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs a writer who aims at his readers' dialogical involvement. Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Tom is Briony's partner in unfinalised writerly dialogue. Not only does his writing defy readerly consumption; Tom continues to initiate independent thought when meeting his reader in person. When Serena, the narrated I, mentions the praise of the "very expert people" which Freedom International has consulted about his writing (ST 142), Serena is baffled since Tom, contrary to Serena's awe of institutional power, is not interested in their authorised assessments of his short stories but wonders about Serena's opinion.

> "And *you*. Have *you* read them?"
> "Of course."
> "And what did *you think*?"
> "I'm really just the messenger. It's not relevant what I think."
> "It's relevant to me. What did *you make of* them?" (ST 142; emphasis added)

Tom asks for *her* thoughts, for *her* readings. Whenever Serena provides him with an opportunity to offer "authorised" understandings of his short stories, Tom does not seize the opportunity (ST 139-47). Only when Serena mentions the short story's potential to be expanded into a novel (ST 142), Tom does not only reject this idea (ST 143), he also emphasises that his narrative has exactly the length he wanted (ST 143). Like Briony, who chooses the format of the draft, Tom

has chosen the format of the short story which is specifically defined by its openness and thus particularly suitable to encourage readers to read between the lines and to actively think about the short story beyond character and plot. Tom's preference for the signifier is, furthermore, present in his choosing a less institutionalised university: "he chose Sussex over Oxford and Cambridge because he liked the look of the courses ('themes' not 'surveys')" (ST 182). Tom prefers discussion, the signifier and its dialogue, over Leavisian shaped survey knowledge where discussion is minimal.

Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, constructs a reading protagonist who finally apprehends that it is impossible to know the author and the author's intention. Contextualising Serena, the narrated I, within Kristeva's intertextual theory, Tom Haley defies readerly consumption within a text and beyond. Visualising Serena's reading process and emphasising Tom's preference of her individual thoughts over institutionalised judgement, Tom Haley constructs Tom to be a writer who welcomes the reader in a shared signifying process.

Consequently, both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, draft protagonists who undergo Kristevan approaches to the text: the monologically destructive moment in the denotative and the objectified word; the dialogically liberating moment in the ambivalent word; the productive and anti-ideological moment of intertextuality as visualised in Briony Tallis's leitmotif *Come back*; and the impossibility to define the author and the author's intention in the dialogical encounter of reading and writing subject. In mediating Briony's and Serena's handling of their writing and reading experiences, their uncertainty and daring, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley encourage their readers and thus McEwan's readers to shake off the author's centralising and guiding function. However, it is difficult to overcome a monological (reading) habit: while Briony is motivated to deal with ambivalence and dialogue to prevent her readers from committing the crime she herself committed, a monological approach to the literary text, Serena, although realising the impossibility to define author and text, is confused; she will, therefore, claim her intimate knowledge of Tom as a perfect measuring device before finally unfinalising her reading process.

Understanding the daring, strength and perseverance dialogue requires, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley both imply the chance and threat Kristeva's intertextual theory implicates. The dissolution of individual subjectivity is thematised in the male protagonists of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*. Both Robbie and Tom, facing unknowing individuality in unconscious existence,

suggest that the individual subject requires some situatedness in history and society to dialogically work against the authoritative word of ideological discourse.

3.3.3 Robbie

Approaching the Descartian subject in terms of Saussurean linguistics, Allen analyses the individual subject (the sign) into signifier and signified: "the subject declares its existence, its self-presence, by proving that its thoughts and its speech occur simultaneously" (Intertextuality 62). In Descartes's sentence *cogito ergo sum*, "the subject combines the signifier (thought, speech) with the signified (the existence of the thinker) and by so doing proves its ability to produce meaning, and thus proves the uniqueness and the presence in the world of its meaning-making consciousness" (Intertextuality 62). This meaning-making consciousness is monologically structured if determined by authoritative discourse. Both Briony's and Robbie's thoughts are monologically reduced by hierarchically structured institutions (hospital and military) and thus they are monologically signified and monologically exist by their occupational titles (nurse and private) and their surnames; indeed, Robbie is reduced to "a bleak sequence of acronyms and numbers" and thus officially robbed of all identity (A 206). However, if the individual subject can be approached in Saussurean theory of the sign, its instability in value is equally applicable to individual subjectivity: the individual subject is an unstable relation between signifier (thought) and signified (existence) which is dependent in meaning on those signifiers and signifieds next to it. Briony, for example, is *valued in difference* from Fiona, a "neighbouring" individual subject: "she longed to have someone else's past, like hearty Fiona with her unstained life stretching ahead, and her affectionate, sprawling family" (A 288).

Bakhtin's theory, too, is applicable to individual subjectivity: the individual subject is a specific utterance which means in context; if the context of the individual subject changes, the meaning of the individual subject changes. Robbie, for example, is officially a lowly ranked private; however, lost in the countryside, Nettle and Mace, eager to survive, both accept Robbie's superior skills and lead: "They had decided that to reach the coast, they needed him. It was difficult for them. He acted like an officer, but he didn't even have a single stripe" (A 193). Considering these examples, Saussure's value and Bakhtin's context subvert monological construction – in theory. Nettle and Mace's aversion to Robbie's unofficial change in rank proves the difficulty to think beyond authoritative monologue: "he was lower in rank, but they followed and did everything he suggested, and to preserve their dignity, they teased him" (A

193). Individual subjects, primarily determined by monological discourse (Zima, Theorie 15), require order and they require structure to arrange their life into order.

Kristeva's intertextual theory, however, undoes order; according to Kristeva and her fellow thinkers, the individual subject is a textual construct and can hence be de-centred (MDR 85). If intertextual theory is applied to the individual subject, centred individual subjectivity, like centred meaning, is endlessly *deferred,* and the individual subject's unity is denied. Kristeva adapts the dynamic process of language to individual subjectivity: "Like signification, the subject is always in a constant process of oscillation between instability and stability or negativity and stasis. The subject is continually being constituted within this oscillation between conscious and unconscious as an open system, subject to infinite analysis" (Oliver xviii; also Hall 99 and Orr 30). Constructed out of the *texte général*, the individual subject is constantly in progress: textual subjectivity is not a product but productivity.

Although intertextual theory attempts to emancipate the individual subject from ideological determination in providing an anti-ideological approach which is valuable to criticise institutional norms, the consequence of intertextuality for the individual subject is, nevertheless, usually perceived as frightening. Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, writes Robbie into an extreme situation in which his individual subjectivity de-centres in the oscillation between consciousness and unconsciousness. Choosing her narrator to focalise Robbie's perspective, her readers are encouraged to observe how Robbie's dialogical mind is deteriorating into monological order; instead of welcoming the permanent dialogue when his individual subjectivity is dissolving, Robbie seeks monological order to continue to consciously exist: retreating to Dunkirk, he finally abandons his mental freedom in order to physically survive in monological consciousness. Briony Tallis, concentrating on Robbie's fear of being undone, hence faces her readers with the ambivalence of order: order is both dangerous and necessary to dialogue and dialogical individual subjectivity.

In prison, Robbie suffers when not only his physical freedom but also his mental freedom is restricted by a routine which is numbing his mind. Initially, Robbie attempts to fight off the monological construction he is experiencing in court and prison, where he is reduced to the monological identity of *maniac*, by focussing on Cecilia's letters and his replies which are intentionally transgressing the binary of 0-1 by coding literary characters and double-voicing "innocent" words by their shared context (A 204-05). However, despite Cecilia's support, Robbie suffers from the stupidity of his daily routine which contrasts with the mental freedom he lived at Cambridge: "He did not know how he survived the daily stupidity of it. The

stupidity and claustrophobia. The hand squeezing on his throat" (A 202). Forced into routine, Robbie, who was used to freely exploring his many interests and identities, feels strangled; he is metaphorically sentenced to death when, without air to breathe, he unlearns to think for himself and physically and mentally withers – when meeting Cecilia in London, he feels embarrassed: "he had shrunk in every sense" (A 206). Not thinking of accompanying Cecilia to her hospital, he concludes that "he must learn again how *to think and act for himself*" (A 206; emphasis added): to think and act independently and to think and act his complex individual subjectivity. Although being granted remission by one institution only on condition of placing himself with another, joining the army is an improvement to his situation in prison; indeed, not being eligible for officer training is a relief: "sooner or later he would have met someone in an officers' mess who knew about his past" (A 207). Instead of again being reduced to the identity of *maniac*, among his fellow privates he is without this stigma: "in the ranks he was anonymous" (A 207). Although institutional routine hardly differs and Robbie discovers that he is "already well adapted to an army regime, to the terrors of kit inspection and the folding of blankets into precise squares" (A 207), he is at least physically free: "The days, though tiring, seemed rich in variety. The cross-country marches gave him a pleasure that he dared not express to the other recruits. He was gaining in weight and strengths" (A 207-08). Even when finding himself in the chaos of war, he still prefers this chaos to the routine of prison where he was "waiting for nothing" (A 202); at least, in the confusion of retreat, he needs to think and act for himself – free of a superior's orders. Out of prison, he is, furthermore, free to contemplate his future with Cecilia who is "his reason for life" (A 209 and A 202-03).

In prison, Robbie suffers when not only his physical freedom but also his mental freedom is restricted by a routine which is numbing his mind; however, he starts craving such routine in order to physically survive in war. With progressing toxaemia, aggravated by general exhaustion due to insufficient fluid and food intake and lack of sleep, thinking and acting for himself becomes a burden and Robbie starts yearning for routine.

> Each step was a conscious decision. A blister was swelling on his left heel which forced him to walk on the edge of the boot. Without stopping, he took the bread and cheese from his bag, but he was too thirsty to chew. He lit another cigarette to curb the hunger and tried to reduce his task to the basics: you walked across the land until you came to the sea. What could be simpler, once the social element was removed? He was the only man on earth and his purpose was clear. He was walking across the land until he came to the sea. The reality was all too social, he knew; other men were pursuing him, but he had comfort in a pretence, and a rhythm at least for his feet. *He walked / across / the*

land / until / he came / to the sea. A hexameter. Five iambs and an anapaest was the beat

he tramped to now. (A 219; emphasis added) [72]

Robbie is still aware of his forward movement, consciously choosing to take one step after the other; thought and action, however, become rudimentary: his pain, hunger and thirst reduce him to the basic thought and action of forward movement. Even this thought and action is exhausting, though; hence Robbie welcomes the metrical rhythm of his phrased purpose, a hexameter, which allows his forward movement to become an instinctive action. The sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables within a hexameter is usually disrupted by a caesura in the syntactical order which welcomes readers into thought and keeps the hexameter's metrical rhythm from becoming monotonous.[73] Robbie's hexameter, however, is lacking this caesura: once he has found his rhythm, once forward movement is adjusted, thought is redundant. The hexameter, a moment of poetic and thus double language, hence turns into a toneless marching drum and mindless forward movement. This marching order, in turn, allows Robbie to ignore the social world around him – against his better judgement. Order becomes his pretence for not being responsible. Only thus his unbearable situation becomes manageable and survivable: "He had wasted precious reserves in unnecessary talk and encounters. Tiredness had made him superficially elated and forthcoming. Now he reduced his progress to the rhythm of his boots – he walked across the land until he came to the sea" (A 226). When he, nevertheless, keeps acting responsibly, for example when he tries to save the Flemish lady and her son (A 235-37), he is involved into mortal chaos. The social (in Robbie's case: emphatic and dialogical) element of existence causes disorder: in Robbie's struggle for survival, it is impeding his security and forward movement.

During his march to Dunkirk, Robbie, with progressing toxaemia, starts drifting between consciousness and unconsciousness and loses his sense of forward movement.

It was in the clear moments he was troubled. It wasn't the wound, though it hurt at every step, and it wasn't the dive-bombers circling over the beach some miles to the north. It was his mind. Periodically, something slipped. Some everyday *principle of continuity*, the humdrum element that told him where he was in his own story, faded from his use,

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[72] In this subchapter, I have cited four long passages from Part Two. I have chosen not to break them apart while analysing them because I think that McEwan's powerfully eloquent and touching and thus pacifist descriptions of Robbie's suffering deserve to be read in full and need to be read in full to engage the reader into critical thought.

[73] As an example, read Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "To a Skylark." The syntactical order of the hexameter which is closing each stanza causes the reader to pause (and think) in the middle of the line (the caesura is marked in bold emphasis, stressed syllables are marked in italic emphasis): "The *world* should *li*sten *then*, as *I* am *li*stening *now*!" (stanza 21, line 5; emphasis added).

> abandoning him to a walking dream in which there were thoughts, but no sense of who was having them. (A 246; emphasis added)

Robbie's individual subjectivity is dissolving. He is de-centred when his thoughts (signifier) are detached from his existence (signified): "thoughts, but no sense of who was having them" (A 246). Robbie is drifting between consciousness and unconsciousness and he is troubled by a resulting lack of continuity which prevents him from setting himself in history and society. Although continuity is "humdrum" to Robbie's dialogical and explorative mind (A 246), he realises in this exceptional situation that continuity is necessary to conscious existence; indeed, continuity offers the possibility of mental peace when Robbie learns about the chance of being cleared: "he would simply *resume*" his story after a major disruption caused by Briony and her parents (A 227; emphasis added). Without the "principle of continuity" (A 246), however, Robbie loses his "ability to produce meaning" and to prove his "meaning-making consciousness" (Allen, Intertextuality 69).

The more Robbie drifts between consciousness and unconsciousness, the more he seeks order to place himself in the here and now of continuity. Fighting against his dissolution, Robbie focuses on Cecilia who is both his past and future (A 241-42). Robbie, furthermore, focuses on his unknown father (A 241-42): parentage is placement and placement is identity: "he would track down his father, or his dead father's story – either way, he would become his father's son" (A 242). Loosing track of himself, he centres himself into being and realises that order is ambivalently both: unsocial and socially necessary. Without order there is "no responsibility, no memory of the hours before, no idea of what he was about, where he was going, what his plan was" (A 246); without order, he finds "himself in the grip of illogical certainties" (A 246). With neither linearity nor logic, the state of individual subjectivity in which the individual subject can consciously assume or deny responsibility does not exist (Zima, Theorie 15-16). If the individual subject is de-centred, if it is, like Kristeva argues, "continually being constituted within this oscillation between conscious and unconscious as an open system" (Oliver xviii), it is unable to think and act – be it monological or dialogical, be it for itself or "the social element" (A 219): if the individual subject cannot position itself in social and historical discourse, it cannot *argue for* or *against* or *in-between*. Indeed, if the individual subject dissolves into a drifting state between consciousness and unconsciousness, it might be "essentially" dialogical, but it becomes unable of using dialogue against ideological systems which are theoretically denied but practically continue to exist. Briony Tallis's readers and thus McEwan's readers are hence confronted with the paradox of ambivalent order. On the one hand, monological order impedes the social and its responsibility for the other; on the other hand,

linearity and logic, elements of monological order which are severely attacked by intertextual theory, are necessary to both monological and dialogical thought and action.

Robbie experiences the paradox of ambivalent order throughout his retreat to Dunkirk. His thoughts alternate between "social" and "selfish." However, the further his health declines, the more he focuses on his physical survival: "From the inside came the groans and shouts of wounded men. One of them was crying out, over and over, more in rage than pain, 'Water, I want water!' Like everyone else, Turner kept going" (A 242). **When Robbie reaches the beach, he is ready to renounce all mental freedom in exchange for physical survival in monological consciousness; however, his attempt at survival is failing and he "drowns" into unconsciousness.**

> He'd assumed that the *cussed army spirit* which whitewashed rocks in the face of annihilation would prevail. He tried to impose order now on the random movement before him, and almost succeeded: marshalling centres, warrant officers behind makeshift desks, rubber stamps and dockets, roped-off lines towards the waiting boats; hectoring sergeants, tedious queues around mobile canteens. *In general, an end to all private initiative.* Without knowing it, that was the beach he had been walking to for days. But the actual beach, the one he and the corporals were gazing on now, was no more than a variation on all that had gone before […]. (A 247; emphasis added)

Robbie perfectly realises that the army spirit of order is "an end to all private initiative" (A 247). Despite hoping for routine, he is – still – aware of how ideological and hierarchical mechanisms work on the individual subject and understands how monological order continues to monologise his individual subjectivity: Briony's order, prison's order, and the army's order; however, aiming at physical survival, he is willing to pay this price. While walking towards Dunkirk, he accepts and hopes for the end of his mental freedom; realising that his situation does not allow him to think and act for his complex individual subjectivity, he only thinks and acts the minimum: **physical survival in monological consciousness**. In exchange for his mental freedom, he expects the army's support in keeping him alive; however, the army's order, which has the reputation of never failing, fails him in the moment of need. Consequently, impatiently execrating the army spirit, he tries to impose order himself but, in contrast to Briony, immediately realises the impossibility of this endeavour: "the majority of the army wandered about the sands without purpose" (A 248). Facing the overwhelming disorder on the beach and the impossibility of moving forward – both literally (he has come to the sea but there are no boats which allow him to move further towards Cecilia) and metaphorically (he will

return home guilty even if he is cleared), his hope to physically survive in monological consciousness is dwindling.

Robbie, while he managed to survive the claustrophobia of prison, finally suffocates when he symbolically **"drowns" into unconsciousness**: "a long steady oceanic swell of exhaustion began to push *him* under" (A 263; emphasis added). His physical and mental tiredness is rising like a wave pushing him, his individual subjectivity, into oblivion. Briony Tallis modifies the hexameter to symbolise the dissolution of Robbie's consciousness: "he walked across the land until he fell in the ocean" (A 263). The wording of the hexameter has changed (from *came* to *fell*, from *sea* to *ocean*) and implies the end of conscious and linear forward movement. Robbie, retreating to Dunkirk, walks towards the sea. The sea, which is per definition geographically limited and partly enclosed by land, is a concrete destination which allows the individual subject to situate itself when walking towards it. Robbie, however, losing all control over his body and mind, does not stop walking when he comes to the sea and falls – not into the sea but into the *ocean*, which is per definition geographically unlimited and not enclosed by land. Drifting in the ocean, Robbie is unable to situate himself in time and place; unconscious of where and when he is, Robbie's individual subjectivity is dissolving. The ocean, therefore, is ambivalently symbolising dialogical subjectivity (nymphean Cecilia) and death of subjectivity (Robbie). Briony Tallis does not only thematise ambivalence but works ambivalence into the (symbolic) texture of her novel.

While Robbie's consciousness is dissolving, the army unexpectedly restores order. Robbie is soothed by news of evacuation and, re-situated by this prospect into time and place, gratefully rejects the mental freedom he lived at Cambridge.

> They would be forming up in the road outside and marching to the beach. Squaring off to the right. Order would prevail. No one at Cambridge taught the benefits of good marching order. They revered the free, unruly spirits. The poets. But what did the poets know about survival? About surviving as a body of men. No breaking ranks, no rushing the boats, no first come first served, no devil take the hindmost. No sound of boots as they crossed the sand to the tide line. In the rolling surf, willing hands to steady the gunwale as their mates climbed in. (A 264)

Robbie's language is dominated by army jargon: he is finally assimilated into military order and propaganda when the army provides him with a new destination and the possibility of moving towards Cecilia. Consequently, he perceives and idealises the army's order, contrary to his previous thoughts and experiences in France, as social: "surviving as a body of men" (A

264). The metaphor *body of men*, however, does not only imply solidarity in the attempt to survive; it equally implies the loss of the (dialogical) individual subject within the monological group. Robbie, once eager to read and analyse poetry (A 82), charges the "free, unruly spirits" with selfishness (first come first serve) and social irrelevance (A 264). Poetic language and thought, valued by intertextual approaches for its subverting and dialogical possibilities, is severely criticised as luxury and unworldly moment. And so is teaching such language and thought – learning to revere the free and unruly, students (of English literature) remain unprepared for harsh reality: "no one at Cambridge taught the benefits of good marching order" (A 264). Even Leavis's cultural "marching order" is an impracticality in face of annihilation. However, with the prospect of physically surviving to see Cecilia, Robbie reconsiders ambivalence: he remembers his arrest but focuses on Cecilia's encouragement which referred to their dialogical moment of *writing* in the *library* (A 264-65) (cf. the textual analysis of 3.4.1.2 Cecilia and Robbie). Robbie's ordeal hence strongly emphasises that physical survival in monological consciousness is required to establish dialogical possibilities.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, is involved with "the stripping-away of identity that war inflicts on those involved" (Alden 59); depicts Robbie's development from dialogical individual subjectivity to basic physical survival in monological consciousness; and thus faces her readers with the paradox of intertextual theory: order is ambivalently dangerous and necessary for the (dialogical) individual subject.[74] Kristeva's approach is brilliantly attacking institutional and ideological movements within society and within the individual subject; at the same time, however, consequently applied, her approach renders the individual subject impossible of using intertextuality in its fight against monological contents and structures; indeed, only within a basic framework of order which allows a setting in history and society, the individual subject can assume responsibility for dialogue. The dissolution of the individual subject into unconsciousness is, furthermore, perceived as frightening; only rarely does the individual subject make use of oblivion. Tom Haley, however, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, writes Tom into an extreme situation in which he profits from a temporary amnesia of identity.

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[74] Intertextual theory itself implies this paradox: Kristeva developed the concept of intertextuality *because* she was situated in (theoretical) history and society and, consequently, aware of ideological mechanisms which needed to be fought.

3.3.4   Tom

Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Robbie and Tom equate existence with consciousness. When Tom learns of Serena's betrayal, he attempts to destroy the link between his thoughts (signifier) and his existence (signified) by getting drunk (ST 305). While Zima distinguishes between conscious existence (subjectivity) and unconscious existence (individuality) and Kristeva defines existence in the oscillation between consciousness and unconsciousness, Tom *equates* existence with consciousness (ST 305): it is *either* "existence" (consciousness) *or* "oblivion" (unconsciousness) (ST 305). Indeed, while an individual physically exists, it is unconscious of its own unconsciousness (Zima, Theorie 21).[75] Hence the physical survival which Robbie pursues for *himself* is necessarily physical survival in (monological) consciousness and not physical survival in individuality. While Robbie aims at remaining conscious, Tom is neither satisfied with consciousness (to be sober) nor with unconsciousness (to be drunk) (ST 305); actually, he does not "want anything" (ST 305). However, if consciousness and unconsciousness are binarily opposed, "beyond existence and oblivion there's no third place to be" (ST 305); Tom is, therefore, forced into a "natural" binary decision and needs to choose between agonising thoughts in consciousness and self-forgetfulness in unconsciousness (ST 305-07). In face of his violent and exhausting confusion finally choosing oblivion over existence (ST 306-07), he gets drunk and, "no more coherent thoughts" (ST 307), falls asleep.

Tom, waking from unconsciousness into a temporary amnesia of identity, apprehends that individual subjectivity is a narrative construct. Returning from his alcohol-induced oblivion, Tom perceives his amnesia of identity as "pure existence" (ST 307), a transit stop between unconsciousness and consciousness in social and historical identity: "I woke some hours later into total darkness – the curtains in that room were thick – and entered one of those moments of total amnesia. I could feel a comfortable bed around me, but who and where I was lay beyond my grasp. It lasted only a few seconds, this episode of pure existence, the mental equivalent of the *blank page*" (ST 307; emphasis added). Sealed off and protected from the social and historical world outside, Tom wakes into awareness without the "ballast" of identity. He is responsive to his body, but his individual subjectivity is a "blank page" waiting to be inscribed (ST 307). However, with his memory intact and his individual subjectivity already written, Tom's amnesia is only temporary: "inevitably, *the narrative seeped back*, with

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[75] The state of individuality is only perceived in the other when the individual subject is consciously watching the unconscious individual (Zima, Theorie 8-9 and 21). McEwan broaches this subject when writing fictional characters who are confronted with dementia in relatives (e.g. Henry Perowne whose mother suffers from Alzheimer's disease).

the near details arriving first – the room, the hotel, the city, Greatorex, you; next, the larger facts of my life – my name, my general circumstances" (ST 307; emphasis added). Individual subjectivity is a narrative construct[76] and, apprehending his narrative, Tom realises for his personal narrative what Robbie realises for the general narrative of history: "without the details there could be no larger picture" (A 227).

Recalling the details of his immediate situation to know his position in the here and now, step by step recollecting his personal narrative, Tom grasps the possibility of fictionalising his relationship with Serena. Instead of feeling heartbroken and betrayed and feeding on these emotions, he starts to practically think: "this brief, cleansing amnesia had delivered me into *common sense*" (ST 307; emphasis added). Practically acting, Tom attempts to benefit from his unpleasant situation and to overcome his writer's block (ST 307). However, while he is comfortable with the content of his narrative, he is unhappy with the perspective he has chosen to mediate this content: "The problem, I decided, was me. *Without thinking*, I was presenting myself in the guise of the typical hero of an English comic novel – inept and almost clever, passive, earnest, over-explained, urgently unfunny" (ST 308-09; emphasis added). Indeed, common sense is ambivalently fixing and creating a problem. While common sense allows Tom to practically act, Barthes, attempting to de-mythologise society, argues that *common sense* signifies a naturalised thought or action (cf. "Le Mythe, aujourd'hui" and *Mythologies*); according to this definition, the term *common sense* implies that a specific situation allows only for one specific thought or action – independent of the complexity of the individual subject which is thinking or acting. When Tom attempts to write a narrative about his relationship "without thinking" (ST 309), he "naturally" chooses a first-person perspective; furthermore, protecting himself from his complex thoughts and feelings, he monologises himself into a stereotypical character (ST 309). However, this monologising process is against Tom's dialogical (writing) self which means to engage his readers into critical thought.

Hence Tom is dissatisfied with the first version of his narrative and perceives the absence of dialogical possibility a "flaw" which is deeply buried in its concept (ST 308): "It was dull, it was dead. […] No resistance or difficulty or spring, no surprises, nothing rich or strange. No hum, no torque. Instead, everything I saw and heard and said and did was lined up

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[76] Zima applies Greimas's actantial model to explain this difference between subjectivity and identity (Theorie 9-11). Greimas's model, originally devised to disclose the structure of narratives, is triadically arranged: the *sujet* (e.g. the prince) is on the quest to find its *objet* (e.g. the princess) and in order to successfully complete its quest needs to encounter the *anti-sujet* (e.g. the witch imprisoning the princess). This model can be usefully applied to illustrate the formation of identity, for identity (be it "internally" chosen or "externally" constructed) is always formed in narrative process – the subject (the *sujet*) is on the quest for its identity (the *objet*): "Identität ist das Objekt des fühlenden, denkenden, sprechenden und handelnden Subjekt-Aktanten" (Theorie 24).

like beans in a row" (ST 308). His narrative is an author's chronological and monological account which does not provide any possibility for the reader to be involved into critical engagement; in consequence, Tom abandons his monological approach of *common sense* for dialogical involvement with both Serena and himself in both content and form. **In order to impede his manipulation by institutional structure, Tom doubles himself by choosing Serena's perspective to tell the narrative of their relationship.** "This story wasn't for me to tell. It was for you. Your job was to report back to me. I had to get out of my skin and into yours. I needed to be translated, to be a transvestite" (ST 309). Tom's anger about being manipulated for propagandistic purposes, his anger on behalf of his readers who are meant to be manipulated into a politically "appropriate" opinion, is vexing; consequently, he dares to be translated and approaches himself through a double layer of ambivalent consciousness: "Your duplicitous point of view, which would have to include your understanding, your version, of me, lover and Sweet Tooth item. My task was to reconstruct myself through the *prism*[77] *of your consciousness*" (ST 310; emphasis added).[78] Each (living) object is distorted and coloured when watched through a prism; the consciousness, consisting of different identities and thus various point of views, is a most complex prism. Tom even doubles this prismatic process by watching Serena through the prism of his consciousness and, furthermore, reading him through the prism of what he imagines being her consciousness. He is simultaneously translator, code and object of translation. In consequence, Tom defeats MI5 with its own practise and even "advances" it: "Your masters did not require you to investigate how you yourself appeared through my eyes. I was learning to do what you do, then better it with one extra fold of deception" (ST 310). Tom realises that both his version of Serena and Serena's version of himself are narrative constructs; choosing a double layer of narrative perspective and explaining this double layer, he multiplies every single word of his narrative into productivity and strongly encourages a rereading of his novel – at the latest when his torque is made explicit in the last chapter of his novel.

Tom Haley's novel is, therefore, ambivalently readerly and writerly in form and content. He emancipates his readers into critical thought not only by writing a first-person narrator who develops from monological to dialogical reading but by daring to watch himself from the perspective of the other. He thus resists common sense and, consequently, the monological

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[77] I would like to thank Dr. Marc Brecht, physics professor at Reutlingen University, for explaining to me in detail the physical properties of a prism.
[78] Dobrogoszcz analyses this approach in terms of the Lacanian mirror stage mode "to investigate the issue of identity formation as well as to illustrate the relation between the author and the reader, and the formation of the authorial image in a narrative work" (201).

attempt of the Secret Service to manipulate him and his readers. However, he needs to be conscious to fight back: dialogue and thus intertextual theory require conscious existence.[79]

Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, writes Tom into an extreme situation in which he, like Robbie, equates existence with consciousness and realises that individual subjectivity is a narrative construct. Tom, aiming to avoid the ideological determination of his individual subjectivity, dares to distort and double himself in the prism of both his and Serena's consciousness by including a double layer into the first-person narrative perspective of his novel; however, to resist monologising, the individual subject must be conscious of its place in society and history: Tom needs to return into the here and now of continuity to write his novel which is readerly in form and content only to explode into a productivity of meaning when he exposes his writing process. Thus Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, both approach the paradox of intertextuality: only if the individual subject is set in history and society, dialogue and intertextual processes are possibilities of anti-systemic and anti-ideological criticism. Barthes, although partly sharing Kristeva's ambivalently and radically liberating and destructive approach, simplifies the exercise of such criticism: his concepts of intertextuality are more tangible in daily life since he deals more illustriously with text and intertextuality (Orr 20-21) and because, even more important, he considers the individual subject's *inevitable* and *necessary* setting in history and society.

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[79] Ksiezopolska's reading of *Sweet Tooth* and, in particular, her negative interpretation of Tom centres around this moment when Tom chooses to turn spy himself: "in fact, it was the novelist who was the spy, and the deceiving heroine was merely a pawn – or, better still, merely a character – in his fast-typing hands" (417). Analysing gender roles and hierarchies in Tom Haley's novel (419-22), she argues that Tom Haley is degrading Serena:

> Tom as a "ventriloquist," as an artist, is much more capable than Tom as a human being. Serena as his creation is believable, and thus it pains us when she is pushed from the position of power (narrating her own story) to the position of a character in a character's fiction. When Tom's letter reassigns her to a lower circle of the narrative structure, she becomes degraded to the position of the character in his stories […]. Reading those stories, she believed herself to be on a higher level, and yet those fictional worlds were simply parallel to her own. (422)

While Ksiezopolska rightly argues that Tom is fictionalising Serena, she does not observe the reflective moment that Tom textualises in the difference between Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I. Indeed, writing his novel and, in addition, a letter about the novel's formation process, he is not degrading Serena but offering her to emancipate herself from authorial control in becoming a Barthesian writer (cf. the textual analysis of 3.4.2 Serena and Tom, 3.4.4.2 Tom Haley and 3.5 Genette's Paratext and Metatext).

3.4   Barthes's Intertext

According to Broich, Kristeva's intertextual theory is impracticable. He argues, from the perspective of the literary scholar, that it is impossible to apply her concept to the literary text (48). Although it is not possible within the format of this dissertation to consider all of Kristeva's theory, the theoretical aspects exemplified in the textual analysis illustrate that, from a conscious and dialogical perspective in literary criticism, it is possible to apply Kristeva's concept to the literary text *beyond* reducing it to intentional reference; indeed, considering the example of the phrase *Come back.*, it is even possible to "traditionally" close read a literary text based on Kristeva's intertextual theory. Considering the anti-ideological and anti-systemic potential of her ideas, it is, therefore, upsetting that she is "openly acknowledged" for coining the term *intertextuality* but that this recognition is "surprisingly fleeting and dismissive" (Orr 20); indeed, literary scholars agree that Kristeva's theory has been "sidelined" and "even actively discredited" (20-21), "used" and, primarily, "abused" (Dillon 85).[80] Intertextuality, threatening discipline and individual subjectivity, is made controllable by re-defining it into intentional reference; however, this "is no more than a futile academic attempt to tame the indomitable, a bourgeois attempt to defuse its explosive and revolutionary potential that aims to expose all notions of autonomy and unity of the subject and the text as ideological fictions" (Pfister, Postmodern 211). According to Manfred Pfister, even if intertextual theory is less practical and applicable than other (literary) theory, it is meant "to revolutionize our notions of art, literature, text and subjectivity" (Postmodern 211).

The development of intertextual theory perfectly exemplifies Barthes's argument that each anti-ideological criticism is in danger of being ideologically appropriated (RB[81] 174-75). Hence only if criticism remains an activity, criticism can fight monological processes: "la critique n'est nullement une table de résultats ou un corps de jugements, elle est essentiellement une activité" (EC[82] 1359). Thus Kristeva's close involvement with Bakhtinian theory (as practiced in the textual analysis of this dissertation) must not be devalued into a translation from Russian to French (Orr 20-25); instead, it is a productivity which protects both Bakhtinian theory and her concept from being occupied. Due to an intertextual reading of Bakhtin, Derrida and Saussure, Bakhtin's dialogue is "rephrased within Kristeva's semiotic attention to text,

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[80] Dillon argues that, in contemporary critical discourse, "the term 'intertextuality' can now no longer be disentangled" from the idea of "source study" (85); hence she suggests *the palimpsest* to signify "the modern experience of writing" which Kristeva tried to approach within her concept of intertextuality (85).

[81] Barthes, Roland. *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*. 1975. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 3: 1974-1980. Paris: Seuil, 1995. 79-250. Print.

[82] Barthes, Roland. *Essais critiques*. 1964. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 1: 1942-1965. Paris: Seuil, 1993. 1165-1377. Print.

textuality and their relation to ideological structures" (Allen, Intertextuality 35). Furthermore, to oppose ideological appropriation, criticism must not only be a criticism of the other but always needs to be a criticism of itself (Barthes, EC 1360). Thus Kristeva soon changed a possibly misleading term: intertextuality was renamed into transposition to focus on the repositioning and transforming processes within intertextuality (Allen, Intertextuality 228).[83]

However, considering the aspect of transformation, John Frow criticises Kristeva for not detailing the process of textual adaptation (127-28; also Allen, Intertextuality 55-56 and Clayton and Rothstein 20). Although Kristeva is aware of the problem of representation (MDR 91), she does, indeed, not focus on specific moments of transposition.[84] However, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, implies the issue of transformation when she allows Robbie a conscious moment to think about the narrative of history:

> The convoy had entered a bombed village, or perhaps the suburb of a small town – the place was rubble and it was impossible to tell. Who would care? Who could ever describe this confusion, and come up with the village names and the dates for the history books? And take the reasonable view and begin to assign the blame? No one would ever know what it was like to be here. *Without the details there could be no larger picture.* (A 227; emphasis added)

A *history* is "a continuous, typically chronological, record of important or public events" (*OLD* def. 3.). However, because of its chronology, official history is a selective and generalising narrative. Firstly, the importance of an event is determined in the ideological eye of the beholder. Secondly, since official history usually focuses on public events, Robbie indicates that a history is an entirely inadequate textual form to mediate individual experience: it affects factual completeness without understanding the details – a history is, therefore, a monological construct.[85] Robbie realises that the text of individual suffering will be sacrificed to meet the

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[83] Allen observes that Barthes, too, "continually shifts his terminology and offers not a fixed model but always a beginning, a prospect, a prelude to a science which must change and mutate if it is to retain any potential for critique" (*Barthes* 45).

[84] Critics primarily interested in processes of mediation rather focus on Foucault's discourse theory:
> Foucault's conception of intertextuality emphasizes the role of both discursive and nondiscursive formations – such as institutions, professions, and disciplines – in shaping what can be known and, more radically, what count as "true." […] Foucault attends to the forces that restrict the free circulation of the text. Although every text possesses countless points of intersection with other texts, these connections situate a work within existing networks of power, simultaneously creating and disciplining the text's ability to signify. Foucault insists that we analyze the role of power in the production of textuality and of textuality in the production of power. This entails looking closely at those social and political institutions by which subjects are subjected, enabled and regulated in forming textual meaning. (Clayton and Rothstein 27)

[85] Hence Natasha Alden argues that *Atonement* "allows us to trace how the novel practises the relationship between history and fiction" and "what fiction *can* do with history that history *cannot*" (59). Rejecting "postmodernist relativism" (61) and foregrounding a difference between reality and fiction (59 and 61), McEwan is "reasserting

standard of a history book; indeed, in this particular case, it will be sacrificed to ideologise the catastrophic flight to Dunkirk into a successful tactical retreat. This Myth of Dunkirk was dominant (widely circulated)[86] and thus "reinforced" in British society (Alden 61; also Bentley 151; Cormack 80; Head 156 and 166-68; Hidalgo 87; Letissier 224 and 226; Müller-Wood 149; and Quarrie 201-02). The Myth of Dunkirk even found its way into English vocabulary: *Dunkirk spirit* signifies "stoicism and determination in a difficult or dangerous situation, especially as displayed by a group of people" (*OLD*). Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, wants "to 'put the record' straight about Dunkirk" (Alden 61) and hence "modifies" and thus de-ideologises the Myth of Dunkirk not only by focussing on individual suffering but by choosing Robbie to imply the development of mythical history (Head 156). She thus specifies Kristeva and Barthes's general objective: "c'est la subversion de toute idéologie qui est en cause" (PT 1511). Neither critic aims at listing specific ideological discourse and form; indeed, this endeavour is impossible since each individual subject differs in its discursive construction and production. While it is the critic's responsibility to raise awareness of ideological determination and provide tools to oppose it (general criticism), it is the writer's and reader's responsibility to fight those ideological discourses and forms specific for their history and society (specific criticism).

Although both Kristeva's and Barthes's ideas on intertextuality are criticised for being a-historical and a-social (Clayton and Rothstein 27), Barthes's theory, contrary to Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, allows the individual subject to criticise monologue in the context of its individual subjectivity; indeed, thinking of Barthes's attempt to de-mythologise (French) culture by means of Saussurean structuralism (M 688-690), a consciousness of history and society has always been a major consideration within his theoretical contemplation. Consequently, although Barthes participates in the intertextual process to counteract ideological discourse in attacking the naturalised, "stable meaning and unquestionable truth" (Allen, Intertextuality 59), his ideas are, even in his poststructuralist phase, more accessible and applicable in the everyday fight against ideological discourse. Hence Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their protagonists and

the difference between historical and fictional forms of narrative" (69) and thus "creating a new form of historiographical metafiction" in which the reader is (self)reflectively taken "towards an understanding of the past that the source material alone might not achieve" (69). While McEwan does not propose that "we can have unmediated access to the past, or to any form of reality" (61), he can, distinguishing between history and fiction but making historical veracity secondary, focus on atmosphere which a historical fact cannot provide (63). "*Atonement* is still a metafictional novel, but McEwan is reasserting the history/fiction divide, broken down by postmodern historiography, in order to interrogate it, while retaining the freedom fiction gives the author to explore the past – to go *beyond* the factual record" (61).

[86] According to Barthes, each ideology is dominant (PT 1510-11); however, (ideological) discourses are circulated to varying degrees and thus more or less present in a specific society.

further characters within Barthesian intertextual theory to mediate the dialogical possibilities the individual subject can introduce and embrace. In the first subchapter (3.4.1 Briony and Emily, Cecilia and Robbie), it will be analysed how Briony Tallis exemplifies the Barthesian theory of work and Text by means of the library and its monological and dialogical connotations and intertextual possibilities – if the individual subject is ready to question its socially and historically prefabricated structures. In the second subchapter (3.4.2. Serena and Tom), it will be analysed how Serena finally accepts Tom's / Tom Haley's Barthesian invitation of rewriting his novel. In the third subchapter (3.4.3 I love you), Barthes's lover's discourse will be introduced in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*: in both novels the lover's ideas on the highly intertextual phrase *I love you* are processed – as the individual subject's confinement when it is spoken monologically *and* as the individual subject's liberation when it is spoken dialogically. In the fourth subchapter (3.4.4 Briony Tallis and Tom Haley), both acting writers will be analysed as paper authors written into the text of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*.

3.4.1   Briony and Emily, Cecilia and Robbie

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, chooses the library to be a central and highly symbolic setting which bears ambivalent meanings for her focalisers; in *doubling* the library, Briony Tallis explores Barthes's theory of work and Text and the reader's power to unbind a work into a Text.[87] While Briony and Emily consider the library a place of authoritative instruction and monological consumption (3.4.1.1 Briony and Emily), Cecilia and Robbie unbind the written text in the library by immerging into the intertext (of their complex individual subjectivity) (3.4.1.2 Cecilia and Robbie).

3.4.1.1 Briony and Emily

Jack Tallis is a transcendental signified in the universe of the Tallis family. Although he is seldom at home, once he is at home, "the household settled around a *fixed point*" (A 122; emphasis added). A transcendental signified is a construct of monological thought: while a (linguistic) sign, always dependent in meaning on its relation to other (linguistic) signs, can, theoretically, never gain a transcendental and hence authoritative position (Allen, Intertextuality 228), authority is, practically, *attached* to a transcendental signified (by those

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[87] The adjective *unbound* was chosen by Graham Allen to explain Barthes's radically liberating approaches to the (literary) text. Cf. "The Text Unbound: Barthes" in *Intertextuality*.

profiting from this authority) (Intertextuality 228). Briony Tallis implies this process in her construction of Jack: *although organising nothing* (A 122), order is imposed by his presence since both his wife and children, living in a patriarchal society, attach authority and command to his person (A 122). Even though her husband is constantly betraying her (A 148), Emily, unlike her sister who is willing to face the social disgrace of divorce, does not intervene: "she had sources of contentment in her life – the house, the park, above all, the children – and she intended to preserve them by *not challenging* Jack" (A 148; emphasis added). Indeed, avoiding any (inner) conflict, she assumes that, keeping up an elaborate fabrication (A 148), "his deceit [the concealment of his affairs] was a form of tribute to the importance of their marriage" (A 148). However, the order imposed by a transcendental signified can be rather ambivalent: liberating and restrictive. On the one hand, Jack's children profit from his presence which lifts the burden of responsibility they share for their mother's comfort (A 122). On the other hand, Cecilia is afraid of defying her father's instruction on feminine behaviour – even in his absence (A 46-47). Only if the monological discourse and authority of a transcendental signified is unquestioningly approved, it is – perceived to be – liberating.

Briony unconditionally welcomes her father's centralising function: both Briony and her father understand the library to be a place of authoritative instruction in written form. "When he was there, it no longer mattered that her mother retreated to her bedroom; it was enough that he was downstairs with a book on his lap" (A 122). Both Briony and her father appreciate the library and subject themselves to the authority of the book. "He knew most things worth knowing, and when he didn't know, he had a good idea which authority to consult, and would take her into the library to help him find it" (A 122). Approaching the written text in search of authority and authorised knowledge, they demand a *work* implying unambiguous (stable and unique) meaning (Barthes, TT 1677). They seek to passively consume a finalised product (T 1215) and, indeed, neither Briony nor her father question the authoritative instruction provided in a work. A work implies security – "la stabilité, la permanence de l'inscription, destinée à corriger la fragilité et l'imprécision de la mémoire" (TT 1677) – and continuity: "le texte est une arme contre le temps, l'oubli, et contre les roueries de la parole, qui, si facilement, se reprend, s'altère, se renie" (TT 1677). Unsurprisingly, Briony's literary products, aiming at securing continuous order, are (meant to be) performed in the library (A 6 and A 11): she is the author among authorial authorities and authorised content. Performing boldly in the library (A 6), she enjoys writing and reading a work, a *text of pleasure* (PT 1501), which upholds individual subjectivity and cultural identification. Being the space of ideological discourse, a work is linked to traditional institutions like the law, the church, the literary or

education system (TT 1677): "il assujettit, exige qu'on l'observe et le respecte" (TT 1677). Both Briony and her father, who works for the government, accept cultural institutions and institutionalised knowledge. They read and respect the work for being an authority providing truth. However, truth is a monological construct which intertextual theorists attempt to deny. Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, equally criticises the concept of institutionalised truth when, ironically, Briony's false statement is made and accepted in the library (A 179).

Barthes, theorising intertextuality, distinguishes between *work* (text of pleasure) and *Text*.[88] While the work is written to provide unambiguous (stable and unique) meaning which is meant to be accepted and respected, the Text cannot be consumed since it is a continuous activity of production rather than a finalised product (T 1212-15): "l'œuvre se voit (chez les libraires, dans les fichiers, dans les programmes d'examen), le texte se démontre" (T 1212). It requires the reader to actively and practically produce – in a shared, multiple and ambivalent signifying process (T 1215-16) – an irreducible plural (T 1213-14). Focussing on the play of the signifier (T 1213) in writer, reader and *texte général* (TT 1681), the Text exists in dialogical, intertextual process only and, functioning across several texts (and works!) (T 1212), it is immune to hierarchy and undermines old classifications (T 1212). Emily shares her husband's and daughter's approach to the work and does not read beyond its signified. **Not considering anti-authoritative possibilities of rewriting and thus upholding the hierarchical old**, **Emily monologically consumes the work.** In consequence, she deprecates Cecilia's literary studies since her daughter "had *lolled about* for three years at Girton with the kind of books she could equally have read at home" (A 152; emphasis added). Accusing Cecilia of having "learned modern forms of snobbery at Cambridge" while focussing on a leisure activity (A 152), Emily devalues her daughter's literary studies and suggests its uselessness for society. However, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, indicates that studying literature has changed Cecilia's reading process into the beginnings of critical thought. Before studying English literature, Cecilia had irritated Briony by suggesting to bind her narratives and sort them in the library (A 7); after studying, however, the bounded text in form of Samuel

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[88] In the context of Barthesian theory, it is necessary to distinguish between *text* and *Text*. "Traditionally, a text was the actual words or signs which made up a work of literature. It gave permanence to the work. In structuralist and poststructuralist theory the 'text' comes to stand for whatever meaning is generated by the intertextual relations between one text and another and the activations of those relations by a reader" (Allen, Intertextuality 227). To distinguish *text* (traditional) from *Text* (intertextual), Barthes capitalises *Text* when used in its intertextual meaning (TT 1677).

Richardson's *Clarissa* causes her physical and mental pain (A 21 and A 109).[89] And contrary to Leavis's dominant habitus, she prefers Henry Fielding's dialogical text (A 25).

Henry Fielding's dialogical text is a readerly text of writerly potential. When Barthes introduces his theory of the *readerly text* which is meant to be passively read and consumed and the *writerly text* which is meant to be actively rewritten and produced, he realises that a writerly text is impossible to be written since each writer is at least to some extent situated in history and society (PT 1510) – fortunately, because a text which is writerly and thus not in need of being rewritten is sterile since it does not offer participation in the play of the signifier and thus, paradoxically, results in passive consumption (PT 1510). The reader, equally situated in history and society, requires a moment of monologue (representation, ideology, subjectivity etc.) within a text to engage in criticism (PT 1510); rewriting requires monological order that can be fought, dissected and regrouped (PT 1510-11). Consequently, worth analysing are those texts which are representative in form and content, but which ambivalently feature both the readerly and the writerly (PT 1510). Emily, focussing on the signifier of the work, is unaware of the writerly in the readerly. However, **Briony Tallis undermines Emily's readerly approach to literature: Emily, intending to prove her point of monological consumption, unknowingly names readerly texts of writerly potential**: her daughter "had lolled about for three years at Girton with the kind of books she could equally have read at home – *Jane Austen, Dickens, Conrad*" (A 152; emphasis added). Never thinking beyond the first-order reading, Emily instances writers whose novels feature "the 'writerly' within its apparent 'readerly' form" (Allen, Intertextuality 77), whose novels have representative form and content but whose readerly form and thus order is denied in ambivalence which is introduced in contentual contradiction or stylistic device (cf. Jane Austen's use of irony). While the dialogue in works of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Joseph Conrad remains work-able, they have, nevertheless, text-ual potential (Kristeva, MDR 91).

Only consuming the literary text in the context of their monological order, neither Briony nor her parents realise the subversive potential of the literary texts in their library. Indeed, **Emily apprehends the library to be a place of finalised "complete" sets**: her daughter "had lolled about for three years at Girton with the kind of books she could equally have read at home – *Jane Austen, Dickens, Conrad, all in the library downstairs, in complete sets*" (A 152; emphasis added). The library symbolises monological order and knowledge,

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[89] Cavalié offers an alternative reading of the "pins and needles" Cecilia is feeling in her arms while reading *Clarissa* (A 21). According to her reading, Cecilia "is not cut out for a career as an intellectual, or even the passive existence like her mother's, but rather the more active part which she will take as a nurse during the war" (125).

intellectual refinement and social status. While Robbie purchased his illegal for anti-systemic copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* under the counter in Soho (A 132), Emily proudly emphasises that the narratives of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Joseph Conrad are sorted in the library in officially sanctioned and presentable "complete sets" (A 152). If a writer's texts are collected and published in a (box) set, such publication promotes a reading based on the author and symbolises monological completeness and finality – even if the writer aims at initiating dialogue within readers; metaphorically, it is twice bounded: by its cover and by its set. Consequently, while the ambivalence of the readerly and the writerly allows for a realisable criticism of ideological monologue, it ultimately depends on the reader if the writerly potential of a readerly text is unlocked. The reader, thus Allen, is necessary "in the production of the anti-monologic text" (Intertextuality 67). A Text might be initiated by the writer, but it is activated and produced by the reader who dares to establish the Text across several works. This power of the reader to unbind the work is symbolised by Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse in the library.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, personalises Barthes's theory of the monological and monologising work within Briony, Emily and Jack who monologically consume the authority of the prestigious bounded text. However, Briony Tallis doubles the library into a space of work and Text and mediates within Cecilia and Robbie the reader's possibility to unbind the work into a Text by immerging into the intertext (of individual subjectivity).

3.4.1.2 Cecilia and Robbie

Vermeule describes Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse as "a quick fuck in the library" (150). This statement denies any complexity to one of the most complex encounters in a complex plot in which "sexual union transcends the physical" (Phelan, Narrative Theory 329).[90] **Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse in the library un-signifies Cecilia and Robbie to prepare their re-birth into ambivalence.** When Cecilia and Robbie meet, they are both aware of their mutual sexual attraction but, inhibited by their common past, feel uncomfortable. "That they were old friends who had shared a childhood was now a barrier – they were *embarrassed before*

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[90] In Chapter Eight "Narrative Theory, 1966-2006: A Narrative" of *The Nature of Narrative*, Phelan, exemplifying several approaches within literary analysis (e.g. order, frequency and duration, or narrative perspective and voice), analyses the complex presentation of Cecilia and Robbie's complex love-making: "the passage is a part of a remarkable scene representing the power, wonder, and beauty of newly discovered love" (Narrative Theory 330).

their former selves" (A 134; emphasis added). Their friendship, although "vague" and "constrained" (A 134), is an "old habit" (A 134), an authoritative word which is hard to break "in order to become strangers on intimate terms" (A 134). They are (self-)conscious of their former identities – brother, sister and friend – which discursively *rule out* sexual intimacy. Since their state of individual subjectivity keeps Cecilia and Robbie from exploring new possibilities, this state needs to be suspended. Thinking within Briony's appreciation of the library, the library is a rather poor place to overcome social habit and constraint; however, meeting in the library, Cecilia and Robbie step outside of history and society when they close the door which seals them off from any expectation (A 136). Of course, Cecilia and Robbie carry (personal) history and society into the library but in the dim light of the library (A 133), their faces and identities become indistinct and unreadable (A 133); embarrassed before their former selves, they seek the darkness of the farthest corner. Briony Tallis augments Cecilia's nymphean ambivalence when she "tempts" Robbie into the gloom. "One elbow was resting on the shelves, and she seemed to slide along them, as though about to disappear *between the books*. […] It was only then that it occurred to him that she might not be shrinking from him, but drawing him with her deeper *into the gloom*" (A 133; emphasis added). However, instead of destroying the male individual subject when drawing him into dark depths (Stamer 33), Cecilia, the nymph, paves the way for her and for Robbie's re-birth into the ambivalence of dialogical individual subjectivity: in the gloomy intertext between the books, Cecilia and Robbie are rewritten.

According to Barthes, each text is intertext (TT 1683).[91] Within the theory of intertextuality, individual subjectivity is, consequently, a cultural construct of specifically *redistributed* and *transformed* social and historical texts (MA 495 and TT 1683), and the human being is without the biography and psychology of essential individual subjectivity (MA 495). Outside of social and historical discourse which facilitates her cultural state of (monological or dialogical) individual subjectivity, Cecilia dissolves into a *natural state of intertextuality* when she metaphorically vanishes "between the books" (A 133). This natural state of intertextuality is compared to the natural state of individuality in which the individual subject, unconscious of itself and/or without linguistic ability, can only instinctively act: Cecilia and Robbie, unable to express themselves in the vocabulary and rules of a signified language system (A 135), start to

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[91] Intertexts must not be thought the signifieds of texts: "the inter-texts, other works of literature, other kinds of texts, are themselves intertextual constructs, are themselves able to offer us nothing more than signifiers" (Allen, Intertextuality 71). Allen, explaining Barthes's concept of intertextuality, emphasises that "the intertextual has less to do with specific inter-texts than with the entire cultural code, comprised, as it is, of discourses, stereotypes, clichés, ways of saying" (Intertextuality 71). The plurality of the intertext is "evil" (Barthes, T 1214).

touch (A 135); **in their process of naturalisation, Cecilia and Robbie are un-signified: they are detached from their signified identities and turn into physical signifiers.**

> Daringly, they touched the tips of their tongues, and it was then she made the falling, sighing sound which, he realised later, marked a transformation. […] This sound seemed to enter him, pierce him down his length so that his whole body opened up and he was able *to step out of himself* and kiss her freely. What had been self-conscious was now impersonal, almost abstract. The sighing noise she made was greedy and made him greedy too. *He pushed her hard into the corner, between the books*. (A 135; emphasis added)

Both Cecilia's and Robbie's body, the surface on which textual discourse works, turn into a physical presence (signifier) without identity (signified). When Robbie, stepping out of himself, detaches himself from the specific arrangement of his individual subjectivity (concept), he can approach Cecilia without social constraint. The further they disappear between the books, the further their individual subjectivity dissolves into instinctive and thus uncontrollable action. "Their heads rolled and turned against one another as their kissing became a gnawing. She bit him on the cheek, not quite playfully. He pulled away, then moved back and she bit him hard on his lower lip. He kissed her throat, forcing back her head against the shelves, she pulled his hair and pushed his face down against her breasts" (A 135). In the end, Cecilia and Robbie's individual subjectivities are entirely deconstructed: "At last they were strangers, their pasts were forgotten. They were also *strangers to themselves who had forgotten who or where they were*. The library was thick and none of the ordinary sounds that might have reminded them, might have held them back, could reach them. They were beyond the present, outside time, with no memories and no future" (A 136; emphasis added). Outside of time and place, Cecilia and Robbie are unconscious of themselves and only respond to the sensation of instinctive existence. While they were before "embarrassed before their former selves" (A 134), they are "too selfless now to be embarrassed" (A 136). They are un-signified, they are plural; however, this natural state of un-signified plurality is as unproductive as the writerly text.

When Cecilia and Robbie are reborn into ambivalence, their intercourse metaphorically implies the necessity of individual subjectivity (consciousness) to appreciate ambivalence. In *Le Plaisir du Texte*, Barthes distinguishes between the *text of pleasure* (cf. Briony) and *the text of bliss*: the process of rewriting is associated with the individual subject's dissolution in the moment of sexual climax (*jouissance* / bliss) (Allen, Intertextuality 221-22) since both sexual climax and *le texte de jouissance* deliver the individual

subject from its cultural confinement (Barthes, PT 1501). However, a text/state of bliss, imposing loss on the individual subject, does not only liberate but bores if sterile (PT 1501); consequently, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, introduces Cecilia's and Robbie's dissolution *and* rebirth *before* this moment of bliss as rewriting and thus *jouissance* paradoxically require consciousness of identity. In their moment of physical unity but before their sexual climax (A 137-38), Cecilia and Robbie return into the state of individual subjectivity: "Instead of an ecstatic frenzy, there was stillness. They were stilled not by the astonishing fact of arrival, but by an awed *sense of return* – they were face to face in the gloom, starring into what little they could see of each other's eyes, and now it was the impersonal that dropped away" (A 137; emphasis added). Grmelová argues that Cecilia and Robbie, in order to become sexually intimate, first must overcome the Romantic notion of "merging in love" which was severely criticised by D. H. Lawrence's descriptions of sexuality (155). Indeed, while conscious of their unity, Cecilia and Robbie are equally conscious of themselves as distinct individual subjects: "the passage does move from their joint consciousness to their individual consciousnesses" (Phelan, Narrative Theory 326); in this movement, they perceive and recognise one another in their past identities. However, in the gloom between the books, they do not *read* their former identities symbolised by a familiar face; instead, a familiar face is full of wonders ready to be explored when identities are *rewritten* in the context of their new situation: "The son of Grace and Ernest Turner, the daughter of Emily and Jack Tallis, the childhood friends, the university acquaintances, in a state of *expansive, tranquil joy*, confronted the *momentous change* they had achieved. *The closeness of a familiar face was not ludicrous, it was wondrous*" (A 137; emphasis added). Cecilia and Robbie "register how the vitality and wonder of the present is dependent on that past" (Narrative Theory 324-25). While they are re-born into history and society and thus into consciousness of their former identities – son and daughter, childhood friend and university acquaintance, their former identities are transformed in the momentous change of their love and sexual attraction for each other: the joy they experience is "expansive" (A 137), embracing all their past identities which thus do no longer provoke a feeling of embarrassment; instead, they feel "tranquil" (A 137) when they are re-born into Nietzschean ambivalence (a coexistence of actually contradictory and, even if identifiable, unresolvable meanings and identities).

Between the books, Cecilia's and Robbie's individual subjectivity is rewritten into the possibilities of dialogue when they appreciate their complexity. "Robbie stared at *the woman, the girl* he had always known, thinking the change was entirely in himself, and was as fundamental, as fundamentally biological, as *birth*. Nothing as singular or important had

happened since they day of his birth. She returned his gaze, struck by the sense of her own *transformation*, and overwhelmed by the beauty in a face which a lifetime's habit had taught her to ignore" (A 137: emphasis added). Cecilia is woman *and* girl, lover *and* friend. Switching the perspective from Robbie to Cecilia, Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises the difference between monological restriction and dialogical freedom: Cecilia is struck by her own transformation which finally allows her to overcome her past discursive habit which "taught her" to ignore the beauty of Robbie's face. **Cecilia and Robbie acknowledge their re-birth into ambivalence when consciously and plurally signifying their names.** "She whispered his name with the deliberation of a child trying out the *distinct sounds*. When he replied with her name, it sounded like a new word – *the syllables remained the same, the meaning was different*" (A 137; emphasis added). Briony Tallis's narrator, however, only paraphrases the speaking of their names. While the signifiers /sɛˈsiːli.ə/ and /ɹˈɒbi/ remain the same, they signify a new Cecilia and a new Robbie which need to be explored. Cecilia carefully tries to form the "distinct sounds" into a new signified since "now that her perception of him has been transformed, she feels compelled to name him anew" (Phelan, *Narrative Theory* 329). Equally, Robbie realises that the same word elements are now combined into a different meaning. Briony Tallis, drawing attention to the Saussurean dyad of signifier and signified, implies, on the one hand, the detachment of signifier and signified, postulated by intertextual theory, into her construction of Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse: in a state of intertextuality / individuality, they are un-signified; on the other hand, rewriting but restoring conscious and plural signifying, she implies the necessity of some situatedness to understand a transformation into ambivalence.[92]

Cecilia and Robbie are awed by their transformation which allows them to overcome the constraint of social and historical discourse and be both instead of either/or; indeed, Robbie is aroused by Cecilia's ambivalence: "his excitement was close to pain and sharpened by the pressure of contradictions: she was familiar like a sister, she was exotic like a lover; he had always known her, her knew nothing about her; she was plain, she was beautiful" (A 130). Facing irreconcilabilities in Cecilia and their relationship, life becomes more intense: "they

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[92] In *Nutshell*, the foetus-narrator refers to "this Monsieur Barthes" and associates the state of bliss "with the condition of the modern foetus" (74). Having "nothing to do but be and grow" (74), he* enjoys "pure existence, the tedium of undifferentiated days" (74). He thus alludes to Barthes's idea that boredom is an access to bliss: "il est la jouissance vue des rives du plaisir" (PT 1507). However, the foetus's state of bliss is unmercifully ended when his mother and uncle decide to kill his father and he necessarily enters into a chronological story: "Now I live inside a story and fret about its outcome. Where's boredom or bliss in that?" (75) Situatedness in history and society with its constant forward movement impedes entering a state of bliss; and yet, the foetus is already craving his own story – his "birthright" (130), because he enjoys being conscious and thus thinking about his individual subjectivity and its sense perception (128-30).

*The foetus is, according to biological sex, a male individual subject; however, he already wonders about the restrictive concept of gender.

would be alone together soon, with more contradictions – hilarity and sensuousness, desire and fear at their recklessness, awe and impatience to begin" (A 130). Briony, however, is disgusted by this "incarnation" of disorder. When she enters the library, it is "stained" by the disarray she observes in Robbie's "attack" on her sister (A 123-24). "The scene was so entirely a realisation of her worst fears that she sensed that her over-anxious imagination had projected the figures onto the packed spines of the books" (A 123). Indeed, **Cecilia and Robbie, re-born into ambivalence, physically and mentally link the different works into one major – uncontrollable for plural – Text**. They cover the titles on the covers' spines and thus uncover the works by their physically and mentally conscious presence. Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, thus doubles the library into a space of the work *and* of the textualising potential of dialogical individual subjectivity.

Briony Tallis, choosing her narrator to tell the "incident" in the library from two diverging perspectives, attempts to emancipate her readers into dialogue by stirring their textualising potential. When Briony enters the library, she watches how Robbie has trapped Cecilia "where the shelves met at *right angles*" (A 123; emphasis added). In this context, the signifier *right angle* is interestingly double: on the one hand, it signifies the tidy geometrical form in which the bookshelves, displaying orderly works, are arranged; on the other hand, *right angle* can be read as a combination of adjective and noun: right perspective. However, Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that monological reading (monological perspective) leads to further monologising: although Briony "had no particular expectations as she placed her hand on the brass handle and turned it" (A 123), her reading is preconceived since "she had seen Robbie's letter, she had cast herself as her sister's protector, and she had been instructed by her cousin: what she saw must have been shaped in part by what she already knew, or believed she knew" (A 123). Thus she misreads Cecilia and Robbie's mutual intercourse into a cruel attack in which both Cecilia and the library, Briony's place of order and authority, are assaulted into disorder (A 123). However, constructing her novel to engage her readers into critical thought, Briony Tallis warns them to be cautious. Her narrator, mediating Briony's perspective, strongly suggests the possibility of a debatable reading: Briony "believed she knew" (A 123). Already familiar with Briony's monological reading of the incident by the fountain, Briony Tallis's readers are alerted and possibly unsurprised when Briony's right angle is rewritten in the narrator's description of Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse. Crucially, Cecilia's and Robbie's perspectives are narrated after Briony's observation, forcing even monologically determined readers to re-consider what they have read before: they cannot but enter into a first process of rewriting.

Briony Tallis does not only attempt to emancipate her readers into dialogue but into continuing dialogue despite being socially impeded. When Robbie is sentenced and imprisoned, Cecilia and Robbie cannot maintain their active and affirmative complexity; while Robbie is forcefully reduced (A 204-05 and A 339-44), Cecilia reduces herself: "She told him she had cut herself off from her family. She would never speak to her parents, brother or sister again" (A 205). Severely suffering from the monologising processes in prison and army, Robbie is afraid for Cecilia's dialogical subjectivity. "Robbie knew better than anyone how she loved her brother, how close she was to her family, and how much the house and the park meant to her. He could never return, but it troubled him to think that *she was destroying a part of herself for his sake*" (A 209; emphasis). When he broaches this issue, Cecilia's reply is telling of a society in which ambivalence is not viable: "Realistically, there had to be a choice – you or them. How could it be both? I've never had a moment's doubt" (A 209). Once impatient and restless because her family refused her any ambivalence, Cecilia, having been confronted with institutional power, now categorically denies the possibility of ambivalence in society; however, while monological structures (Briony's authorship, Emily's tradition, the institutions of justice and military) have succeeded in monologising Cecilia, she does not share the monological content her family wished her to share but monologically distances herself from her parents and siblings (A 209) – "when they wrecked your life they wrecked mine" (A 209). While monological structures are always restrictive and destructive, they do not necessarily imply alignment of thought but might equally produce the monological "other" of the binary opposition: you or them. Nevertheless, Briony Tallis's novel leaves her readers with a moment of hope. When Robbie is imprisoned, his books, entirely diverse in content and jumbled on his desk (A 82), are stored into boxes (A 213); metaphorically, the ambivalence of his dialogical individual subjectivity is confined. Although Cecilia provides him with poetry (A 213), Robbie stops believing in the (mental) freedom of the literary text (cf. the textual analysis of 3.3.3 Robbie). When meeting Cecilia and Robbie, however, Briony observes "a pile of books" in their flat (A 335): "at the bottom were *Gray's Anatomy* and a collected Shakespeare, and above them, on slenderer spines, names in faded silver and gold" (A 335). Cecilia and Robbie are attempting to un-box their ambivalence. While these books are not yet jumbled, they are at least not confined and, indeed, piled instead of orderly arranged. It is the tentative beginning of a new library in which covers, already difficult to decipher due to age and repeated opening, do not present a boundary.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, explores Barthes's theory of work and Text. She constructs the library to be a place which symbolises both the author's power and the reader's ultimate power to bind the Text (Briony and Emily) or to unbind the work (Cecilia and Robbie) and thus strongly implies Barthes's point that the individual subject holds both the work and the Text and *the possibility* to rewrite the work into the Text (PT 1501): "il participe en même temps et contradictoirement à l'hédonisme profond de toute culture […] et à la destruction de cette culture: il jouit de la consistance de son *moi* (c'est son plaisir) et recherche sa perte (c'est sa jouissance)" (PT 1501). According to Barthes, the individual subject, when consciously dialogical, is split (PT 1501). Doubling the library into both a place of monological authority and dialogical ambivalence, Briony Tallis, following this argument, continues to emancipate her readers in understanding individual subjectivity as a readerly text of writerly potential: consciousness is required for dialogical criticism. Nicklas, referring to McEwan's claim that imagination is a condition to dialogically approaching the other, summarises: "the not-knowing of one's own position is equally dangerous as not being able to imagine what it is like to be the victim or the object of our actions" (11). Hence Cecilia and Robbie (and Tom in his hotel room) seek their loss, an unconsciousness of historical and social identity, but are reborn into consciousness to appreciate their ambivalence and the ambivalence of the other. However, dialogical individual subjectivity is vulnerable and constantly in danger of being ideologically recaptured; indeed, monological determination is difficult to overcome in the first place. Hence in *Sweet Tooth*, Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, equally explores Barthes's intertextual theory in constructing Serena's long and difficult road into dialogue. While Cecilia and Robbie's intercourse in the library primarily implies the theoretical level of unbinding the work in Cecilia's and Robbie's highly metaphorical thoughts and actions, Tom Haley chooses a straightforward strategy to raise his readers' awareness of a dialogical *between the lines*: Serena, the narrated I, can be observed to develop her neck from readerly to writerly in practically engaging with literary texts.

3.4.2 Serena and Tom

Preparing for her initial meeting with Tom, Serena, the narrated I, first apprehends that a reader can only imply the author; indeed, a reader constructs the author in the process of reading when the reader's and the writer's and the context's discourses meet. Nevertheless, **Serena, the narrated I, does not dare to unlink the author and the author's text**: **according to institutionalised norm and norming, the one cannot be thought without the other.**

Believing that Serena has graduated in English literature, Tom, when meeting Serena in London, quickly introduces poetry into their conversation. Serena, who is unfamiliar with poetry (ST 176), finds herself in a precarious situation. "Yes, there were Keats, Byron, Shelley, but what did they write that *I was supposed to like*?" (ST 176; emphasis added) This passive phrasing, devaluing independent thought, is telling: constructing her identity of a graduate in English literature, she (correctly) believes that she is expected to give a canonical norm for an answer. However, panicking, her mind has gone blank and, to her consternation, she cannot match an author and a work. "Even if I came up with a poet, I would have to name a particular work. There it was. Not a poem in the world that I could name. Not at this moment. He had asked something, he was staring at me, waiting. *The boy stood on the burning deck*" (ST 176). Ironically, a line of poetry is quoted which is dissociated from its author's name in cultural memory.

Tom Haley's intentional reference to Felicia Dorothea Hemans's poem "Casabianca" (1826) suggests how author and work are un-linked in the *texte général*. Considering the first-person narrative situation of Tom Haley's novel, it is impossible to tell whether this intentional reference "originates" in Serena, the narrated I, or whether Serena, the narrating I, is retrospectively commenting Serena's situation. On the one hand, this poem is public knowledge (Rumens n.pag.); hence Serena, the narrated I, might think of its first line which perfectly describes her situation: Serena's ship / identity, which she has constructed when first meeting Tom, is burning because she is about to be found out. On the other hand, this intentional reference can equally be read in the context of changing reading processes which Tom Haley is perceptibly constructing in Serena, the narrating I – indeed, it associates the relationship of author, narrative and reader and the death of those readers who remain mentally dependent on the author. Firstly, the intentional reference shows that the author and her/his literary text are not necessarily connected in cultural memory; this is made obvious because the first line of Felicia Hemans's poem is, as Carol Rumens notes, particularly well-remembered due to its many (anonymous and adult) parodies (n.pag.). In her article in *The Guardian* from July 2011, Rumens even wonders: "Remembered mostly through parodies, does this portrayal of maritime tragedy still warrant serious attention in its own right?" (n.pag.) Secondly, according to Barthes, the author is to his book and reader like a father to his child (MA 145). He comes before the book; he forms the book; he gives orders to his reader and asks his reader's obedience. The boy's father and the author are dead, however, unable to give commands: "That father, faint in death below, / His voice no longer heard" (ll. 11-12). In Felicia Hemans's poem it is ambiguous whose voice is no longer heard; it might be the father's or the son's voice. Both

possibilities can be applied to the death of the author for neither the author's voice giving guidance nor the reader's voice asking for guidance can be heard any longer by the opposite party. Nevertheless, the boy remains on the burning ship: "he would not go / Without his father's word" (ll. 9-10). Dependently, the boy is asking his father for directions (ll. 13-18, 25-26); equally, the reader asks the author for guiding him through her/his narrative. Boy and reader rely on a person of authority instead of thinking / acting for themselves, thus risking, facing and meeting their own death. While the boy is considered "beautiful" and "bright" (l. 5), "heroic" (l. 7), "proud" (l. 8), "brave" (l. 24), "gallant" (l. 31), "noblest" (l. 39) and "faithful" (l. 40) by the voice of Felicia Hemans's original poem, the boy's behaviour is questioned and ridiculed in parodies (Rumens n.pag.); after all, it can be considered rather unwise to remain on a burning ship. The boy finally burns because of his blind trust in and obedience to his father, because of his inability to think for himself and act. If this reading is applied to poststructuralist theory, the reader is criticised and burns for his obsolete trust: obedience to the author is the reader's mental death; those, however, who have fled the ship / the author, daring the sea / *texte général* and its turbulent instability, will live (l. 2). Tom Haley's intentional reference to Felicia Hemans's poem thus metaphorically comments on Serena's present situation and equally metaphorically on the (dis)connection of author and work in the *texte général*.

Serena, the narrated I, facing exposure, braves herself and leaves the burning ship, admitting to Tom that she was pretending to be the person she once wanted to be and entrusting him with her conflicting past (ST 177). Tom does not blame Serena but resolves to familiarise her with poetry (ST 177). Chalupský suggests that Tom like Tony "attempts to refine Serena's reading by introducing her to poetry and giving her more 'appropriate' books as present" (110 and 109-110); however, in contrast to Tony, Tom wants to introduce Serena to dialogically approaching the literary text. He walks her into the "basement of a second-hand bookshop" (ST 177) and presents her with "a sweet, old-fashioned thing" which is "hardly the stuff of poetic revolutions" but "lovely, one of the best-known, best-loved poems in the language" (ST 177), Edward Thomas's "Adlestrop" (1917). Inviting Serena to read Thomas's poem (ST 177), Tom is perplexed by her fast-reading (ST 177). **Serena's fast-reading, restricting each literary text to plot and character, prevents her from reading between the lines of "Adlestrop."** Indeed, Serena has never learned how to approach poetry – neither in private nor in an institutionalised context. "No one I knew read poetry. Even at school I had managed to avoid it. We never *'did'* poetry" (ST 176; emphasis added). Interestingly, the quotation marks around *did* imply that Serena, the narrating I, hardly thinks poetry appropriate for the institutionalised context. Poetry cannot be *done* – and graded – *systematically* since its amount of symbolism

and lack of plot and character makes a poem apt to raise more questions than it clearly answers. It is this lack of plot and character which causes major problems for Serena, the narrated I. Serena, reading only novels and avoiding poetry, approaches Thomas's poem like a narrative: "A train makes an unscheduled stop at an obscure station, no one gets on or off, someone coughs, a bird sings, it's hot, there are flowers and trees, hay drying in the fields and lots of other birds. And that was it" (ST 178). Plot, however, is often minimal or even absent in poetry which subsists on its imagery; hence Serena concludes: "there wasn't much to take" (ST 177). When Serena, in consequence of her narrative reading, dismisses the poem as "very nice" (ST 177), Tom invites her to focus on the atmosphere of the poem (ST 178). Serena, however, unable to read between the lines, is "sure there isn't a single mention of a feeling" (ST 178).

Although Serena, the narrated I, and Tom are surrounded by the same books, they approach them differently. Serena monologically turns each text (be it readerly or of writerly potential) into a work which, according to Barthes, lulls its readers out of entering into signifying processes. In the bookshop, she notices a "dusty soporific smell, as though the books had stolen most of the air" (ST 178). However, having grown up in a "polished, orderly, book-filled" home (ST 1), Serena considers this smell "pleasant" and enjoys a moment of drowsy thoughtlessness (ST 178). Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Briony, Emily and Serena are not afraid to mentally suffocate; on the contrary, being determined by monological discourse and its order, they are determined into uncritically adopting those thoughts they are presented with. Tom, however, is mentally alert. **Reading beyond plot and character between the lines of "Adlestrop," Tom textualises Thomas's poem into an atmospheric reflection on the individual subject's detachment from (personal) time and place.** In contrast to Emily, who proudly thinks of the "complete sets" in the family's library (A 152), Tom takes the "old hardback collected Thomas" from one of the shelves, opens it and unbinds a non-revolutionary poem by reading between its lines. He diminishes the distance between reading and writing (Barthes, T 162) when he focuses on those feelings which the imagery of the poem triggers within his mind: "the memory of a name and nothing else, the stillness, the beauty, the arbitrariness of the stop, birdsong spread out across two counties, the sense of pure existence, of being suspended in space and time, a time before a cataclysmic war" (ST 178). Tom does not try to control the poem's language by "plotting" it; instead, he explores how the poem's language works him (TT 1682). Reading between the lines of Thomas's poem, he reflects on a consciousness which is detached from (personal) time and place into the sensation of pure existence: no purposing, just being. Interestingly, he thus anticipates his moment of pure existence between unconsciousness and consciousness; while this moment,

"suspended in space and time" (ST 178), is peaceful, it is, however, unproductive. The individual subject can only pluralise language when conscious. Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, thus illustrates a textualising process and the reader's power to consciously unbind any text into a Text.

In this Barthesian context it is equally significant that Tom guides Serena, the narrated I, into a *second-hand* bookshop. The signifier *second-hand* is assigned two major signifiers. (a) *second-hand* is something which was owned (and used) by at least one individual subject before it is passed on or resold. Consequently, second-hand books have been read before and thus, per definition, deny the purpose of traditional literary criticism: the interpretive criticism of philology, thus Barthes, attempts to prove that a literary text has a global signified (depending on the theoretical focus): "le texte comme s'il était dépositaire d'une signification objective" (TT 1682). The concept of second-hand rejects any possibility of objective signification: in the moment two individual subjects are involved with a book, objective signification is replaced by global ambivalence. (b) *second-hand* is something which is not directly known or experienced. Knowledge, for example, is hardly ever acquired first-hand but is usually imparted by the narratives of lecturers or books which cannot possibly claim any truth (cf. the Myth of Dunkirk). Knowledge is, therefore, a dense and ambivalent textual construct which works in and on the rewriter. Thus **Tom Haley, contrasting reading processes in Serena's fast-reading and Tom's atmospheric reading and situating them in a second-hand bookshop, suggests how to unbind a work: making reading a highly individual rewriting process.**

When Serena, the narrated I, and Tom are chatting in her bedroom with "two hundred and fifty prompts in the form of paperback novels" around them (ST 184), Serena is relieved and pleased that Tom finally learns the important "truth" about her: "now at last he could see that *I was a reader* and not just an empty-headed girl who cared nothing for poetry" (ST 184; emphasis added). Reading, which was once Serena's "way of not thinking" (ST 5), becomes her way of proving that she is not "empty-headed" (ST 184). Consequently, she feels doubly guilty when reading the first draft of Tom's novel *From the Somerset Levels* – guilty for reading the draft without his permission and guilty for necessarily fast-reading it before he returns (ST 194). Tellingly, Serena's fast-reading has changed after meeting Tom who does not only focus on plot and character but also atmosphere. **Serena fast-reads atmosphere instead of plot and character; however, fast-reading atmosphere is equally restrictive as fast-reading plot and character when centred in the author.** Since Serena is now intimately familiar with the author, Tom is, "naturally," her interpretive point of origin and atmospheric measuring device; she is, therefore, disappointed by Tom's "doomed dystopia" (ST 196) – "insincere" since not

"really Tom" (ST 197). Fast-reading the atmosphere of Tom's draft, Serena fails to contemplate the potential of a narrative which is (intentionally) unlike its author, who grew up in the "luxury and privilege" of Western society (ST 196). Hence she feels betrayed by the "literary mask" of his "modish […] pessimism" (ST 197).

Paradoxically and self-deceivingly, Serena, the narrated I, justifies her own mask and betrayal by helping "bring freedom to a *genuine* artist" since "no one was going to tell him what to write or think" (ST 181; emphasis added). In writing a "modish" and "insincere" narrative (ST 196), one which will rather displease Nutting and his colleagues due to its dystopian content (ST 196) and, even worse, one which undermines Serena's measuring, Tom is, to Serena's utter disappointment and indignation, neither genuine in the adjective's signification of *sincere* nor in its signification of *original*. Indeed, Serena, expecting the author's genius, is expecting the culturally impossible. While an artist, depending on the reader's construction of the author, can be *perceived* to be both sincere and original, genius is a myth (Barthes, AS[93] 75). Actually, the author is reduced to the traditional structuralist choice of *langue* (specific literary codes) out of *parole* (all literary codes available) (AS 75), a choice which is severely limited in historically and socially sanctioned codes:

> Ainsi le choix, puis la responsabilité d'une écriture désignent une Liberté, mais cette Liberté n'a pas les mêmes limites selon les différents moments de l'Histoire. Il n'est pas donné à l'écrivain de choisir son écriture dans une sorte d'arsenal intemporel des formes littéraires. C'est sous la pression de l'Histoire et de la Tradition que s'établissent les écritures possibles d'un écrivain donné [...]. (DZ[94] 148)

Neither is Tom genuine nor is he free when writing – be it in form or content or atmosphere. However, understanding his cultural determination, he re-arranges existing textual structures and elements to be re-arranged and thus gains access to the unlimited *texte général*. Serena, the narrated I, considering the authorial product only from her readerly reading perspective, is entirely unaware of this writing process. However, when – by mathematical accident – switching into Tom's perspective, Serena first contemplates the writing process, grasps inventing as re-arranging and, in consequence, actively criticises her fast-reading.

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[93] Barthes, Roland. "Introduction à l'analyse structural des récits." 1966. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 2: 1966-1973. Paris: Seuil, 1994. 74-108. Print.
[94] Barthes, Roland. *Le degré zero de l'écriture*. 1953. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 1: 1942-1965. Paris: Seuil, 1993. 137-87. Print.

When Serena, the narrated I, feels responsible for Tom's "hopeless mathematics" (ST 210) in his short story "Probable Adultery" (ST 211), she wants to make amends in correcting the mathematical flaws (ST 212-13); however, while correcting the short story according to mathematical logic, she takes an authorial perspective. **Changing her perspective from reader to author, Serena, the narrated I, approaches invention in the process of writing as an individual re-arranging of textual structures and elements.** Having corrected Tom's short story, Serena admits that she has never thought about the writing process preceding a product. "As a reader, a speed-reader, I took it for granted, it was a process I never troubled myself with. You pulled a book from the shelf and there was an invented, peopled world, as obvious as the one you lived in" (ST 214). Once Serena, as a result of switching to the author's perspective when correcting the mathematical flaws in Tom's short story, contemplates the writing process of a narrative, she realises that her technique of fast-reading, of consuming the book from the shelf without wondering about the writing process, is limited in her readerly perspective; if a reader starts to critically contemplate the writing process, reading necessarily slows down. Laying in the dark (ST 214), Serena's mind, detached from the "discursive" waking world, opens to the idea that a literary text is not ready-made but results from a process of productiveness and production. "Almost like cooking, I thought sleepily. Instead of heat transforming the ingredients, there's pure invention, the spark, the hidden element. What resulted was more than the sum of the parts" (ST 214). The metaphor of cooking is well chosen to describe a writing process: while the cooking subject chooses existing ingredients to create a dish, the writing subject chooses existing textual elements to create a literary text. Consequently, while a literary text is never original, it is always unique. On the one hand, the ingredients of a dish and the character, plot and setting of a narrative are systematically discernible: "it was obvious enough how these separate parts were tipped in and deployed" (ST 214); on the other hand, however, heat transforms the ingredients into a dish and the writing subject's unique and individual subjectivity, "the spark, the hidden element" (ST 214), transforms textual elements into a narrative: neither a dish nor a narrative can be defined by its elements only, and "Tom had taken control of a subject […] and *tried to make it his own*" (ST 214; emphasis added). Serena's comparison of cooking and writing implies the intertextual process of rewriting: existing textual elements, the already-read and the already-written, are rewritten by the writing subject's discourses.

However, Serena, the narrated I, still denies any form of experimentalism in the writing product: "the mystery was in how they were blended into something *cohesive and plausible*, how the ingredients were cooked into something so *delicious*" (ST 214; emphasis added). While

Chalupský considers this a positive development into creative writing (110), Serena's action de-mystifies the mystery: any illogicality is eliminated. Failing to be cohesive and plausible and thus delicious, the mathematical flaws in Tom's short story are adjusted by Serena. When she is confronted with Tom's failure, she imposes order onto a text flawed in logic and, maintaining the hierarchy between author and reader, originates *her* order *within* the author: "if he incorporated *my* suggestions, then it would surely be *his* own [subject]" (ST 214; emphasis added). Serena's co-authorial perspective is monologically corrective. **Although Serena, the narrated I, contemplates invention in the process of writing and criticises her consumption in fast-reading, Serena, instead of joining Tom in a signifying process initiated by the failure of mathematical logic, does not rewrite but co-authors a short story of writerly potential into plausibility.** Serena still does not envisage the possibility that writer and reader can join in a shared and disorderly signifying process: in the way a gourmet reads a dish through differently developed gustatory nerves, experiences and memories, the reader reads a literary text. Cooking and eating, writing and reading are collaborative practices. If the gourmet does not only consume a dish but immerses in its multiple flavours, if a reader does not only consume a narrative but immerses in its multiple elements, a product is returned to a state of productiveness. However, although Serena does not become a producer herself, understanding that a product is a result from a process of productiveness and production is a crucial first step to understanding that a product is "contestable." When Serena's cover is uncovered and she reads Tom's letter in their flat, contesting the products Serena and *Sweet Tooth* and returning both to a state of productiveness become her only possibilities of saving her relationship with Tom.

Unexpectedly, Serena, the narrated I, is presented with a letter written by Tony before his death and before her "career." His monological phrase "*my* dear girl" emphasises the hierarchical structure that defined their relationship (ST 290; emphasis added); accordingly, he is convinced of the product Serena he was forming: "the work will give you much fulfilment and pleasure and I know you'll be good at it" (ST 290). Although Tony's letter, explaining his sudden parting and disappearance, reconciles Serena with Tony (ST 290 and ST 298-99), his letter, read in the context of Serena's situation, is presumptuous: Serena was hardly fulfilled or pleased with her work. **Although running Tom at the behest of a monological institution in order to strengthen monological power, disorder is soon introduced in her life when her secret agency initiates dialogical moments: thinking about the author, meeting the author / writer, dating the author / writer, loving the author / writer.** Leading a double life, Serena is unable to resolve this disorder: the more intimate her relationship with Tom, the more

conflictual and chaotic her life. "*Tell him. Get it over with. No! Don't you* dare. Events were moving out of my control and I had no idea what I should be doing" (ST 280). Serena, entirely torn between telling Tom and losing Tom, is paralysed (ST 280) and, in the end, she is denied deciding since her secret agency is publicly uncovered.

Following the exposure of her secret agency, Serena is confronted with unresolvable disorder; in consequence, she critically contemplates her individual subjectivity and her reading identity is "potentialised" into dialogical possibility. Serena, watching her constructed life collapsing when uncovered, realises that her identities and her actions have been entirely determined by her superior's ideologies: "I experienced again the vague longing and frustration that came with the idea that I was living the wrong sort of life. I hadn't chosen it for myself" (ST 298). Preferring order, she allowed herself to become a product of random ideological determination (ST 298). Her mother made Serena study mathematics; Tony made Serena apply for a position at MI5; Nutting made Serena approach Tom. However, neither her mother's feminism (ST 3), nor Tony's civilisation (ST 38-39), nor Nutting's anti-communism (ST 91) have offered Serena the order and stability she once preferred; nor has her readerly consumption. When meeting Shirley and learning about her novel, *The Ducking Stool*, which is publicly celebrated but lacks complexity, Serena's response is plural: "I told her I'd be her ideal reader" (ST 295). In a literal reading of this reply, all hope is lost – Serena will remain Serena, the narrated I; however, in an ironical reading implying the opposite, all hope remains – Serena might become Serena, the narrating I. Tom Haley does not suggest a specific reading of Serena's response and thus resists to pre-interpret his character. However, when Serena enters Tom's flat and approaches his letter, Tom Haley has constructed a character which is finally contemplating her individual subjectivity and, criticising her ideologically determined identities, has the potential of accepting Tom's invitation into collaboration. Like Briony, who enters Cecilia's apartment, Serena enters a flat in which she is confronted with her past and, in consequence, consciously chooses a dialogical approach to literature. At the end of Tom Haley's novel, Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, constructed by Tom Haley to mediate Serena's development from monological to dialogical reading and subjectivity, are about to converge.

In Tom's letter, Tom admits that he was deeply hurt by Serena's secrecy and betrayal (ST 306); cleaning his flat (ST 301-02), he wanted to erase Serena from his memory: "there's always a degree of oblivion in tidiness" (ST 301). Tom, however, in his letter admitting to have written the novel *Sweet Tooth*, only wanted to erase Serena as mediated in Serena, the narrated I: "with all this scrubbing I was erasing you, *you as you were*" (ST 301; emphasis added).

Although Serena has chosen not to protect him from a monological institution which might seriously and lastingly harm him (ST 280 and ST 316), **Tom hopes that the development of Serena's readerly neck into a writerly, a development which he initiated, will finally allow them to enter into a dialogical relationship.** Originally, Tom wanted to write a novel about Serena's secret agency "to wrap the matter up between the covers of a book" (ST 318), ignoring, monologically intent on tit for tat (ST 318), his approach to literature which requires to unbind a book from its cover; however, he underestimated "the logic of the process" which needed him to become Serena (ST 318-19) – a logic which is, ambivalently, purely dialogical. Consequently, Tom, while writing *Sweet Tooth*, realised the impossibility to close the past – least of all through writing. Putting clean sheets on their bed, the white and ironed linens remind him of the writer's block from which he suffered before he learned of Serena's betrayal; he feared "the blank page writ large and sensual" (ST 302). Only rewriting the already-written, Serena's narrative, her secret agency, made him overcome his writer's block; and dialogically rewriting Serena's narrative from Serena's perspective, instead of presenting himself in stereotypically heroic form (cf. the textual analysis of 3.3.4 Tom), made him overcome his anger for Serena and even strengthen his love for her (ST 319): he imagines her fast-reading, her orderliness, her conflict, her despair and, therefore, never doubts that she, despite her secret agency, *does* love him.

Consequently, **instead of giving up on Serena, Tom, transferring their past into textual form, dialogically appeals and proposes collaborative writing processes to Serena as mediated in Serena, the narrating I.** If Serena, the narrated I, prevails, if his dialogical rewriting of Serena was wishful thinking, she can monologically burn the only copy of his novel (ST 320). However, if it is Serena, the narrating I, who is reading the letter, he does not make her suffer from the blank page but makes her a present of loose pages, of a text written to be rewritten. Ksiezopolska, harshly criticising Tom for his authoritative, deceiving and treacherous writing (429-32), argues that the reader needs "to claim back the power from the writer" (431). However, the reader does not need to claim; like Briony, Tom *offers* – to Serena, to his readers and, in consequence, to McEwan's readers. Tom became productive in rewriting Serena's narrative and he offers her to dialogically involve with his version of Serena and her narrative. Tom dares Serena into joining him in his signifying processes. "If you still love me and your answer is yes, then our *collaboration* begins and this letter, with your consent, will be Sweet Tooth's final chapter. Dearest Serena, *it's up to you*" (ST 320; emphasis added). Indeed, as Walker proposes, Tom's invitation is Briony Tallis's final act of kindness (511). Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Tom, at the end of Briony Tallis's

and Tom Haley's novels, make a writerly present: a text written to be rewritten. Accepting this present, contesting the product *Sweet Tooth* and returning it to a state of productiveness becomes Serena's only possibility of saving her relationship with Tom.

Serena, the narrated I, is confronted with two letters of two lovers: Tony's and Tom's. Walker suggests the irony "that both of her lovers turn out to be 'double agents,' whether political (Tony) or literary (Tom)" (502). However, there is a major difference between Tony's and Tom's double agency and letter. Tom's letter, in contrast to Tony's letter, approaches Serena dialogically. Addressing her with the phrases "dear Serena" (ST 301) and "dearest Serena" (ST 320), Tom meets her at eye level and establishes equality between writer and reader when he invites her, literally and figuratively, to rewrite his novel, to join him in dialogue and plurality, and to newly discover herself since *Sweet Tooth* is, despite Tom's thorough observations and investigations (ST 314), primarily extrapolation and invention: "that leaves an island of experience, an important fraction of the whole, that was you alone, you with your thoughts, and sometimes you invisible to yourself" (ST 314). **In the "end," the reader of Tom Haley's published novel *Sweet Tooth* is confronted with multiple layers of prismatic consciousness: an offer to unbind, dialogise and pluralise.** (1) Serena (character) is watching Tom (character). (2) Tom (writer) is watching how Serena (character) watches Tom (character). (3) Serena (reader / writer) is watching how Tom (writer) watches Serena (character) watching Tom (character). (4) The reader / writer of Tom Haley's *Sweet Tooth* is watching how Serena (reader / writer) watches Tom (writer) how Tom (writer) watches Serena (character) watching Tom (character). Indeed, Serena and Tom are both spies "who constantly invent and reinvent each other" (Walker 506), and, while inventing and reinventing each other, are spied by the reader. This narrative constellation, "akin to a matryoshka doll" (Childs, Humorous Shades 81) and initiated by the meta-textual element introduced in Tom's letter, the last chapter of Tom Haley's published novel, is highly intertextual since each prism of consciousness distorts and colours thoughts and actions – theoretically, it is impossible to finalise Tom Haley's *Sweet Tooth*; practically, this impossibility is the reader's to choose.

Serena's development, after reading Tom's letter, is not explicitly described. However, **Tom's letter is the final chapter of Tom Haley's *and* Serena Frome's dialogical *Sweet Tooth*.** Obviously, Serena has accepted Tom's proposal of marriage and collaboration. All in all, it remains unknown which parts of *Sweet Tooth* are Tom's first version and which parts were rewritten by Serena. [95] If Tom Haley's and Serena Frome's readers read for signs of Serena

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[95] Childs observes that "only on the last pages of *Sweet Tooth* do we find that the story we have been reading is written by, or part-written by, or collaboratively written with someone else" and that it remains unclear which is

Fromes's intervention, for example her "paddings of the backward glance" like *in those days* or *back then* (ST 319), they are particularly pointed to those passages which not only emphasise the difference between Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, but which also prove that the authoritative word of ideology is socially and historically specific and that individual subjects, their thoughts and actions are correspondingly changing: "*in those days*, in our milieu, no one ever spoke like that" (ST 3; emphasis added) and "*back then* I'm sure I'd have taken for granted Tony's need to creep away without explanation, to winter with his awful secret [cancer] by a cold sea" (ST 49; emphasis added). Although some readers will always want to know the truth (A 371), in a collaborative process it is, indeed, irrelevant which parts were written by Tom Haley and which were "corrected" by Serena Frome (ST 319). Walker pointedly concludes that "their perspectives converge in a dialogical narrative voice with powerful cultural implications, one seeking to preserve rather than homogenize difference within a process of collaborative authorship" (510). Indeed, the reader's emancipation does not require the death of the author (506-07); instead, "power over the text should be equally shared between writer and reader" (507).

Sweet Tooth, written and rewritten by Tom Haley and Serena Frome in a shared signifying process, unmasks monological thought and action; however, in a readerly and thus enjoyable and acceptable form which is only undermined in Tom's letter, the novel offers the individual subject narrative possibilities to protect itself from ideological content and structure. Of course, since writing is always a "cultural and political act" (Walker 498), writing "can be driven by a will to power" (495). However, "portraying a (writing) self that acknowledges the other both outside and inside itself, McEwan shows that writing can also be driven by the will, or rather openness to love, which is irreducible to ideology" (496). Walker hence concludes that "Tom and Serena come across as McEwan's secret literary agents – twin aspects of his personality embodying tensions within society at large" (496). *Sweet Tooth* is a novel about reading and writing, about reader and writer. **In portraying a woman which ambivalently suffers and enjoys developing a writerly neck, Tom Haley and Serena Frome offer insights into the dangers of monologue and the value of dialogue, into strategies of reading and writing, and they encourage their readers to reread, to rewrite, to join them in their**

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the "right" option: "*Sweet Tooth* is an unusual book in that the reader is partially left in a bemused position, trying to work out who has actually written the pages of the novel" (Humorous Shades 82). I, too, was bemused in a first reading; however, in the context of intertextual theory, I enjoy reading *Sweet Tooth* as Tom Haley and Serena Frome's collaboration.

signifying processes. *It's up to you* – this is the most dialogical invitation a writer can offer a reader in the hope that the reader will start writing.

Tom Haley constructs a protagonist whose neck slowly develops from readerly to writerly: from Serena's first shock when reading Tom's short stories and realising that author, narrator and character are never identical, only versions of each other (cf. textual analysis of 3.3.2 Serena and Tom); to her contemplating both the writing process and the product; to her collaboration with Tom in rewriting *Sweet Tooth*. While Tom Haley personalises the development of Barthesian intertextual theory in Serena's involvement with Tom and his narratives, Briony Tallis, atoning for her crime, personalises Barthes's criticism of ideological discourse in her monological protagonist and one of his major emancipating ideas, the intertext, in consciously dialogical Cecilia and Robbie.

Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Serena undergo a development from monological to dialogical subjectivity when their ideologised readings of "reality" are exposed to be ideological and thus simplifying determinations; the development of the former is shown from the perspective of the author / writer who starts seeing from the reader's perspectives (cf. the textual analysis of 3.3.1 Briony, Cecilia and Robbie), the development of the latter is shown from the perspective of the reader who starts seeing from the author's / writer's perspectives. The binary opposition usually implied in the constellation of author / writer and reader dissolves in ambivalence when a reader turns into a rewriter of what is already rewritten. While the process of rewriting might be initiated by the writer, for example by offering a draft, it is the reader's power and responsibility to consciously rewrite a narrative: *it's up to you*.

Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, emancipate their readers and encourage them to unbind each literary text. A specific possibility to unbind language from ideological appropriation is exemplified in the phrase *I love you*. Both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley focus on this phrase within the context of Barthes's lover's discourse; thus they raise awareness of the ideological occupation of language and the individual subject's possibilities to counter such occupation.

3.4.3 I love you

The intertextuality of Barthes's *I love you* with both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* first made me realise the productiveness of contextualising *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* in intertextual theory, of reading *Sweet Tooth* in the context of *Atonement* and *Atonement* in the context of *Sweet Tooth*. Hence this "digression" to *I love you* is both a matter of heart and mind – of heart because *I love you* initiated the idea behind this dissertation, of mind because it is only "logical" to include *I love you* in a dissertation so entirely involved with intertextual theory: *I love you* is *the* intertext. Spoken by millions, independent of time and space, *I love you* contains uncountable voices and rewritings.

Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, contextualises Briony, Cecilia and Robbie in Barthes's lover's discourse by implying his different thoughts on *I love you*. In *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (1977), the lover is "a semiotician in love" (Allen, *Barthes* 111); being a semiotician, the lover is perfectly aware of the unreliable link between signifier and signified of the sign the beloved is sending and apprehends that a lover's truth is always made: love is a juxtaposition of interpreted signs (F[96] 659-660). **While Barthes's lover is wary of the sign, Briony, believing in stereotype and dictionary, does not consider the possibility that the signified of a signifier is disputable.** When she forces Robbie to save her from drowning (A 231) and Robbie furiously demands an explanation for her imprudence (A 231-32), Briony is surprised to learn that Robbie fails to correctly read her sign:

> "Do you know why I wanted you to save me?"
> "No."
> "Isn't it obvious?"
> "No, it isn't."
> "Because I love you." (A 232)

According to Briony, her action and Robbie's re-action signify *I love you*; Robbie, however, clearly denies this signification: "I'd risk my life for yours. But that doesn't mean I love you" (A 232). Confronted with the uncertainty of the sign, Briony, like Barthes's lover, paradoxically and self-deceivingly, draws on more conventionalised linguistic language and simply ignores the ambiguity caused by interpretation (F 660): "je recevrai toute parole comme une *signe de vérité*" (F 660; emphasis added). When Briony speaks *I love you*, she is "dazzled by the *momentous truth*" she reveals (A 232; emphasis added). Briony shares the lover's approach that

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[96] Barthes, Roland. *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*. 1977. *Roland Barthes: Œuvres Complètes*. Ed. Éric Marty. Vol. 3: 1974-1980. Paris: Seuil, 1995. 457-687. Print.

declaring herself in a conformist phrase will dispel all doubts about her feelings: "rien n'est laissé à la suggestion, à la divination: pour qu'une chose soit sue, il faut qu'elle soit dite; mais aussi, dès qu'elle est dite, très provisoirement, elle est vraie" (F 660). However, Briony's self-deception is immediately pointed out by Robbie's question: "What on earth do you mean by that?" (A 323) Signification, even within conventionalised linguistic language, is unclear. And yet, despite Robbie's reply which emphasises the impossibility of truth in language, Briony does not contemplate her linguistic declaration which is a truism, a meaningless phrase which is repeated unreflectively: "I mean what everybody else means when they say it. I love you" (A 232).

Such truism derives from ideologically appropriated language: without thinking herself, Briony monologically repeats what she has heard and read. Consequently, **Briony's declaration of love symbolises the emptiness of a commonplace phrase.** It is only meant to situate the individual subject in relation to the beloved and thus denying or confirming the lover in the lover's fiction of the lover as lover (Allen, *Barthes* 111). However, while Robbie does not co-author Briony's fiction, he does not wholly reject her either. According to Barthes's lover, the lover is rejected as lover if the lover's declaration receives a negative answer; the lover is completely rejected, though, as lover *and* as speaking subject, when the lover's declaration is not answered (F 599). Robbie spares Briony this complete rejection: instead of laughing, he offers her the possibility to explain herself and thus to strengthen her position as speaking subject (A 232). Briony, however, is unable to communicate outside of formulaic language: "She drew herself up a little. 'I want to thank you for saving my life. I'll be eternally grateful to you.' Lines, surely, from one of her books, one she had read lately, or one she had written" (A 232). Unable to contemplate *I love you*, Briony repeats the truth and truism and thus the emptiness of her declaration: "I love you. Now you know" (A 323). Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, thus encourages her readers, taking the example of an ever-present phrase, to critically watch their own usage of language. Indeed, considering the plot of *Atonement*, Briony's *I love you* has a particularly lasting effect of emptiness since the situation by the lake is related by Briony Tallis's narrator after Briony Tallis's readers have already witnessed Cecilia and Robbie's declaration of love which counters dependence and responsibility and affirms the individual subject.

In *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, Barthes elaborates on the lover's discourse which is, according to him, separated from all other discourse despite being spoken by millions (F 459): "il est complètement abandonné des langages environnants: ou ignoré, ou déprécié, ou moqué par eux, coupé non seulement du pouvoir, mais aussi de ses mécanismes (sciences,

savoirs, arts)" (F 459). However, in this solitude the lover's discourse gains, whatever the extent, affirmative function (F 459). Being familiar with Barthes's anti-ideological thoughts, this statement is unexpected since "it is almost indisputable that the discourse of love allows modern capitalism to turn us into compliant consumers" (Allen, *Barthes* 111). Allen, therefore, explicitly raises the issue why Barthes encourages a discourse which allows society "to divert our energies, energies which could otherwise be employed in more rebellious action" (*Barthes* 111). He then argues that Barthes's text "demonstrates the fictional, deluded nature of amorous discourse while avoiding the violence of an explicit demythologizing critique" (*Barthes* 112): on the one hand, the reader is confronted with "the illusory, mythological nature of the discourse of love" and identifies with its criticism (*Barthes* 112); on the other hand, the reader affirms the lover in identifying with the lover's thoughts and actions (*Barthes* 112). The text thus carefully and sympathetically raises consciousness for the reader's own involvement in the discourse of love: "suspended between a militant language which would debunk the lover's discourse and a conservative language which would sentimentalize and naturalize it, the text presents its reader with a disturbingly yet pleasurable mirror" (*Barthes* 112).[97] Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, pursues Barthes's considerate approach of demythologising in carefully unmasking the emptiness of Briony's *I love you*; however, Briony Tallis equally focuses on the affirmative function of *I love you* when read and written in the context of ambivalence and dialogical subjectivity. The de-mythologising and thus affirmative power of *I love you*, which is a major aspect of the lover's discourse, depends on the degree of equality and voluntariness involved in its speaking.

Barthes's lover is aware of the dependence and responsibility a declaration of love involves: the lover is dependent on being answered; the beloved is responsible to answer. Although a positive answer *moi aussi / so do I / ich dich auch* causes extensive joy if it contributes to the lover's fiction of the lover as lover (F 599), the lover (signifier) is dependent on the beloved for signification; thus Barthes's lover imagines the empirically impossible: "que nos deux proférations soient dites *en même temps*: que l'une ne suive pas l'autre, comme si elle en dépendait" (F 600). Lover and beloved offer *I love you* at the same time and thus withstand dependence and responsibility (F 600). Such simultaneity would be extra-ordinary, against the norm of ideological forces which flourish in environments of inequality. Since this simultaneity is highly unlikely, though, Barthes's lover contemplates *I love you* as an *active proffering* (F

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[97] Allen comprehensibly emphasises the importance of Barthes's *neutral writing* which is consciously contradictory (neither militantly de-mythologising nor sentimentally naturalising) and thus particularly valuable in raising the individual subject's critical awareness in considering its contextualisation in monological discourse (*Barthes* 112).

601): "je prononce, pour que tu répondes" (F 601). However, in order to counter dependence and responsibility, the re-action must not imply cause-effect and, consequently, needs to be syntactically independent of *I love you* in becoming syntactically identical: "il n'est donc pas suffisant que l'autre me réponde d'un simple signifié, fût-il positif ('moi aussi'): il faut que le sujet interpellé assume de formuler, de proférer le *je-t-aime* que je lui tends" (F 601). If the self proffers *I love you* and the other proffers *I love you* in the same way, signifier for signifier without any syntactical alteration (F 601), dependence and responsibility are *equally* shared. On the one hand, such proffering offers the lover security on the level of the signified: the lover is loved in return and can contextualise lover and beloved in social discourse (F 601); on the other hand, however, in actively proffering *I love you* each speaking subject affirms and is affirmed without signifying or being signified: while the absence of an answer completely rejects the speaking subject, this perfect answer, which is without any variation, completely embraces the speaking subject (F 599 and 601).

In the library, both Cecilia and Robbie actively proffer their love. While Briony's declaration of love symbolises the emptiness of a commonplace phrase, Cecilia's and Robbie's declaration of love affirms the self and the other in a "lip service" against dependence and responsibility. "Finally he spoke the three simple words that no amount of bad art or bad faith can ever quite cheapen. She repeated them, with exactly the slight emphasis on the second word, as though she were the one to say them first" (A 137). According to Phelan, "that exchange simultaneously gives voice to and enacts their transformed perceptions" which originate in "mutual understanding" (Narrative Theory 329-30). Indeed, mutually proffering *I love you*, Cecilia and Robbie welcome the ambivalence of their identities and embrace their dialogical individual subjectivities: "*se l'entendre dire*, sous la forme aussi affirmative, aussi complète, aussi articulée, que le sienne propre" (F 601). Indeed, speaking her *I love you* signifier for signifier and even seizing Robbie's emphasis as if being the first who proffers *I love you*, Cecilia actively establishes a "belated" simultaneity. Cecilia and Robbie's *I love you* is hence highly complex and fully affirmative. Thus the repetitive and monologised stereotype of *I love you*, as spoken by Briony, is revolutionised (F 600); indeed, in not writing it, Briony Tallis pluralises *I love you* by emphasising it in each reader's head: *I love you* is everything and everyone (F 598 and 601).

Spoken by millions in diverse situations (F 598-599), *I love you* is highly intertextual: it is unpredictable and uncontrollable (F 598) and, therefore, dangerous to authoritative discourse because it cannot be socially constraint: "c'est un mot socialement baladeur" (F 598). Consequently, it is possible but difficult to de-pluralise *I love you* into formulaic language;

Briony Tallis's narrator emphasises that "no amount of bad art or bad faith can ever quite cheapen" *I love you* into monologue (A 137). Accordingly, *I love you* is isolated and ignored by those who prefer classification (F 459); paradoxically, in the moment it is isolated and ignored by those in power, *I love you* becomes an active force against destructive forces – the doxa of science, reality or reason (F 602). "Comme profération, *je-t-aime* n'est pas un signe, mais joue contre les signes" (F 602). Only saying and hearing *I love you*, saying and hearing *everything* in the active and affirmative proffering of the speaking subject liberates the lover from interpreting and being interpreted and welcomes the lover into the play of the signifier.

When Robbie is released from prison into the army and Cecilia and Robbie meet, Robbie, interpreted and thus de-pluralised himself, is unable to proffer "*I love you, and you saved my life*" (A 205). Briony Tallis, italicising this sentence, unmistakably draws attention to this "larger thought" (A 205). When Briony forces Robbie to save her life, she implies a conditional (if you love me you will save my life). Robbie's unspoken declaration is not conditional: "I love you, *and* you saved my life" instead of "I love you *because* you saved my life"– no dependence, no responsibility. However, with neither Robbie nor Cecilia proffering *I love you*, without either of them daring to open their lips against social constraint (F 601), Robbie, whose perspective Briony Tallis's narrator is mediating, cannot but interpret both Cecilia and Cecilia's opinion of himself (A 205-06) and thus falls victim to the uncertainty of the sign. Only a kiss, a promise to continue the liberating intimacy they shared in the library, finally allows Robbie to come out of his social and historical shell: "he kissed her, lightly at first, but they drew closer, and when their tongues touched, a disembodied part of himself was abjectly grateful" (A 206). **Focussing on the phrase *I love you* in the context of Barthesian theory hence allows Briony Tallis to raise her readers' awareness of the uncertainty of the (linguistic) sign and to encourage them to consciously use language against its own limitations in monologised context.**

Considering the intertext of *Atonement and Sweet Tooth*, Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, continues the involvement with Barthes's lover's discourse and focuses on his idea of *jouissance* as an "unspoken" *I love you*. **Serena's and Tom's *I love you* is liberating them from the doxa of society.** Serena, the narrated I, and Tom have avoided confessing their love (ST 250); like Barthes's lover, they feel the dependence and responsibility involved with *I love you*. Serena, the narrating I, retrospectively explains: "it was too momentous, it marked the line we were wary of crossing, the transition from an enjoyable affair to something weighty and unknown, almost like a burden" (ST 250). Yet when Serena, the narrated I, and Tom are making love on the beach at Brighton, they are consciously ignoring

social constraint and taboo (ST 250), and, consequently, Tom dares to voice his love: "There's no way around it, I have to tell you. It's simple. I love you" (ST 250). Serena, from whose perspective Tom's confession is mediated, thinks Tom's voice distant and toneless (ST 250); interestingly, however, the negative moment which is conventionally associated with the adjectives *distant* and *toneless* is rewritten in the context of Barthes's lover's discourse. Tom's *I love you* is distant, careful not to force Serena into the responsibility for a response; and Tom's *I love you* is toneless, without nuance and interpretation (F 598). Tom *proffers* his *I love you*. When Serena is liberated from the responsibility to respond in an expected way, she proffers an unspoken *I love you*: "his words finished us, right there together, with our cries of joys lost to the sound of passing cars" (ST 250). According to Barthes's lover, sexual climax is an unspoken proffering of *I love you*: "la jouissance ne se dit pas; mais elle parle et elle dit: *je-t-aime*" (F 599). Liberated from any linguistic determination and restriction, in proffering *I love you* desire is neither supressed nor acknowledged, "mais simplement: joui" (F 599). In French, *jouir* signifies both *to come* (context: sexual climax) and *to enjoy*. *I love you*, (un)spoken without any burden, is simple and can be simply enjoyed: "It's simple. I love you" (ST 250). In *Atonement*, Robbie, too, implies the liberating release of an unspoken *I love you*. Making love to Cecilia, he imagines himself taking "a glimpse of the near-vertical scree down which he would shortly have to throw himself" (A 138). He is looking forward to this fall which will liberate them from any social and physical constraint: "hand in hand, they would fall backwards" (A 138). However, the release of Cecilia's and Robbie's desire, their unspoken *I love you* is prevented by Briony's monological intrusion. Indeed, monological intrusion is always looming.

On the one hand, Serena's and Tom's *I love you* is liberating them from the doxa of society; on the other hand, however, their proffering is sullied in the unfreedom of their political involvement. Once released from any doxa, proffering *I love you* is simple: "I brought his face near mine, kissed him and *repeated* his words. It was easy" (ST 250; emphasis added). However, while speaking *I love you* without any syntactical alteration, Serena is immediately aware of her conflictual situation: "As I did so, I knew that before this love began to take its course, I would have to tell him about myself. And then the love would end. So I couldn't tell him. But I had to" (ST 251). Serena, the narrated I, finally realises the destructive element within authority and implies that love can only be thought and acted independent of any authoritative discourse. Involved with the Secret Service, though, she is kept by law from continuing and living the easiness of her *I love you*. Her professional and her private identities have become inextricably interwoven aspects of her individual subjectivity and, even more complicated, they have become inextricably interwoven with Tom's individual subjectivity:

"*his* art, *my* work and *our* affair were one" (ST 197; emphasis added). While Serena is caught in internal dialogue between telling and not telling Tom about her mission, Tom, retrospectively contemplating this moment in his letter, remembers his pragmatic approach to their situation (ST 311):

> In one orbit, our mutual deceit, a novelty in my case, habitual in yours, possibly addictive, possibly fatal. In the other, our affection bursting through ecstasy to love. We reached the glorious *summit* at last and *traded* our [...] I love you's even as we each reserved our secret. I saw how we could do it, live with these sealed compartments side by side, never letting the dark stench of one invade the sweetness of the other. (ST 311; emphasis added).

However, having by then borne heavy consequences, Tom's grammatical structure and wording suggests the impossibility of his envisaged side by side. While he binarily opposes deceit ("in one orbit") and love ("in the other"), neither dark stench nor sweetness can be clearly assigned to either deceit or love. In Serena and Tom's complex relationship, it is impossible to un-link deceit and love which have become ambivalent aspects of their individual subjectivities. Consequently, fully aware of their political involvement, Tom describes their sexual climax as a *summit*, the highest level of meeting between different political camps; moreover, their *I love you*-s are diplomatically *traded*. At the beach Serena and Tom enjoy a moment of freedom from any doxa. "We laughed at the enormity of the words we had spoken. Everyone else was bound by the rules, and we were free. We'd make love all over the world, our love would be everywhere" (ST 251). In retrospective, however, Tom contextualises their (sexual) relationship in political context and their *I love you*-s become what Barthes's lover fears *I love you* to be: a moment of dependence and responsibility and, worst, betrayal – an unfreedom.

In the end, **Tom's readerly text of writerly potential, his novel *Sweet Tooth*, is the most affirmative declaration of love which Tom can proffer Serena**: not offering her a blank page to be written on but offering her a written page to be rewritten, he offers her the possibility to consciously involve with her monological past and to enter into a dialogical future. Tom's invitation *it's up to you* does not only fully affirm Serena in her identity of lover but fully affirms her as a speaking subject whose dialogical thought is most welcome.

Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, translate Barthes's lover's discourse, which is strongly influenced by the lover's semiotic background, into everyday language and situation. Thus they raise awareness of the different usages of *I love*

you – from a commonplace phrase empty of any meaning to sexual climax which proffers *I love you* beyond the linguistic system which is so vulnerable to monological constraint. Choosing a highly intertextual phrase which is spoken by millions of individual subjects in as many different contexts to make his readers aware of the destructive as well as the affirmative function of language is McEwan's writerly proffering.

3.4.4 Briony Tallis and Tom Haley

If writers try to encourage readers into dialogue, they face a major conflict. While concerned with creating awareness of monological structures in society, they do not only need to consciously consider their own determination in social and historical discourse but, furthermore, they need, at least partly, to draw upon understandable forms and contents for their writing to be effective: "for writing to be socially significant, and thus involved in social and political commitment, it must already be existent prior to its adaptation by an author" (Allen, *Barthes* 17).[98] Original thought is, therefore, neither possible (Barthes, MA 493-94) nor desirable: highly experimental writing in either contentual or structural elements is not suited to encourage continuous dialogue. This causes a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, "writers cannot, in the modern world, simply choose to be free, to eradicate from their language all traces of a stifling tradition" (Allen, *Barthes* 23); on the other hand, they cannot "cease the pursuit of free language without ceasing to be writers in any meaningful sense" (Allen, *Barthes* 23). McEwan is aware of this paradoxical situation. Head, comparing McEwan's literary output, summarises that in McEwan's writing "systemic explanations are often exposed as limited or damaging" but that "without them, there is nothing against which the self can be measured or defined" (16). Fortunately, it is exactly this paradoxical situation which allows the individual subject to become productive. Barthes argues that any text requires shadows of ideological discourse in traditional representation to contextualise the individual subject and to welcome the individual subject into rewriting ideological units and unities which can be fought, dissected and regrouped (PT 1510-11).

In *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan has constructed two acting writers who consciously use representation of ideological discourse to encourage continued dialogical involvement with mystifying, that is naturalising and institutionalising explanatory patterns:

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[98] Barthes considers "writing as the expression of an ideological commitment on the part of the author" (Allen, *Barthes* 16); thus "we are in a position to begin to study how authors throughout history have responded to social and political realities by choosing distinct forms of expression" (*Barthes* 16-17). Commitment is, therefore, to be considered a choice pro or contra ideology within form, a choice that is historically and socially restricted.

each is writing a readerly text which is "at least in its dénouement, writerly, plural, structured and yet infinite" (Allen, *Intertextuality* 77). Briony Tallis, choosing an omniscient narrator switching between perspectives, traditionally represents Briony's development from a monological to a dialogical approach to language, literature and reality to finally present her readers with a dialogical draft which cannot be finalised. Choosing a first-person narrative, Tom Haley traditionally represents Serena's development from monologue to dialogue which finally allows her to accept Tom's invitation of rewriting his draft of *Sweet Tooth*.

Diverging from Stefanie Albers and Torsten Caeners's reasoning that *Atonement* "manages to fashion language in such manner – through the combined participation of author and reader – that the illusion of a self-sufficient and closed work emerges" (711), it will be argued that both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley try to de-finalise the literary text *precisely* through the combined participation of writer and reader. Each acting writer weaves a textual tissue in which the already-read and already-written is fragmented and opposed to prevent final meaning on which a reading or writing subject might rest (Barthes, MA 494). Indeed, the meta-fictional twist of each novel (Chapter 22 of *Sweet Tooth* and "London, 1999" of *Atonement*) allows valuable insight into the thoughts and actions of Briony Tallis (3.4.4.1 Briony Tallis) and Tom Haley (3.4.4.2 Tom Haley). In both twists, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley contemplate processes of writing and reading and are revealed to be Barthesian *paper authors* who are discursively inscribed in their narratives waiting to be rewritten.

3.4.4.1 Briony Tallis

The extensive amount of secondary literature which has been published on *Atonement* usually revolves around the novel's meta-fictional twist (Dillon 92; also D'Angelo 88). Many literary scholars read this twist as unnecessary insight into the manipulative function of narrative (cf. summary by O'Hara 84-88); David K. O'Hara, however, disagrees "for it is at the metafictional level that *Atonement*, rather than retracting the trustworthiness of its narrative, both endorses and illustrates, explores and reinforces, the ethical essence of narrativity" (88). While O'Hara introduces the intriguing concept of meta-mimesis to explore the ethical moments of *Atonement*, arguing that "mimesis is a creative process through which different possibilities of being are made communicable" (91), the poststructuralist theory of intertextuality, often dismissed as unethical but ethically retold in the textual analysis of this dissertation, allows for an equally ethical reading of *Atonement*: within the context of intertextual theory, Briony Tallis's novel and McEwan's meta-fictional twist are thoroughly

dialogical in input and output. Indeed, as Nicholas Frangipane concludes, "many novels that show us two versions of the story argue that fiction can lead to a deeper understanding of events, to a more accurate version than a recounting of the actual facts would allow" (581; also Vitanova-Strezova 180). Before approaching Briony Tallis's dialogical decision of constructing Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending[99] against historical fact, three major questions arising with "London, 1999" and usually discussed in secondary literature shall be introduced.

(1) *Is "London, 1999" included in Briony Tallis's novel or is "London, 1999" exclusive to McEwan's readers?*

It is impossible to unambiguously answer this question. Some literary scholars opt for the former, some for the latter reading, and each reading offers informative understandings of a complex novel which can be constantly reread in search of further signifiers. In the textual analysis of this dissertation, the latter reading is hypothesised because it allows the contemplation of two readerships: **McEwan's readership and Briony Tallis's readership.** Some literary scholars suggest that Briony Tallis's readers have the advantage over McEwan's readers, some that McEwan's readers have the advantage over Briony Tallis's readers.

McEwan's Readership

In "London, 1999," McEwan's reader is confronted with "bleakest realism" when "neither love nor art nor science nor self-sacrifice can effect redemption" (Pastoor 213); according to Pastoor, McEwan offers "a story that dangles hope and satisfaction in front of us" only to "yank it away" in the final pages (210). Admittedly, **in the meta-fictional twist, McEwan's reader is provided with ontological information which *might* impede the hope and satisfaction of Briony Tallis's novel; however, the ontological information is not disadvantageous or discouraging**. After all, McEwan's readers "have access to Briony's diary entry[100] which reveals the relation between fiction and history in Briony's novel and which implicitly asks us to use that revelation in our coming to terms with Briony's novel" (Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 123). Although McEwan's readers are confronted with the ontological uncertainty of history and fiction (Wolf 308-09), Chalupský suggests that the uncertainty in "London, 1999"

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[99] Very few critics suggest that Cecilia and Robbie live and that those readers who assume Cecilia's and Robbie's death "mis"read (cf. Jacobi's and Serpell's essays). Jacobi's reading is insightful and comprehensible and most certainly not wrong (67-70); unfortunately, Jacobi considers any reading "wrong" which explores Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending as Briony Tallis's construction: "McEwan never says explicitly in the novel that these characters die, and I believe that the *logic of the narrative overwhelmingly proves* that they do not" (56; emphasis added). While Jacobi convincingly argues against ideologically informed misreading (70-71), his argument is rather anti-dialogical in "essence."

[100] Finney observes that the status of "London, 1999" is "uncertain" (Oblivion 81). The coda "is unsigned and could be taken as a diary confession or extraneous commentary on the novel proper" (Oblivion 81). Holman argues that "we enter Briony's mind" (317).

productively "challenges and subverts most readers' experience and presuppositions made up to then, and turns their attention to the question of the (im)possibility of fiction to ethically interfere with the realm of the real" (108).

Considering the ontological challenge of the meta-fictional twist, Ingersoll argues that "McEwan's epilogue requires an immediate re-membering, or re-visioning, of the three parts preceding it" (248 and 250-51; also D'Angelo 100). Dillon emphasises the intertextually productive consequence of such rereading: "the final section of *Atonement*, with its blatant exposure of the narrative as written text, unmercifully shatters the illusion of 'literature'" and, consequently, "forces the reader to recognize the text as productivity – it disallows him or her the comforting illusion of the monological (realist) book" (94). Indeed, the novel's "lack of resolution – especially in the much discussed ending – eludes the reader's need for control, but offers him [or her] an enthralling textual maze in which to get lost, again and again" (Cavalié 133). **Within an intertextual reading of *Atonement*, McEwan does not impede hope and satisfaction but emancipates his reader into dialogue**: "the catastrophic clash of mutually exclusive ends that characterizes our first reading of the novel gives way in a rereading to a softer layering of subjunctive possibilities, one that corresponds to the subjective striation of author and reader alike" (Serpell 81). Serpell is the only critic focusing on the reader's self in rereading *Atonement*: "Our own earlier, naïve reading of *Atonement* is folded into our rereading. We […] envelop ourselves in the novel's folds, in Briony's self-schisms. Our naïve reading, her naïve writing, our spoiled rereading, her drafts: all are enfolded" (113). The reader of Briony Tallis's *and* McEwan's *Atonement* is, in constant dialogue, intertextually inscribed in the novel.

Briony Tallis's Readership

In contrast to Briony Tallis's *and* McEwan's readers, Briony Tallis's readers "will not know that she has altered history, will not know how much, if any, of the novel's action is actually based on the experience of historical personages" (Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 123). Emily Holman thus argues that Briony Tallis's novel "does not query art, or its redemptive possibilities" (316): allowing her reader "a final gladness that remains uncomplicated" (316-17), Briony Tallis's novel will be perceived as honest and brave confession mediating "serendipitous truth" (317). This argument deserves a second thought, though. On the one hand, assuming the publication of Briony Tallis's novel, it is difficult to believe that each of Briony Tallis's readers would Serena-like accept the truth and reality of a plot when this plot dialogically reappraises the interpretation of the real within simplified literary structure. On the other hand, Briony Tallis's novel is constantly inviting her readers to thoroughly and critically

read and think. Although Phelan reasons that Briony Tallis's novel does not contain signals of her authorship (Experiencing Fiction 127), **Briony Tallis's readers are well prepared for Briony Tallis's composition of Parts One to Three in Parts One to Three by various clues** including the rejection of Briony's manuscript (Harold 137-38 and 141; Head 164-65; Mitrić 716; Quarrie 203; Robinson 476; Serpell 85-86; and Worthington 159). Finney explores some clues in detail: ironic intentional references to a variety of literary texts (Oblivion 73-74), modulation of prose styles (Oblivion 74), variable internal focalisation (Oblivion 74-75), parallel or symmetric motifs (Oblivion 75), narrative anticipation (Oblivion 75-76; also Serpell 99 and Vitanova-Strezova 174-75) or misinterpretation (Oblivion 79-80; also Jacobi's essay). Finney even reasons that the novel is "a work of fiction that is from the beginning to end concerned with the making of fiction" and that a "literary self-consciousness […] is present from the opening page of the novel and serves throughout the book to undermine the classic realist mode of narration" (Oblivion 69-70).

Nevertheless, **be it for readerly consumption or a different reason, the various clues are not always perceived in a first reading** (Head 163-64; Marcus 87; Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 109-10; and Serpell 99). Assuming the publication of Briony Tallis's novel, however, her readers would have one advantage over McEwan's readers during a first reading: Briony Tallis's novel would not be published anonymously or under a pseudonym (A 359 and A 369). While Holman argues that this would manifest "serendipitous truth" (317-18), it might equally raise scepticism: her readers, realising that writer and protagonist share the name and, furthermore, recognising "public" names like those of Lola and Paul Marshall (A 357-58), might be or rather soon become aware of the protagonist's composing function and (auto)biographical elements which are – to some extent – researchable (e.g. Cecilia's and Robbie's death). If interested, they would be able to learn about some of the differences between history and fiction which McEwan's readers are presented with in "London, 1999."

(2) *Is Briony Tallis's novel a self-serving narrative in which she changes historical fact for the purpose of atoning?*

In his analysis of McEwan's literary production, Head concludes that "the refusal of consolation" is an "exaggerated element of most of the fictions" (12) and that "the most dramatic refusal of consolation comes at the end of *Atonement*, with the revelation that the reuniting of the lovers, parted by Briony's misadventure, was her invention, a consoling feature of her latest draft, but not of McEwan's novel" (12-13 and 174). Consequently, according to Dillon, "it is common for readers to feel framed, betrayed, cheated and deceived" (93). Indeed,

reading secondary literature on *Atonement*, many readers communicate a feeling of betrayal which they experienced when learning (a) that Briony Tallis is the author of Parts One to Three and (b) that Briony Tallis has altered history – although Briony Tallis (especially via Robbie's thought and experience in France) contemplates that history is a construct in the first place. Ingersoll, for example, argues that "McEwan's epilogue radically subverts the reader's knowledge of not merely the 'content' of the preceding narrative but its provenance as well" (248). James Harold agrees that the revelation of "London, 1999" "changes how *we* have understood the book and its characters" (135-36; emphasis added). Mathews becomes more explicit:

> The reality of the characters as the reader has seen them – in both a psychological and a concrete sense – is tainted by this newly gained knowledge of Briony's authorship. How are *we*, as readers, to believe in the validity of the innermost thoughts and motivations of these characters when, as it turns out, they are told from the perspective of someone who has a clear interest in how *we* judge the story?" (157; emphasis added)

And Maria Margaronis concludes that the epilogue "lets us know that all *we* have just read was in fact written by Briony *to serve her own purposes*" (142; emphasis added).

Not unlike Serena, who feels deceived when "This Is Love" defies her readerly consumption centred in the author, many a literary scholar feels betrayed and/or muses on betrayal when the reader's relationship with the author and the reader's faith in the author's motivation is subverted in *Atonement* (Margaronis 146; also Albers and Caeners 711-12; D'Angelo 101; Holman 316-18; Müller-Wood 150; Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 127 and 130; Puschmann-Nalenz 193 and 197; Quarrie 200; Tönnies 69; L. Wells 101 and 71-72; and Wolf 306).[101] Schwalm even outspokenly accuses the author Briony Tallis of consciously deceiving her readers: "her modernist choice is one that seeks to pretend the independent existence of individual minds by limiting the visibility of her authorial power" (178). Groes, however,

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[101] D'Angelo, referring to T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," argues that McEwan has an optimal and a general reader in mind (94-95). His optimal reader "must bring with him or her particular knowledge of the literary past" and "a certain literary background to his [or her] reading of *Atonement*" and, engaging with historical "layers of meaning unavailable to the general reader" (95), succeeds in reading through Briony's crime and Briony Tallis's deception (94). McEwan's general reader "stands to miss the layered meanings throughout the text" and fails to anticipate crime and deception (95). Considering the wide-spread emotional complexity expressed in institutionalised secondary literature on *Atonement*, D'Angelo's argument puts many a literary scholar, who is well familiar with literary tradition and surely recognises many of the intentional references included in *Atonement*, into the position of an emotionally invested general reader. However, towards the end of her reading, she suggests that "the very concept of an ideal professional reader – one who will recognize each subtle textual clue at the appropriate moment – is itself another fictional construct" (103). Rather than maintaining the distinction between optimal and general reader, the reading of McEwan's *Atonement* dissolves the binary opposition between optimal and general into ambivalence.

argues differently. *Atonement* "continuously wrong-foots the reader, brutally punishing us for our willingness to suspend our disbelief" (Mapping Newness 4). According to his reading, **the reader is actively involved in being betrayed by unwarily trusting the author**: following Serena's example, "*we*, as readers, offer ourselves up for manipulation and exploitation" when inviting "narrative authority" (Mapping Newness 5; emphasis added); unsurprisingly, then, "the admission of Briony at the end of *Atonement* in particular has vexed critics because our emotional and intellectual investment in characters is exploited and leaves us behind as gullible fops" (Mapping Newness 4). Indeed, as Marcus concludes, the shock at realising that the reader is not confronted with "the 'impartial' truth of historic narration or *histoire* […] exposes the extent of our investment as readers in 'the illusion of fiction'" (92). D'Angelo, too, argues that "the narrative's structure suggests a larger ideological aim: to critique the reader's expectations of narrative itself" (100). She suggests that "Briony's contrast forces the reader to examine his or her narrative expectations and preferences" (101). In this argumentative line, Serpell claims that "*we* are accused – framed – by the text, and in self-defense, we seek someone else to accuse" (88; emphasis added).

Tellingly, **independent of the party which is blamed for betrayal (author or reader), almost all literary scholars discussing *their* emotional involvement with "London, 1999" employ the first-person plural pronoun *we* – monologically assuming each reader into their highly individual reading and analysis of *Atonement*.** While an emotional involvement with *Atonement* is perfectly understandable (never have I read a novel which left me that perplexed and devastated and still evokes the strongest feelings), assuming that the emotional involvement of all readers centres on betrayal is not.[102]

(3) Is it possible for Briony Tallis to atone for her "real" crime via a "literary" text which she shapes?

Focussing on betrayal, most literary scholars deny Briony Tallis the possibility to atone her crime by writing a novel. According to Jacobi, although Briony Tallis "can never undo what she has done and can never be forgiven" (64), her "repeated drafts can be seen as attempts

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[102] Serpell, focusing on rereading in his analysis of *Atonement*, names three kinds of rereading initiated by the novel:

> We have the recursions embedded in a first reading, whereby we are made to read a scene twice from different viewpoints as we move through the text. I call this *local rereading*. Another kind of rereading follows on the discovery that Briony has "faked" Parts II and III of her novel and entails an abrupt mental revision of the pages we have read: a *retrospective realization*. And then there is the literal rereading […], a *global rereading* in which we revisit the whole novel from the beginning. (96)

In consequence of such repeated rereading, each literary scholar, trying to persuade a reader of a specific interpretation, necessarily fails.

to work through her difficulties and to find some emotional and psychological relief, as a means of clearing Robbie's name and of healing herself" (63 and 65). Frangipane, too, reasons that "in the claims that *Atonement* and other novels make about the power of fiction to rectify past wrongs, there is a strong optimism about the potential efficacy of fiction" (580). However, most literary scholars are less optimistic in their conclusions. Finney argues that "the chasm that separates the world of the living from that of the fictional invention ensures that at best her fictional reparation will act as an attempt at atoning for a past that she cannot reverse" (Oblivion 69 and 81; also D'Angelo 88). Nevertheless, he wonders whether "the attempt to imagining the feelings of others is perhaps the one corrective that we can make in the face of continuing human suffering" (Oblivion 82). According to Dillon, however, "the tragedy of *Atonement*" develops from the impossibility to imaginatively correct the real (97): Briony Tallis "may write and rewrite the events following that moment of misreading" but "she can never rewrite that moment itself" (97; also Vitanova-Strezova 179). Dillon reasons that Briony Tallis can "never erase the *need for* atonement" in fiction (97) but that "her perpetual attempt *to atone* obscures this fact" (97).[103] Cormack, too, argues that Briony Tallis unsuccessfully struggles against the real (81): depicting Cecilia and Robbie "has not brought them back to life or enabled her to assuage her guilt" (81). Attempting an anti-postmodernist reading which re-introduces the possibility and necessity to distinguish between the real and the fictional to allow for moral thought and action (72-73 and 78), Cormack even claims that in McEwan's novel the imagination, aiming at obscuring facts and misleading the unwary (82), "is portrayed as dangerous, untrustworthy and originating in self-interest" (81). Fiction, in his approach, "is presented as lie – a lie that, if believed, comforts, distorts and finally produces unethical action" (81). Margaronis, too, suggests that *Atonement* "deliberately betrays its readers to make the modernist point that all fiction – indeed, all writing – is a kind of betrayal" (148). Consequently, "accounts of the past cannot but be self-serving" (146-48) and it is impossible to "atone by writing" (148). Hence, according to Letissier, *Atonement* becomes "the record of an unachievable 'mourning work' – it eschews the trappings of fiction as problem-solving conjuring trick" (210).

While Cormack, Margaronis and Letissier argue that atonement cannot possibly be achieved in writing since fiction always bends historical fact in subjectively approaching it, Phelan introduces the idea that, independent of historical accuracy, Briony Tallis's "literary" atonement is impossible since atonement requires a "real" instance which forgives. "Since

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[103] Analysing Briony's attempt at atoning, Dillon interestingly involves "the psychoanalytic element of Kristeva's concept of intertextuality" (97): narrative (self-)construction as a response to (existential) crisis (97-98).

Briony's writing brings into being the novel's world, including both the crime and its aftermath, her decisions about the fates of the characters, whether they conform to history or not, cannot atone for what she has done to real people. There is no one external to the fiction who can serve as judge of whether her effort is sufficient to achieve atonement" (Experiencing Fiction 121). Vitanova-Strezova, however, argues that Briony Tallis "subverts through her polylogue her own authority 'of deciding outcomes' in the novel, handing it over to the reader" (181). Worthington is sceptical about this approach, though: although Briony Tallis finally "resists writing the closure she desires" and thus "acknowledges the authority of the others who will finally write *her* in *their* (retrospective) readings" (167), she is "'dead' to her reader" (163; also D'Angelo 102) and thus cannot "hope for forgiveness from this source either" (163). Nevertheless, **forgiveness must not necessarily be explicitly granted to the individual subject atoning but can be implicitly acted.** Birke suggests that "the novel as a whole, rather than condemning or wholly endorsing Briony's attempt at atonement through storytelling, invites its audience to appreciate the ambivalence of her narrative act" (185). **If Briony Tallis writerly succeeds in her Barthesian approach of encouraging her readers into the dialogue of ambivalence, she successfully atones.**

In this subchapter, a reading of Atonement *and atonement different to those which have just been outlined shall be proposed:*

According to Worthington, Briony's crime is to authoritatively appropriate Cecilia and Robbie (160); however, the gulf between self and other is unbridgeable (153) and, consequently, imagining the other "is inescapably appropriative" (161). Briony Tallis has, therefore, necessarily failed "to assuage her guilt by *imagining*" Cecilia's and Robbie's interiority (161) but metafictionally "duplicates that crime: it again imagines Robbie and Cecilia from Briony's authoritative perspective" (160). Of course, being situated in history and society, each individual subject is appropriating the other into the narrative construction of its individual subjectivity (153-54); however, there is a difference between the individual subject which dialogically writes (the reality of) the other and the individual subject which monologically authors (the reality of) the other. **Briony monologically authors, Briony Tallis dialogically writes.** While Worthington argues that Briony Tallis "crafts a fiction (of self) for reader consumption" (162), Briony Tallis, although necessarily fictionalising herself and encountering her limited perspective (164), is trying to emancipate her reader from readerly consumption. Rethinking Worthington's argument (161-63), the authorial narrative situation Briony Tallis constructs is not an unethical manifestation of power but a means to severely criticise Briony's monological appropriation. Hence her readers, despite "lacking" the ontological uncertainty of

"London, 1999," are constantly – implicitly and explicitly – encouraged into dialogical thought and a revision of their (monological) first impressions. Indeed, "the adult Briony has learned the value of reading, and she constructs a narrative that continually reminds" her readers of their "ethical responsibility" (D'Angelo 89): since they "hold the final power of interpretation, judgement and atonement" (89), readers "must maintain a stance toward the text that involves both critical assessment and empathetic identification" (89).

Worthington, however, claims the impossibility of atonement and forgiveness in the appropriative process between self and other (162-63). Based on Derridean thought, Worthington argues not only that "(confessional) self-narration can never come to rest" but that it "*should* not if we are to avoid a violent closure of the potentially ethical exchange between self and other" (166). This dialogical approach is valuable; however, it does not deny the possibility of forgiveness. It shall be argued that **in the crime of monological appropriation, forgiveness *is* implicitly granted in the successful dialogical and thus ethical exchange between self and other.** Proposing that Briony Tallis's atonement is her reader's dialogical encouragement and that she is implicitly forgiven within her reader's dialogical thought and action, **Briony Tallis's atonement and forgiveness is independent of historical accuracy.** Serpell already tentatively unlinks telling factual truth and acting ethically (88). Indeed, in this textual analysis it shall be hypothesised that historical accuracy would impede ethical action and Briony Tallis's atonement. **Since Briony has committed her crime, a monological interpretation of the real, via narrative structure and stereotypical content, Briony Tallis can atone via narrative structure and ambivalent content which is meant to inspire her readers into a dialogical involvement with the literary and the real.** Hence Briony Tallis chooses the writerly in the readerly form to emancipate her readers: consciously turning into a Barthesian paper author, she crafts a final draft featuring a happy ending.

McEwan has, literally, constructed a paper author: *Atonement* **is the story of Briony Tallis, the author, written on paper. However, in visualising Briony Tallis's development into a writer by choosing her to become his (self) reflective acting writer, he constructs her to be a de-transcendentalised paper author in the Barthesian understanding.** Briony Tallis is fatally ill. She is diagnosed with vascular dementia and thus facing "an incoming tide of forgetting, and then oblivion" (A 371). Thinking about her mental and, finally, biological death, she contemplates the process of writing. Traditionally, the author and the work are considered within a chronological relation: *before* (the author) and *after* (the work) (Barthes, MA 493). Such a myth coerces a reader to seek the explanation of a text in the

author-god (MA 493). Both Briony and Serena, before developing an understanding for the importance of dialogue, consider the author the origin of the literary text and, unquestioningly, structure and seek the meaning of a text within its author. In intertextual theory, however, the author is de-transcendentalised and revealed to be the ideologically situated reader's construct. In the process of writing, the individual subject's thought and action are detached from the individual subject and its physical world: "la voix perd son origine, l'auteur entre dans da propre mort" (MA 491). However, the author is always inscribed in its text in the form of a *discursive guest*, a paper author (T 1215): "sa vie, n'est plus l'origine de ses fables, mais une fable concurrente à son œuvre" (T 1215). Briony Tallis is perfectly aware of this process: without any relation to the physical world, Briony and thus Briony Tallis "will be as much of a fantasy as the lovers who shared a bed in Balham and enraged their landlady" (A 371). Even before Briony Tallis's physical death (language and memory are fading), (auto)biographical elements, which might be taken into consideration by Briony Tallis's readers while approaching her novel, will only exist in written and thus constructed narrative forms like letters (A 359) or public statements: "like all authors pressed by a repeated question, she felt obliged to produce a story line, a plot of her development" (A 41). She is, according to Barthesian theory, pushed into mythologising herself (A 41). Hence (auto)biographical elements will only continue this fantastic rewriting of historical characters and not re-relate them to the physical world (even if this is the reader's intention): "when I am dead, and the Marshalls are dead, and the novel is finally published, we will only exist as *my inventions*" (A 371; emphasis added). Since Briony Tallis is discursively constructed and thus discursively inscribed in her novel, not only within the obvious form of Briony but within monological Emily, ambivalently torn Cecilia and dialogical Robbie or within her narrator which severely criticises Briony's monological approach, she and her (historical) characters will only exist within her invention, her writerly *re-arranging* of textual elements and structures and their further processing in the *texte général*. While having symbolically died in the writing process and while literally dying, Briony Tallis's life is revealed to be a textual construct – narrated, transformed and continued by others.

Vitanova-Strezova, too, concludes that "Briony is constantly multiplied in the story" (179): Briony, the character; Briony, the narrator; Briony, the writer; and "Briony in our version of her story" (179); indeed, as Vitanova-Strezova argues, "there is no at-one-ment of the many Brionys in the novel" (179).[104] However, while McEwan's readers, reading Briony Tallis's

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[104] Vitanova-Strezova analyses Briony / Briony Tallis as a Kristevan subject in process (179-81). "Briony's attempt at narrating her own being is perpetually procrastinated, and it does not end with a narrative being. Instead, it ends up with the multiplied, heterogenous subject in process. The book closes, but Briony's polylogue is yet to be told" (181).

thoughts on authorial power (A 370-72), are rather explicitly pointed into abandoning the idea of the author-god, **Briony Tallis's readers are implicitly encouraged into *not* transcendentalising Briony Tallis.** Phelan argues that Briony Tallis, contemplating her past failures, crafts a narrative which "sympathetically enters into the consciousness of the other characters" and constructs a narrator which "clearly signals how deficient her judgements were" (Experiencing Fiction 122; also Cavalié 127-28; de la Concha 206-07; Finney, Oblivion 75 and 80-81; and O'Hara 84 and 92-94). Further literary strategies meant to inspire dialogical approaches to Parts One to Three have already been thoroughly discussed in the textual analysis of this dissertation; however, one major possibility in which Briony Tallis cedes authorial power and facilitates dialogical thought remains to be introduced in detail: a happy ending, utterly deviating from historical fact, in form of a final draft.

Briony Tallis alters historical facts. Reading "London, 1999," McEwan's readers learn that they have just read Briony Tallis's final draft of her novel which (auto)biographically relates the crime she committed: "the earliest version, January 1940, the latest, March 1999, and in between, half a dozen different drafts" (A 369). Although aiming at a "historical record" of the crime itself in order to publicly admit to her crime and to publicly accuse Lola and Paul Marshall of their crimes (A 369-70), Briony Tallis, an "unreliable witness" (A 358), did not intend to write an unfailingly readerly text: "if I really cared so much about facts, I should have written a different kind of book" (A 360). Analysing this ambivalent approach, Margaronis concludes that Briony Tallis's "novel unfolds in the space between […] two apparently divergent points of view" (141): the novelist's obligation to strict accuracy and the impossibility of strict accuracy (141-42). However, instead of appreciating this ambivalent approach, she accuses Briony Tallis of tricking and deceiving (158) and forsaking her novelistic duty: despite artistic licence, she is "responsible to something outside her book, which is her imagined community" (158). Like Serena, the narrated I, Margaronis claims the *author's responsibility* for the *reader's wellbeing* and centres this wellbeing in fact and truth.

Indeed, Briony Tallis has repeatedly adjusted facts: "I worked in three hospitals in the duration […] and I merged them in my description *to concentrate all my experiences* into one place. A convenient distortion, and the least of my offences against veracity" (A 356; emphasis added). Hence Merle Tönnies concludes that readers are "absolutely right to mistrust the accuracy of the plot after having learned about the narrator's identity" (70). Nevertheless, Briony Tallis does not intend to mislead. According to Phelan, although "Briony has actively shaped the historical events as she has constructed her novel" (Experiencing Fiction 124), it is not her goal to "make every detail as accurate as possible but rather to highlight the disastrous

consequences that follow from the historical intersection of her development as a writer with Cecilia and Robbie's discovery of their love" (Experiencing Fiction 124). Instead of misleading and deceiving, **Briony Tallis alters historical facts to concentrate experience and thus to intensify the depiction of her guilt.**[105] Nevertheless, in particular Briony Tallis's major "offence" against veracity, Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending (A 370-71), is often relentlessly interpreted as spineless deception (e.g. Müller-Wood 147-48); even Phelan argues that this particularly transgressive alteration of history ultimately denies Briony Tallis her atonement in writing (Experiencing Fiction 121). However, scrutinising these interpretations, within this textual analysis, Briony Tallis's major alteration of historical fact shall be rewritten: it will be suggested that constructing a happy ending contributes to Briony Tallis's atonement and, furthermore, continues her *writerly responsibility* of dialogical involvement.

In "London, 1999," facing and fearing death, Briony Tallis's thoughts on the relationship of author / writer and reader, meticulously mediated in a first-person narrative, evolve around her insight that she no longer possesses "the courage of [her] pessimism" to mediate Cecilia's and Robbie's death (A 371). Hence **Briony Tallis, altering historical facts, constructs Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending.** However, Briony Tallis, confronted with death, doubts her approach and is afraid that she might have suffered a relapse into old habits. "As into sunset we sail. An unhappy inversion" (A 370). Briony Tallis does not only criticise her younger self's clumsy usage of a stylistic device but equally wonders if she herself has unhappily inverted: "It occurs to me that I have not travelled so very far after all, since I wrote my little play. Or rather, I've made a digression and doubled back to my starting place" (A 370). If the prevalent argument in secondary literature on *Atonement* is to be followed, Briony Tallis is, indeed, reverting to authorial "God-like powers" when changing historical fact in constructing Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending (Cornwell 164; also Puschmann-Nalenz 196-97; Schwalm 178; and Worthington 162). Albers and Caeners even argue that Briony Tallis has never stopped being the authorial author of manipulating fiction. "Even though Briony has certainly realised the mistakes she has made, her naïve aesthetic principles and aesthetic attitude have remained the same, and she still aims at putting life into a neat little box of art(ificiality)" (718). Müller-Wood reasons that her "protracted non-atonement" underlines "her cowardice, dishonesty and desire to dominate" (148; also Puschmann-Nalenz 196), and Lynn Wells emphasises that "the artificial reinstatement of the happy ending recalls her youthful attraction

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[105] Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, thus practices McEwan's new approach to historiographical metafiction: historical accuracy is secondary to creating atmosphere (Alden 61 and 63). Cf. footnote 86 for a summary of Alden's argument on McEwan's historiographical metafiction.

to order" (108). Phelan, too, although usually sympathetic in his reading of Briony Tallis, argues that "her aesthetic commitment to the representation of other minds and to judging those representations does not provide the ethical grounds for the liberties she takes with the story of Cecilia and Robbie, and her own transgression" (Experiencing Fiction 127). Head, discussing the ethical function of narrative, is perhaps most harshly criticising a manipulation of Briony Tallis's readers.

Head argues that *Atonement* raises the possibility that "the novel has the capacity to achieve a unique form of moral philosophy" in investigating "character, dilemma and moral agency" (163), a capacity that "can and should be put to social uses" (163), but destroys this possibility in the character and action of Briony Tallis (163; also Weidle 68). According to Head, "*Atonement* presents narrative fiction as having centrally *to do* with moral questions, without necessarily being able to *resolve* them" (160) – in particular if narrative fiction investigates and questions the moral and morally dubious behaviour, responsibility and authority of the author who seeks to establish and construct truth (156, 160, 162 and 172). However, **Briony Tallis, altering historical facts, constructs Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending to de-finalise her literary text; drafting her literary text, she means to inspire her readers' dialogical involvement.** Briony Tallis, in her function of acting *writer* for McEwan, has relinquished authorial and thus interpretive power and written an ethical novel in only *drafting* it (A 360, A 369 and A 371). Briony Tallis's choice to let Cecilia and Robbie live might be, understandably human, wishful thinking (A 371-72), but, within a draft, structured but never final (*OED*, def. 4), it is not, as Head suggests, "insufficient" or "a grand, one-off gesture" (174) but a dialogical and consoling "stand against oblivion and despair" (A 372). According to Barthes, "le texte est une arme contre le temps, l'oubli, et contre les roueries de la parole, qui, si facilement, se reprend, s'altère, se renie" (TT 1677); however, while the text of a work passively prevents oblivion, a draft actively prevents oblivion in encouraging readers to continue it. Consequently, Cecilia's and Robbie's death would not serve any purpose (A 370); Cecilia and Robbie's life, however, can be imagined and continued by the multiple voices of her readers. "What sense or hope or satisfaction could a reader draw from such an account? Who would want to believe that they never met again, never fulfilled their love? Who would want to believe that, except in the service of the bleakest realism? I couldn't do it to *them*" (A 371; emphasis added). The pronoun *them* does not only refer to Cecilia and Robbie, whom Briony Tallis owes a happy ending (A 372), but equally to her readers: bleakest realism, deprived of any hope, cannot possibly induce dialogue – it is sterile, it is unproductive. Bentley reasons that Briony Tallis's novel "asserts that the redemptive power of fiction allows it a

certain license with the truth, if the consequence of that licence is to produce a life-enhancing work" (157; also Frangipane 581). O'Hara, too, concludes that "Briony, in the end, imaginatively alters and recreates the past in order to reconfer empathetic value on those victims of history, the forgotten and the dead" (95). The construction of Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending, commonly interpreted as vile manipulation and cover up (Müller-Wood 147-48), is, therefore, as Briony Tallis hopes, neither weakness nor evasion but a kindness (A 372): her contribution to a life-enhancing – individually enhancing and socially enhancing – dialogue. Imagined fiction is, contrary to Cormack's argument (81-82), not necessarily unethical; fiction, if practicing dialogical imagining and aiming at dialogical involvement, is most ethical and focuses on "what matters" instead of "what happened" (Frangipane 578).

According to Frangipane, "narrative has the ability to give us hope, satisfaction, comfort" and "it can do those things *despite* our knowledge that narrative is a human-made construction" (574). Consequently, the novel "has productive potential even though we know its limitations and its power to deceive" (574). Strikingly, a "positive" reading of *Atonement* and Briony Tallis's intention seems to clash with Briony Tallis's famous and extensively interpreted thoughts on authorship: "how can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God?" (A 371) According to Albers and Caeners, Briony Tallis's "desire for closure" is thus "openly stated in the final chapter" (710). Holman claims that Briony Tallis's "authority is absolute" and that "in changing their lives, Briony asserts her ownership" of Cecilia and Robbie (318). Lynn Wells equally harshly criticises Briony Tallis: "the true complexity of this novel lies in discovering the ethical deficit of its main character, whose 'at-one-ment' or reconciliation is with the self, but not the other" (110). These critics, representative of many literary scholars (including myself when writing my Magisterarbeit), read Briony Tallis as the author-God of no development who "does not atone, only cover up" (Holman 319) and whose "self-aggrandizement and fantasy resolution rather than true reparation to others suggests that her egotism permeates all aspects of the text" (L. Wells 99-100). However, **Briony Tallis, drafting her literary text, means to inspire her readers' dialogical involvement and, broaching the difference between authorship and writership, chooses writership.** Her musing on having constructed Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending, usually negatively interpreted in criticism of Briony Tallis, is a (self) reflective statement on *authorship*: "she is pondering a problem here, not a triumph" (Birke 185-86); indeed, in the context of intertextual theory, this statement on authorship can be read to communicate an awareness of *writership*. Briony Tallis is perfectly aware that a novelist, who is assuming a centralising function, who is setting "the limits and the terms" (A 371) and who

has thus "absolute power of deciding outcomes" (A 371), cannot atone: "there is no one, no entity or higher form that she can appeal to, or be reconciled with, or that can forgive her" (A 371); indeed, if the author assumes the function of a transcendental signified, "there is nothing outside her" (A 371): "no atonement for God, or novelists" (A 371). Hence Head argues that "the authority of writing" is "incompatible with atonement on a personal level" (171). Indeed, Briony Tallis concludes that "the attempt was all" (A 371). However, atonement and, consequently, forgiveness is only an impossible task for the Barthesian author-God which Briony Tallis is not – at least, not anymore: her intertextual development into a writer, who relinquishes authorial and interpretive power and seeks the dialogical involvement of her readers, makes it possible to atone via writing and to being implicitly forgiven through the dialogical thought and action of her readers.

Briony Tallis, drafting her literary text, means to inspire her readers' dialogical involvement by choosing writership and thus facilitates her atonement in the intertextual. On the one hand, Briony Tallis's dialogical approach is selfishly serving herself: forgiveness becomes a possibility only within a readerly text of writerly potential; on the other hand, it is selflessly serving the social: while bearing the risk of not being forgiven if her attempt fails, her dialogical approach encourages critical thought and action in the social reality of her reader. Of course, it is impossible to inspire all readers into dialogue; monologised minds are not easily involved in critical thought. Briony Tallis, having dealt with publishers and readers ever since writing her first draft, *Two Figures by the Fountain*, is honest with herself: "I know there's always a certain kind of reader who will be compelled to ask, But what *really* happened?" (A 371). Considering some of the secondary literature published on *Atonement*, this kind of reader is not uncommon. Situating the moral in historical accuracy, Vermeule argues that Briony Tallis's fiction is amoral because it is intertextual (153): "since she has woven into it so many layers of memories, drafts, and snippets of other texts, it is impossible ever to find her way back to the scene as it really happened" (153). Holman agrees and claims that the intertextual is Briony Tallis's "ultimate irresponsibility" (323). Indeed, Briony Tallis intertextualises readings which monopolise the "truth" of historical fact: "The answer is simple: the lovers survive and flourish. As long as there is a single copy, a solitary typescript of my *final draft*, then my spontaneous, fortuitous sister and her medical prince survive to love" (A 371; emphasis added). Historical accuracy, however, is impeding atonement in the writerly, and Briony Tallis's oxymoron *final draft* offers a reading which makes the intertextual a moral instance and her ultimate responsibility: throughout her life, Briony Tallis has rewritten her literary text and herself (A 360) but her final version is still a draft, a text to be executed (*OED*, def. 4.). While

Chalupský suggests that Briony Tallis has failed to complete her novel (108) and Elke D'Hoker ambivalently argues that Briony Tallis atones in finally completing "her story, her truth" (41), Briony Tallis, read in the context of Barthesian intertextual theory, atones precisely because she *intentionally* does not complete, because she does not finish and finalise her novel. Instead, she "engenders an infinite number of new stories which are yet to be told" (Vitanova-Strezova 171). Scrutinising those interpretations that claim Briony Tallis's manipulating authority and authorship, Briony Tallis is written to cede authorial power: she wants her novel to be executed, her inventions to be continued by her readers. The answer is, therefore, indeed simple: Cecilia and Robbie will survive and flourish as long as there is a single typescript to be absorbed and transformed by a reader's context. Briony Tallis wants to be forgiven and creates the possibility to be forgiven but she puts forgiveness into the hands of her readers who become the "higher form that she can appeal to" (A 371).

Choosing writership and its productivity in the intertextual, Briony Tallis is inscribed with McEwan's approach to the writer's and reader's possibility of free inquiry. Contemplating the power of narrative, McEwan voices the writerly responsibility of initiating active and critical thought: "if you set about writing fiction with a clear *intention of persuading people* of a certain point of view, you cramp your field, you deny yourself the possibility of opening up an investigation or free inquiry, which I think is the great redeeming quality" (McEwan, interv. with Gonzáles 59; emphasis added). In the process of persuading, an individual subject is talked into thinking or acting in a specified mode; such a process is impeding "the great redeeming quality" of dialogical thought and action. Hence monological structure and content is not only destructive to the other which is meant to be talked over but equally to the self which denies itself any redemption in denying the other its dialogical individual subjectivity. McEwan's statement of 1989 is implied within his acting writer Briony Tallis: "All the preceding drafts were pitiless. But now I can no longer think what purpose would be served if, say, I tried *to persuade my reader*, by direct or indirect means" of Cecilia's and Robbie's death (A 370; emphasis added). If the purpose of the writer is to dialogise, this purpose will not be served with the depiction of Cecilia's and Robbie's death; it is served, however, when Briony Tallis, refraining from bleakest und unproductive realism, facilitates "an investigation or free inquiry" – what will happen to Cecilia and Robbie? what will happen to Briony? facing institutionalised and thus authoritative power, will Briony succeed in clearing Robbie's name from its monological signification of maniac? will Cecilia and Robbie finally forgive Briony? According to D'Angelo, Briony Tallis can only atone if she shapes "critical, responsible, and invested readers – for these will be the ones capable of granting *final* atonement

and absolution" (102; emphasis added). Indeed, Briony Tallis's atonement requires critical, responsible and invested readers; however, her atonement is not granted in her reader's signification and *final judgement* but in her reader's *unfinal (reading) action*. Yet Briony Tallis will never be able to watch her readers' (dialogical) involvement with her novel and hence the last thought which is mediated in McEwan's novel is Briony Tallis's anxious doubt. "I gave them happiness, but I was not so self-serving as to let them forgive me. Not quite, not yet. If I had the power to conjure them in my birthday celebration…Robbie and Cecilia, still alive, still in love, sitting side by side in the library, smiling at *The Trials of Arabella*? It's not impossible" (A 372). Briony Tallis struggles with ceding forgiveness, with ceding authorial and interpretive power, with offering writerly power to her readers. Hence "*Atonement* 'ends' by remaining open to the possibility of a further reinscription" (Dillon 93) and "closes" on an implied note of Bakhtinian, Kristevan and Barthesian warning: defying the authoritative word in redeeming dialogue is a constant struggle and effort – on the part of both writer *and* reader.

Briony Tallis encourages active dialogue in the productive possibilities of Cecilia and Robbie's constructed happy ending. Instead of historical accuracy, Briony Tallis's atonement involves the dialogical of the intertextual: only if Briony Tallis's novel will engage her readers into *unfinalised* writerly dialogue, if they think more critically and more empathetically because of her literary text, she will successfully if only implicitly be forgiven for her monological thoughts and actions and her authoritative manipulation of Cecilia and Robbie. In consequence, she provides her literary text with several techniques to facilitate dialogical involvement (cf. the textual analysis of 3.1 Saussure's Value to 3.4 Barthes's Intertext) and chooses the writerly in the readerly form to emancipate her readers: in the end, consciously turning into a Barthesian paper author, she crafts a final but unfinalised draft featuring a happy ending which allows her readers to actively absorb and transform her literary text.

3.4.4.2 Tom Haley

Comparing *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Walker argues that "McEwan cautions us that gaining power over others by whatever means is a necessary evil" and that "throughout McEwan's work, a wariness of an extreme form of (human) control indirectly reflects an anxiety about authorship itself, more precisely about authorial manipulation" (499). Hence in *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan constructs an "authorial persona willing to delegate part of his power to another entity, namely the engaged reader" (500). Like in *Atonement*, McEwan succeeds to

encourage this shift in power in constructing Tom Haley as a Barthesian paper author. **In *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan has, literally, constructed a paper author: Tom Haley, the author, is written on paper. However, he equally constructs him to be a de-transcendentalised paper author in the Barthesian understanding.** According to Barthes, language knows only a grammatical subject, not a person (in the sense of personality) (MA 493): in the process of writing any relation to the physical world is cut and the writer is de-personalised and discursively inscribed in the text. Following Kristeva's thought that one of the codes in which the subject of narration is inscribed is the literary character (MDR 95), Barthes argues that this subject (the *she* and *he* and *it* of the literary character), holds language together while simultaneously limiting language (MA 493). A subject is, grammatically and symbolically spoken, a transcendental signified: it is the element around which further elements of a clause are centred. Tom Haley, however, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, prevents this centralising function of the subject and constructs subjects which do not only hold language together but double language in prismatic consciousness. Tom Haley constructs and inscribes himself in the "I" of Serena, the secret agent, and the "he" of Tom, the writer, whom Serena is meant to instrumentalise for the English Secret Service. However, reconstructing Serena in the difference between narrated I and narrating I and reconstructing himself through the prism of Serena's consciousness which, finally, allows Serena to explore Tom's understanding of herself, the subject is constantly de-centralised by shifting it from subject to object (watching and being watched); therefore, personality is not emptied but multiplied in discursive rewritings of the *nom propre*. The subjects of *Sweet Tooth* are, consequently, "concrete" in its readerly and "elusive" in its writerly elements; despite autobiographical components, it is impossible to "pinpoint" Tom Haley and Serena Frome based on their novel – neither for the Secret Service which fails to monologise since subject and object of watching constantly change, nor for Tom Haley and Serena Frome's readers who are encouraged to consider changing perspectives. Furthermore, by making Tom Haley his acting writer, McEwan suggests that it is impossible to pinpoint Ian McEwan.

In *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan does not only construct Tom Haley to be a paper author in the Barthesian understanding; he equally reveals *himself* to be a paper author inscribed in his narrative. Although McEwan's (literary) texts are diverse in form and content, literary scholars have never failed in their attempt to categorise McEwan and his writing (cf. 2.2.1 Dialogue). However, in "autobiographical self-reflectiveness" (Chalupský 102), in inserting aspects of his biography into Tom Haley's biography (e.g. his education, his publishing career, his acquaintance with Martin Amis), he does not only point to Tom Haley's function of acting

writer but, in rewriting several of his short stories within the context of *Sweet Tooth*, for example "Dead as They Come,"[106] "Reflections of a Kept Ape" or – in Tom's first novel *From the Somerset Levels* – "Two Fragments: March 199-" (all published in 1978), McEwan defies categorising.[107] Being interviewed about re-using his short stories, he replies: "It is not quite my work. I thought the best way to remind myself of what the seventies were like would be to look at my own two volumes of stories and then slightly alter them. So I retell them in different terms. They are not quite the same stories" (interv. with Bigsby 238-39). Indeed, this consciously intertextual process of rewriting causes a shift in focus. "Dead as They Come," for example, is not much appreciated among literary scholars analysing McEwan's short stories. According to Head, it is a "flat" and "unpleasant" narrative which allows McEwan "to imagine the perspective of an unhinged sex killer" (43). It is usually interpreted as a short story which criticises the destructive treatment of women in a patriarchal society (Malcolm 35) and emphasises that equality is the foundation of every healthy relationship (Slay 56-57). While these readings are not irrelevant within present (Western) society, they fit perfectly into the categories of Ian Macabre and the male feminist (cf. 2.2.1 Dialogue). However, McEwan's rewriting of his short story within the context of *Sweet Tooth* encourages "Dead as They Come" to be read as a complex (far from flat!) insight into (destructive) processes of the imagination.

In *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan's short story "Dead as They Come" is rewritten: the monologising protagonist destroys himself when he fails to de-centre himself and to dialogise his imagination. Since the mannequin, which is named Helen, does not change its appearance, the nameless protagonist of "Dead as They Come" interprets the mannequin's appearance based on those discourses determining his personality and hence his imagination (e.g. his preference for passive and silent women). According to the protagonist, Helen's features change from "an expression of great tenderness and understanding" while sleeping (DC 64) to "a wide-eyed look of fear" (DC 65) and "exhausted by pleasure" (DC 67) to "so elusive, so indefinably cool" (DC 71) and "quiet, naked contempt" (DC 76). Neil Carder, the rewritten protagonist, equally forms every thought, emotion and action of Hermione, the rewritten

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[106] Ksiezopolska emphasises that only "Dead as They Come" "is narrated in full" (423). According to her, "it represents a postmodern ploy of deliberate rewriting of an existing text that is sufficiently extended for detailed comparative analysis – and no literary critic can resist such a temptation" (423). I declare myself guilty as charged. Ksiezopolska herself focuses on the difference in narrative situation between McEwan's story and Tom Haley's adaptation: "'Deas as They Come' may easily be written by an inmate of an asylum, while it would be difficult to read Haley's version this way because of its omniscient narration" (424-25). She concludes that in impeding a straightforward reading, McEwan "improves his own story" (425).

[107] Further examples are McEwan's short story "Pornography" which was also published in *In Between the Sheets* and his television play *The Imitation Game* (1981). For further specific examples of the (distorted) processing of McEwan's (writing and publishing) experience in Tom Haley's biography, read Childs's short essay "Ian McEwan's *Sweet Tooth:* 'Put In Porphyry and Marble Do Appear'" (2013).

mannequin Helen (ST 117-24). In McEwan's rewriting of his short story, the narrator, therefore, claims: "*he, an ordinary fellow, had discovered for himself the awesome power of the imagination*" (ST 124). However, although each protagonist, imagining his mannequin, enjoys an emotionally intense and pleasant life for some time, each protagonist's imagination finally turns destructive because of its monological one-sidedness. While they are "authorising" their mannequins with thoughts and actions, undergoing the process of writing when they are inscribing themselves in the literary character they are constructing (indeed, both Helen and Hermione can be well read in terms of self and other), they are the "origin" of each thought and action and do not allow their mannequins and thus themselves to be rewritten by a third party: their mannequins are isolated, and when they are imagined to interact with third parties while having an affair, they are destroyed in a vain attempt to regain control. However, since the protagonists are inscribed in their mannequins, in turning destructive against their mannequins, they turn destructive against themselves. When authorising does no longer compensate for interpersonal dialogue, when Helen "refuses" any response, the authorising protagonist, incapable of dialogue, dies: "my eyes were closed and I thought I saw my own soul recede from me across a vast black void till it was a pinprick of red light" (DC 76). While his monological imagination and treatment of his mannequin results in violence and Gollum-like madness – "I tore, trampled, mangled, kicked, spat and urinated on … my precious possessions …oh my precious" (DC 77), Neil Carder, successfully forgetting all about Hermione (ST 124), withdraws from life and any social contact and "shrank into middle age with minimal dignity" (ST 124). Instead of regaining control when they destroy their mannequins, the authorising protagonists die. The "soul" of a human being requires dialogue to be productive, to grow and continue; hence the author who tries to monologise will not only fail if the reader is unwilling to be monologised and will not only necessarily fail when different contexts rewrite the author's narrative, an author incapable of dialogue, will, in the long run, wither.

McEwan, in sharing elements of his biography and literary texts with Tom Haley, emphasises that it is impossible for the writer not to be (consciously) inscribed in his narrative and his literary characters but that it is possible and necessary for the writer to cede control over his texts and thus to encourage dialogue in rewriting – for the sake of both writer and reader. After all, McEwan has rewritten short stories from his collection *In between the sheets* (1978). Unlike the 1997-Vintage paperback cover implies, the signifier *sheets* does not necessarily signify *linen* but equally *sheets of paper*. Only reading *in between the sheets* allows for dialogue and maintains a human being's "soul." Hence Childs pointedly argues that "*Sweet Tooth* emerges as a book that has narratives within narratives, fictions about

fictions, stories that tell other stories" (Marble 143). Ksiezopolska even argues that the autobiographically coloured textual construction of *Sweet Tooth* allows Serena to be interpreted as a triple agent: when "Serena summarizes/retells the stories by Tom Haley, which are actually borrowed from McEwan's own store" (419), she is written into the position of "an avatar of an avatar of a writer reminiscing on the nature of fiction and his own textualized self" (419).[108]

Consequently, **McEwan places both the writer *and* the reader under a dialogical obligation: making (uncomfortable) dialogue the "essence" of writing and reading processes which, ideally, merge into one process of productivity.** Serena, the narrated I, suggests that writers owe "their readers a duty of care, of mercy" (ST 105). She is repeatedly most insistent on this relationship of parental trust. "There was, in my view, an unwritten contract with the reader that the writer must honour. No single element of an imagined world or any of its characters should be allowed to dissolve on authorial whim. The invented had to be as solid and as self-consistent as the actual" (ST 193 and ST 66). Unsurprisingly, she is shocked when reading a short story, written by Tom, which breaks this contract. His short story is a version of "Reflections of a Kept Ape" which transcends reality and fiction in pointing to the possibility that the story the ape observes Sally Klee writing is the story which the reader is reading. "Only on the last page did I discover that the story I was reading was actually the one the woman was writing. The ape doesn't exist, it's a spectre, the creature of her fretful

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[108] Analysing *Sweet Tooth*, I came across a contentual change when comparing three editions of *Sweet Tooth*. Primarily, I was working with the Cape hardback edition (2012). In the Cape e-book edition (2012), two more sentences were added to Tom Haley's letter between "sweet protective instincts" and "To recreate you" (ST 318): "Living inside you, I saw myself clearly: my material greed and status hunger, my single-mindedness bordering on autism. Above all, my vanity – why else make you linger interminably over my stories, why else italicize my favourite phrases?" (ST 2012 n.pag.) In the Vintage paperback edition (2013), the two sentences read yet differently: "Living inside you, I saw myself clearly: my material greed and status hunger, my single-mindedness bordering on autism. *Then my ludicrous vanity, sexual, sartorial, above all aesthetic* – why else make you linger interminably over my stories, why else italicize my favourite phrases?" (ST 2013 369; emphasis added). On the one hand, the additional sentences included in the Cape e-book edition and, in particular, the changes made to these additional sentences in the Vintage paperback edition, changes by which Tom Haley's vanities are explicitly listed, highlight that the dialogical imagination of the other might better the self if the self thereby recognises its monological habits. On the other hand, the additional sentences emphasise that McEwan's short stories are rewritten twice: by Tom Haley writing them and by Serena reading them. Dobrogoszcz, involving with the Vintage paperback edition, concludes that "McEwan structures the dialogic dynamic between Serena and Tom, which produces the double narratorial voice of *Sweet Tooth*, in such a way as to present the collaborative task of the reader of a literary work" (198) and suggests that "the most basic level on which this measure functions is by engaging Serena in the process of an interpretative reading of Tom's short stories" (198). Indeed, the emphasis Tom Haley puts on the italicising of his favourite phrases is telling: it explicates the difference between direct quotations from Tom Haley's short stories (in italics) and Serena's paraphrases (not in italics). Or rather, considering the meta-fictional structure of *Sweet Tooth*, it explicates the difference between direct quotations from Tom Haley's short stories and Tom Haley's dialogical imagination of Serena's reading process. Strikingly, when reading *Sweet Tooth* a first time, this difference is unknown to McEwan's readers who cannot know but merely guess a difference between italicised and non-italicised sentences in Serena's narration; thus Tom Haley's sentences and Serena's interpretative paraphrases of Tom Haley's sentences blend into a different version of Tom Haley's short stories and yet a different version of McEwan's short stories: writing and reading are not only shown to be a collaborative task but a *collaborative production* in which origin is lost.

imagination" (ST 193). Serena's immediate response is complete denial: "*No*. And no again. Not that" (ST 193). Not unlike those who feel betrayed by the meta-fictional twist of *Atonement*, Serena feels deceived when she is confronted with an ontological collapse and the author's breach of contract (ST 193). Childs comprehensively observes, however, that "in *Sweet Tooth* such an unwritten contract between reader and writer is no more inviolable than the mutual trust between Serena and Tom" (Marble 142). He reasons that "in this deceptive novel of surfaces and distorted reflections, we are simply left to calculate the probability of the pattern in the carpet being woven by the writer or simply (mis)perceived there by McEwan's target: the reader" (Marble 143). However, while McEwan does target the reader in form of Serena, the narrated I, who demands the authorial responsibility of monologue and its readerly consumption (ST 105), McEwan, opting for "investigation or free inquiry" (interv. with Gonzáles 59), does not leave his readers to calculate but offers them the *writerly* responsibility of dialogical production.

Chalupský argues that "by accepting Tom's proposal" (111), Serena, the reader, "gains the man she loves" and "allows her wish to make her life a fiction come true" (111). However, the end of *Sweet Tooth* is more complex and more intertextual in output than this statement might suggest. **The last sentence of *Sweet Tooth* implies the fundament of a "dialogical" happy ending: the writer offers and encourages dialogical involvement and the reader continues dialogue in critically engaging with the writer's (literary) text.** Assenting to make Tom's letter the final chapter of *Sweet Tooth*, Serena actively agrees to becoming the protagonist of a novel she once would have despised reading (as much as she would have despised reading McEwan's *Atonement*) – a narrative in which the ground is removed under its readers' feet by a meta-textual twist (ST 193). Challenged and encouraged by Tom, Serena enters into a new contract between writer and reader, a *contract of rewriting*. Reading the last chapter of *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan's readers are equally left challenged and encouraged: only on the last page do they discover that the novel Tom Haley *and* Serena Frome have rewritten is the novel they have just been reading. If their response to this meta-textual twist, maybe for reading *Sweet Tooth*, differs from Serena's complete denial, dialogical involvement is happening.

In the context of Barthesian intertextual theory, *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* are de-finalised in the conciliatory prospect of writing productivity. Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, adopt several of Barthes's ideas into the development of their protagonists and those characters they are facing to encourage their readers' dialogical involvement with their literary texts.

Briony Tallis, by doubling the library into both a place of monological authority and dialogical ambivalence, explores Barthes's theory of work and Text and mediates both the author's power and the reader's ultimate power to monologise or dialogise the literary text. Both Briony and Emily bind the literary text to avoid its anti-institutional and destabilising potential. However, in Cecilia and Robbie's sexual intercourse, Briony Tallis mediates individual subjectivity as a readerly text of writerly potential and emphasises the necessity to appreciate individual subjectivity while liberating the individual subject from its historically and socially pre-conceived structures. Emily's and Briony's narrow approach to the literary text is rewritten in the complex intertext of Cecilia and Robbie's de-authorised relationship.

Tom Haley, using a first-person narrative which introduces Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, constructs a protagonist that is first impeded by the monological structures of the authoritative word of ideological discourse but gradually grasps the process of invention in which textual elements and structures are re-arranged within the *texte général*. When Serena, the narrated I, slowly realises the inadequacy of her fast-reading which readerly consumes plot and character and the inadequacy of those monological contents controlling her individual subjectivity, Tom Haley's readers meet a protagonist who has – in front of their reading eyes – developed the potential of becoming an individual subject of dialogical productivity. Reading Tom's novel and letter, Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I, meet; in the end, Serena dares the uncertainty of the writerly to maintain her relationship with Tom, and Serena Frome and Tom Haley rewrite *Sweet Tooth* in a process of dialogising productivity.

Throughout *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley welcome their readers into dialogically de-finalising a literary text. A specific possibility to unbind language and individual subjectivity from ideological determination is exemplified in the phrase *I love you*. Both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley focus on this phrase, which can bind if monologically spoken and unbind if dialogically proffered, within the context of Barthes's lover's discourse and hence raise awareness of the ideological occupation of language and the individual subject's possibilities to counter such appropriation.

Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Serena undergo a development from monological to dialogical subjectivity when their writing and reading is gradually dialogised in intertextual processes. Hence Briony Tallis, the dying writer, alters historical facts and constructs Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending to encourage her readers' productive and dialogical continuation of her final draft. If her readers enter dialogical

processes when reading her novel, she will successfully atone for her crime of monologically appropriating Cecilia and Robbie. Serena Frome, joining Tom Haley in rewriting *Sweet Tooth*, dares writing a novel she once would have despised reading and thus welcomes her readers' dialogical productivity.

In the course of writing, the writing subject is de-personalised and discursively inscribed in the textual construction of its literary characters; while this process, according to Kristevan and Barthesian intertextual theory, occurs either way – consciously or unconsciously, McEwan inscribes himself by including his literary approach of free inquiry into Briony Tallis and elements of his biography into Tom Haley. By rewriting several of his short stories, originally published in *In between the Sheets*, in the context of *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan's readers witness the process of rewriting which allows for the free inquiry encouraged by both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley. Emancipating their readers within readerly texts of writerly potential, McEwan and his acting writers, analysed as Barthesian paper authors waiting to be rewritten, cede interpretive power, cede persuasion and prepare their readers to de-finalise their narratives and thereby to enter into the redeeming process of dialogical thought and action. McEwan further inspires these processes in using Genette's concepts of *paratextuality* and *metatextuality* to defy authorised meaning and monological reading practice.

3.5   Genette's Paratext and Metatext

Genette's theory of transtextuality is a "more circumscribed […] rendition of intertextuality" (Allen, Intertextuality 92) and was first introduced in *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (1982). According to Genette's structuralist approach, literary texts "are not original, unique, unitary wholes, but particular articulations (selections and combinations) of an enclosed system" (Allen, Intertextuality 93).[109] Within this system, Genette distinguishes five forms of transtextual relationships: (a) intertextuality, (b) paratextuality, (c) metatextuality, (d) architextuality and (e) hypertextuality. Although Genette emphasises that these five types of transtextuality can hardly be examined independently (16-17), this textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* will focus on

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[109] Despite his structuralist approach, Genette does not seek to close the literary text. His open structuralism is "a poetics which gives up on the idea of establishing a stable, ahistorical, irrefutable map or division of literary elements, but which instead studies the relationships (sometimes fluid, never unchanging) which link the text with the architextual network out of which it produces its meaning" (Allen, Intertextuality 97). Therefore, to some literary critics, Genette's "more circumscribed" approach to intertextuality still stops short of reducing poststructuralist plurality (Pfister, Intertextualität 17).

paratextuality and *metatextuality*. It will be proposed that McEwan's autographic peritexts to *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* – the quote from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and the quote from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* – introduce the subject of spying into a rereading of *Atonement* in the context of *Sweet Tooth* (3.5.1 McEwan's Paratextuality). Furthermore, it shall be suggested that *Sweet Tooth* is a metatext – a commentary – on monological reading approaches to *Atonement* (3.5.2 McEwan's Metatextuality).

3.5.1   McEwan's Paratextuality

Genette adopts Kristeva's term *intertextuality* to indicate the concrete presence of one text in a second text (8). Genette's concept of intertextuality, in contrast to the Kristevan and Barthesian concept, involves an author / a writer who consciously and thus intentionally quotes, alludes or plagiarises a pre-existing text (8). Intention is equally relevant to Genette's second type of transtextuality: *paratextuality*. *Paratexts* are those elements of a (literary) text which bind the text and direct its reading (10): titles and subtitles, prefaces and postfaces, forewords and afterwords or any kind of note, illustration, blurb or cover (10). *Autographic paratexts* are those added by the author / writer, *allographic paratexts* are those added by other persons (e.g. editors). Paratexts are divided into *peritexts* (texts within the book, e.g. prefaces) and *epitexts* (texts outside the book, e.g. interviews). According to Genette, it is impossible to avoid the prominence of peritexts within a publication (10). Due to its prominence, a peritext has a huge influence on the reception and interpretation of a (literary) text (cf. the Vintage cover of *In between the Sheets* showing rumpled linen and thus clearly emphasising only one signified of the signifier *sheet*). Limiting and controlling signifying processes, monological structure and ideological content are reinforced in the peritext when the reader is instructed "how to read the text properly" (Allen, Intertextuality 103). However, McEwan's autographic peritexts work differently – they unbind his novels.

In *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, autographic peritexts encourage the reader's dialogical involvement with the literary text. On the one hand, they are omitted (neither the chapters in *Atonement* nor the chapters in *Sweet Tooth* have contentual headings which might influence the reader's reading); on the other hand, they are particularly inserted to emphatically deny one correct and authorised reading. *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* are both preceded by quotations which evolve around the subject of judgement.

Atonement is preceded by Henry Tilney's reprimand of Catherine Morland's stereotyping imagination which is influenced by her readerly consumption of Gothic novels.

Usually, this peritext is interpreted to be a warning of not confusing reality and fiction (e.g. Finney, Oblivion 70 and Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 111). However, although Henry criticises Catherine's stereotypical reading of General Tilney, he does not criticise ideological structure itself: "Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English: that we are Christians" (A n.pag.). Determined by powerful institutionalised discourse (Englishness and Christianity), he denies the possibility of his father's villainy: instead of raising Catherine's awareness of the monological structure and content underlying a stereotype, he corrects her imaginatively wrong judgement of his father into his socially right judgement. He applies the distinction of right versus wrong and good versus evil which is specified by those institutions which succeed in maintaining (in contrast to revolutionary France) a civil society: English government, Anglican church, educational and legal system. Tellingly, within Henry's argument only educated men and women are prepared to defy criminal activity: "Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive them?" (A n.pag.) Internalising and upholding the institutional, not only Catherine's accusation of General Tilney but also Henry's refutation is monological in input and output. Hence Ángeles de la Concha, analysing the warning against distortion mediated in the peritext, concludes that "McEwan's novel ironically subverts" Henry's trust in institutional structure: "education, social and literary intercourse and law actually play an important part in distorting the process of cognition and attribution of meaning" (199; also Birke 175). Indeed, Henry's uncritical approach to institutionally structured society resembles those approaches which dictate Robbie's sentence: more dangerous to the norm since more educated, the lower class is still discursively determined to be the origin of crime and needs to be locked away to protect upper-class Englishness from uncivil influence (cf. the thought and action of Emily and the police). Hence the quote from *Northanger Abbey* is not only a warning to distinguish between the imagined and the real; reread in the context of *Atonement*, it is a warning that the imagined *and* the social real which is developed within ideological structure and content is (purposefully) simplifying, misleading and even destructive.

Simplification within monological judgement is explicated in the quote from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* which is preceding **Sweet Tooth**: "if only I had met, on this search, a single clearly evil person" (ST n.pag.). The peritext to *Sweet Tooth* suggests the ambivalence of good and evil and the vain attempt to categorise the individual subject – even within a world of secret agency which both *The File* and *Sweet Tooth* explore. However, this peritext equally suggests the individual subject's longing for the clearly definable, which both Serena, the narrated I, and Briony feel: *if only*. Simplified life is less complicated. Indeed, Jane Austen's

narrator sarcastically concludes that life will run smoothly for unaware Henry and Catherine who "begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen" (Northanger Abbey 236). Hence the peritexts to *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* link both novels in the subject of judgement. They caution McEwan's readers not to indulge the monological which is institutionally anchored in society.

Furthermore, the peritext to *Atonement* reread within (the peritext to) *Sweet Tooth* suggests that both *Sweet Tooth* and *Atonement* share an architext[110] – the spy novel. ***Sweet Tooth* and *Atonement* are linked within their autographic peritexts which propose a common subject: spying.** *Sweet Tooth*, evolving around Serena Frome, a secret agent of MI5, is a spy novel; even if McEwan's readers have missed to read the blurb, the quote preceding the narrative, taken from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File*, unmistakably (according to common genre distinction) points to the genre of spy fiction.[111] Remarkably, however, not only the quote from *The File* but also Henry's reprimand of Catherine introduces the subject of spying. "Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open?" (A n.pag.) On the one hand, Henry's argument might suggest social criticism: neighbours are rather keen to invade into the private sphere of their neighbours; on the other hand, however, his argument suggests that the neighbourhood becomes the long arm of the law: more spying, less secrets, less crime. This thought does not contemplate the possibility that neighbours falsely accuse neighbours by monologically reading an encounter by a fountain or a private letter. Briony is the spy Henry has in mind: she watches Cecilia and Robbie and secretly reads Robbie's letter to gain intelligence. However, Briony's act of spying and its consequences satirise Henry's argument and uncritical trust into the institutions of society. In the process of spying, Briony constructs a crime which does not only facilitate her crime but, giving Henry's argument the final blow, covers Paul Marshall's crime; furthermore, neither does the law protect Robbie, nor do newspapers reveal his innocence. Neither institution – law, neighbourhood, newspaper – can reveal *the* truth, they are only capable of constructing *a* truth; hence, unsurprisingly, within

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[110] Architextuality establishes / explores generic relations (Genette 7).

[111] I will refrain from listing each element in content and form which allows *Sweet Tooth* to be categorised as spy fiction. Read Chalupský's article for an extensive listing in comparison to *The Innocent* (103-06) and his conclusion that "combining a Cold War spy thriller and a romance, the novel by far transcends the limits of either of these genres" (103).

Atonement and *Sweet Tooth* the process of spying is closely related to the processes of writing and reading.

In both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the process of writing is closely related to the process of spying. Tom argues that successful espionage arises from successful storytelling: "Mincemeat succeeded because invention, the imagination, drove the intelligence" (ST 318). Operation Mincemeat was a disinformation strategy in the Second World War: British intelligence dressed a dead homeless into British military uniform, placed disinformation on him and left him to be found by the Spanish who forwarded the disinformation to the Germans (ST 317-18). A reality is a narrative construct (the real is interpreted); those who are aware that a reality is a narrative construct can (monologically or dialogically) manipulate this construct in understanding and adjusting its narrative structure and content: "my theory is that what produced its particular brilliance and success was the manner of its *inception*" (ST 317; emphasis added). Tom is impressed by how artfully / cunningly the story of the dead officer was *implanted* into the storyline of German military command (ST 317-18). In this narrative process, the invention and inception of disinformation gave British military intelligence an important advantage (German troops were re-stationed). In contrast, Operation Sweet Tooth "reversed the process and failed because intelligence tried to interfere with invention" (ST 318). Serena's superiors aim at disinforming the British public of the simplified approach that capitalism is superior to communism. However, instead of writing themselves into a storyline, they want to impose on the written: they want to control the publication, circulation and reception of "an Atlanticist at heart" (ST 96) – hoping that his (literary) texts are publicly interpreted according to their ideological discourse (ST 96-97). Consequently, they are rather displeased with Serena for having approved of Tom (ST 268): Tom is not an author but a writer who wants his readers to critically think and is, therefore, useless for the purpose of propaganda; indeed, his novel, funded by the Secret Service, does not even implicitly circulate the required ideological content (ST 222). Furthermore, without an in-depth inception preparing a specific interpretation within the narrative construct of the target person or group, interpretation is hardly controllable: even Serena, despite her discursive determination which is in line with those of Nutting and his colleagues, does not succeed in ideologically pinpointing Tom and his (literary) texts (ST 138). Hence, considering Tom's idea of inception, Briony's act of spying is successful only because her interpretation of Robbie – her reality – meets the narrative construct and storyline of her parents' and the authority's reality; therefore, her narrative is easily incepted, adopted and promoted.

According to McEwan, "all novels are spy novels, because the author is always withholding information and controlling the flow of it" (interv. with Bigsby 237). Considering this statement and **reading *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, a reader might conclude that spying is a monological (writing) process aiming at manipulating individual or collective subjects into a specific interpretation of the real.** Booth, for example, argues that fiction "is revealed to be a distorted close-up, compacted with the pleasures of surveillance" (862). Within her reading, the writer is a spy that cannot be trusted (863), and both writer and reader are "implicated in the patterns of blindness, deception and tendentious pleasure that structure the production and reception of narrative art" since neither writer nor reader can transcend their "painfully restricted points of view" (863). However, withholding information and controlling its flow must not necessarily aim at monological manipulation; it might also induce dialogical engagement when, for instance, a withheld information is belatedly given and thus initiates a rereading of the previously known (cf. the diverging perspectives on the incidences by the fountain and in the library). Indeed, each individual (writing / reading) subject is situated in history and society and hence restricted in its (writing / reading) viewpoint. And yet, each individual (writing / reading) subject has the potential of becoming aware of their discursive and ideological determination and counter such monological determination in ongoing dialogue. Indeed, in the context of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, writing / spying and reading / spying is ambivalently rewritten into a process which is meant to encourage and practice dialogue.

In both *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the processes of writing *and* reading are closely related to the dialogical and hence emancipating process of spying. In his letter, Tom frankly admits that he has closely observed his and Serena's sexual intercourse to report on their intimate moment: "it multiplied my pleasures, to know that I could retreat to the typewriter to describe the moment, from your point of view" (ST 310). However, while Briony's spying on Cecilia and Robbie, lacking any change of perspective, remains a monological action, Tom's spying is dialogised when he does not only report on Serena from his perspective but imagines their sexual intercourse and himself during this sexual intercourse from Serena's perspective (ST 310) – in this case, his imagination drives his personal intelligence since his change of perspective offers himself new insights into himself: "your understanding, your version, of me" (ST 310). Most remarkably, however, in *Sweet Tooth*, not only the process of writing but also the process of reading is aligned with spying. Serena and Tom's first sexual intercourse is awkward (ST 174): "we were aware of the expectations of an *unseen audience*" (ST 174; emphasis added). On the one hand, this unseen audience is quite

concrete in Serena's housemates (ST 174); on the other hand, this unseen audience involves Serena Frome and Tom Haley's and thus McEwan's readers who are watching Serena and Tom's sexual intercourse. Each reader turns spy when the reader watches and, especially, when the reader watches an intimate moment. While sexual intercourse is an intimate moment, a thought process is even more intimate and, indeed, secret. And since each literary text shows or mediates thought processes, each literary text is a double act of spying: (a) an act of spying by the *author* who tries to monologically manipulate the narrative construct of the reader's reality in promoting ideological thought processes *and* an act of spying by the reader who watches and who accepts or dialogises such manipulation; or (b) an act of spying by the *writer* who tries to dialogise the narrative construct of the reader's reality in examining monological and dialogical thought processes *and* an act of spying by the reader who watches and who welcomes or monologises such encouragement. In *Sweet Tooth*, Tom Haley, in his function of acting writer for McEwan, facilitates his reader to spy the spy in the internal dialogue between Serena, the narrated I, and Serena, the narrating I. In *Atonement*, Briony Tallis, in her function of acting writer for McEwan, facilitates her reader to spy the spy and thus the destructive power of a monologised and monologising mind which slowly admits and appreciates the dialogical.

McEwan's acting writers are double agents working ambivalently against themselves and for themselves; in readerly representing and disclosing their involvement with the monological, they can writerly emancipate their readers in showing and mediating how to defy ideological structures and contents in shared signifying processes. Furthermore, McEwan, constructing two acting writers who aim at emancipating their readers, facilitates his readers to spy the intimate processes of monological authoring and dialogical writing. Spying is thus rewritten: while spying is usually monologically perceived in the context of intelligence, spying in the processes of writing and reading ambivalently turns into a possibility to defy monologue. Thus two autographic peritexts, apparently unrelated, do not only allow *Atonement* to be reread within the entirely different discourse of spy fiction but suggest that spying, in the processes of writing and reading, can be rewritten into encouraging dialogue when control of and responsibility for the narrative is shared between writer and reader. While a reading of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* in the context of spy fiction cannot be architextually pursued at this

point, it would be a worthwhile research approach to consider how *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* rethink *spying* and thus rewrite the genre of spy fiction.[112]

3.5.2   McEwan's Metatextuality

Metatextuality is the relationship of one text to another in form of commentary (Genette 11). The most common form of metatextuality is the practice of review or literary criticism. **In *Sweet Tooth*, Serena's changing opinion on Tom's novel *From the Somerset Levels* illustrates how metatextuality can influence an individual subject's reading.** Initially, Serena, the narrated I, dislikes Tom's novel (cf. the textual analysis of 3.4.2 Serena and Tom); however, most public reviews praise his novel and he is awarded the Austen Prize (ST 273). Influenced by the novel's positive public reception, Serena, to whom the novel is also dedicated (ST 273), "re-views" her negative judgement. "I took the book, *my* book, from my bag and read random pages and, of course, began to see them through different eyes. Such was the power of this assured consensus that *The Levels* did look different, more confident of its terms, its destination, and rhythmically hypnotic" (ST 274). Attributing knowledge and power to public authorities on literature, Serena's judgement is changed by their authoritative word, their "assured consensus" (ST 274). Retrospectively, Serena, the narrating I, is resigned and cutting in her judgement: "of course" she changed her opinion because institutionalised readers enjoyed reading *From the Somerset Levels* (ST 274); her reading, monological in development and outcome, turned from thinking Tom's novel "insincere" (dislike) to thinking it "majestic" (like) without considering the varieties in-between or detailing the opinions expressed in the public consensus. Serena, the narrated I, is entirely unaware of how a discourse is circulated in society and hence she is unable to dialogically assess the primary and secondary literature she reads. Unfortunately, she is not an individual, not even an invented case.

McEwan's *Atonement* has produced a considerable amount of strong emotional reaction: "in teaching the novel, I have learned that flesh-and-blood readers are often sharply divided in their ethical and aesthetic judgements of McEwan's performance, especially in the ending, with some finding it to be brilliant and admirable and others finding it to be a cheap trick or cheat, one that delights in unfairly jerking its audience around" (Phelan, Experiencing

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[112] It would equally be worthwhile to include the following of McEwan's novels into this research approach: *The Innocent* (1990), in which Leonard, involved into the world of Cold War Berlin, learns to spy himself; and *Nutshell* (2016), in which an unborn child spies his mother and those she is in contact with.

Fiction 109-10).[113] Phelan suggests that "the divide among readers is an inevitable consequence of McEwan's admirable effort to offer both a deeply compelling experience of the mimetic and a meta-level meditation on the powers of fiction" (Experiencing Fiction 130). Within Finney's comparative reading of reviews (Oblivion 69-70), Phelan's assumption is corroborated. According to Finney, those readers "lulled […] into the security associated with the classic realist novel" criticise McEwan for "failing to live up to the realist expectations that he has aroused during the first half of the book" (Oblivion 70; also Marcus 94). Margaret Boerner's review of *Atonement* – "A Bad End" – exemplifies such response; she considers McEwan's ending "wrong--very wrong" (n.pag.). Remarkably, her reading offers significant similarities to Serena's monological "*No*. And no again" (ST 193). Both signifieds – *wrong* and *no* – are emphatically repeated and, in Serena's and Boerner's context, signify aversion to any dialogical involvement with the literary text in question.

Boerner's strongly emotional review, particularly read in comparison to Serena's imperious reading practice, exemplifies monological thought. Boerner argues that "London, 1999" demonstrates "the author's failure to come up with a real conclusion" (n.pag.); she claims that McEwan's meta-fictional twist "dissipates instantly all the plot tension and good will built up in the reader" (n.pag.). Both Serena, the narrated I, and Boerner demand a contract of mutual trust between author and reader which originates in traditional storytelling; indeed, at first sight, it is impossible to tell whether the following argument is an argument of Serena or Boerner: "Fiction *ordinarily* presents us with a world in which everything is meaningful. A wound, a rape, a beggar: Anything depicted becomes relevant to a vision of the novel's world" (Boerner n.pag.; emphasis added). Based on this logic of the narrative, Boerner argues that "endings are not really surprises" but "inevitable" since "endings are *ordinarily* a product of the world presented in a novel and the protagonist's character acting on that world" (n.pag.; emphasis added). Insisting on this *ordinary* and thoroughly monological approach to the literary text, she accuses McEwan of having written an arbitrary ending (n.pag.), one which does not evolve from the plot but, borrowing Serena's phrasing (ST 193), shakes the ground beneath a reader's feet. A comparison of Boerner's response to *Atonement* with Serena's response to Tom's version of "Reflections of a Kept Ape" is telling.

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[113] In winter semester 2011/12, I equally had the pleasure of teaching *Atonement*. The meta-fictional twist was strongly and emotionally discussed; while my students did not disagree on the literary artistry of the novel and its ontological twist, they did disagree on the emotions provoked by it.

> But then McEwan unexpectedly converts the story of Cecilia's and Robbie's later years into a novel that Briony is writing and rewriting. (Boerner n.pag.)

> *and*

> Only on the last page did I discover that the story I was reading was actually the one the woman was writing. (ST 193)

Both Serena and Boerner do not expect the meta-fictional twist and are surprised when the writership of Briony Tallis respectively Sally Klee is "suddenly" revealed. While the meta-fictional twist invites the dialogical reader into rereading and analysing the rhetorical finesse of the narrative's ambivalence (Phelan, Experiencing Fiction 110), monologically minded readers dismiss the narrative as "wrong--very wrong" (Boerner n.pag.). Both Boerner and Serena are not "impressed by those writers […] [infiltrating] their own pages as part of the cast" (ST 66). They clearly distinguish between fiction and reality which, according to Serena, only writers are ever in danger of confusing (ST 66).

> Although everything in the second part of *Atonement* is presented as though it happens on the same plane of reality as what happened in the first part, Briony tells us on the next-to-the-last page of the novel that [she has invented Cecilia and Robbie's happy ending]. […] McEwan destroys the structure he has set up and tells us it was all fiction. But we knew it was fiction. That is why we were reading it: to enter a world in which things are worked out, however severe the working out may be. (Boerner n.pag.)

> *and*

> No single element of an imagined world or any of its characters should be allowed to dissolve on authorial whim. The invented had to be as solid and as self-consistent as the actual. (ST 193)

According to Boerner, fiction must not only imitate but adjust reality; hence she and Serena, the narrated I, share the ideal author: Briony. In the logic of the narrative, which is "solid" and "self-consistent" (ST 193), the plot is reasoned and comprehensible – always worked out; in fiction, the reader can escape the inconsistency of reality and, therefore, a writer must not indulge in "authorial whim" (ST 193) but remain within the logic of the narrative and "on the same plane of reality" (Boerner n.pag).

Considering her approach, Boerner, unsurprisingly, dismisses "London, 1999" – instead of working out and finalising the plot, instead of binding the novel, Briony Tallis's writing process and her writerly reflections are explicated, and McEwan's readers are invited into

rereading the novel. However, unable to welcome the possibility of a rereading, Boerner concludes that McEwan's attempt to sell Parts One to Three "as an aspect of the creation engaged in by the writer Briony is completely unsuccessful" (n.pag.). She misses or ignores that the reader of *Atonement* is (more or less) implicitly but carefully prepared for exactly this ending (cf. the textual analysis of 3.4.4.1 Briony Tallis) and simply argues that the novel is an inconsequence (n.pag.) and thus "a straight-faced and increasingly discomfiting manipulation of a *victim* (in this case, the reader)" (n.pag.; emphasis added). Both Serena, the narrated I, and Boerner feel betrayed by the experimental writer who seems to create a world of meaningful and self-consistent logic only to "cross and recross in disguise the borders of the imaginary" (ST 66) and thus to destroy the world and its logic: "no room in the books I liked for the double agent" (ST 66). In consequence, **the comparison of Boerner's review to Serena's reading practice suggests that *Sweet Tooth* is a metatext on monological reading approaches to *Atonement*: within Serena, the narrated I, it comments and criticises a monologically structured reading practice as exemplified in Boerner's review.** Serena, however, slowly realising the destructive within monological consumption and involving with a writer who intents his readers' dialogical involvement, finally dares the productivity of the writerly. Indeed, the writerly in the readerly requires the double agent to unmask the ideological determination of the individual subject in the familiar and thus to raise the individual subject's awareness not only of ideological structure and content but for the responsibility to fight both. Consequently, McEwan's readers are not victimised. A victim is an individual subject which suffers from a deceiving and destructive action. *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, in contrast, both provide a (structural) setting which allows the individual subject's emancipation from the most deceiving and destructive action: ideological determination. Tellingly, however, Boerner's readers are victimised. Although having just read *Atonement*, she commits Briony's crime and attempts to determine her readers' minds: her collective usage of the pronoun *we*, monologically assuming that all readers share her monological and monologising approach to the literary text, generalises and simplifies and aims at preventing contradiction.

Attempting to counteract monological reading approaches as phrased and exemplified in Boerner's review of *Atonement*, *Sweet Tooth* mediates the thoughts and actions of a reader who favours the authoritative word of ideology but who repeatedly and severely suffers from her involvement with ideological thought and institution; paradoxically and hence thought-provokingly, only by entering a contract of rewriting, she can maintain order in saving her relationship with a writer. Accordingly, ***Sweet Tooth* is not only a metatext on those reviews which monologically dismissed *Atonement*; *Sweet Tooth* is equally an explicating comment**

on *Atonement* itself. *Atonement* implicitly invites McEwan's readers to reread *Atonement*; *Sweet Tooth* explicitly invites Serena and thus McEwan's readers to reread *Sweet Tooth* and, furthermore, mediates why it is necessary to reread: the contract of rewriting is the only possibility for both writer and reader to defy the authoritative word of ideology. Hence in *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan evokes the structure of *Atonement* in his meta-fictional twist; more explicitly than in *Atonement*, however, he hands over responsibility to his readers: "it's up to you" (ST 320). While Boerner criticises McEwan for "abjuring all responsibility" (n.pag.), McEwan actually reinterprets the care and mercy Serena demands of the author (Walker 504). McEwan emancipates his readers in ceding authorial responsibility for writerly responsibility. Only if writer *and* reader devote themselves to thinking and encouraging dialogue, a shared signifying process might successfully defy ideological determination.

Applying Genette's concept of paratextuality to *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, the autographic peritext to *Atonement* (Henry Tilney's reprimand of Catherine Morland) and the autographic peritext to *Sweet Tooth* (an excerpt from Timothy Garton Ash's *The File* which emphasises the impossibility to judge) unbind the literary text instead of binding it when the subject of spying is highlighted in both novels. Catherine's and Henry's monologically judgemental approaches to the real, the former's influenced by her readerly consumption and the latter's originating in his institutionalised trust, are severely criticised; an act of spying, in contrast to Henry's argument, facilitates crime instead of preventing it: watching Cecilia and Robbie by the fountain and reading Robbie's letter, Briony constructs a crime, commits a crime and covers a crime. However, in McEwan's novels the process of spying is interrelated with the processes of writing and reading; indeed, the act of spying, usually aiming at monological determination in the context of intelligence, a context Briony, Serena and Tom finally dialogise, is ambivalently doubled into the monological manipulation of the individual subject *and* its dialogical emancipation – if the reader, spying the intimate thought of the (writing and reading) character, is encouraged into defying ideological and destructive thought.

Applying Genette's concept of metatextuality, *Sweet Tooth* is read to be a critical comment on monological reading approaches to *Atonement*. In mediating the destructive consequences of Serena's ideologically determined thoughts and actions, reading approaches which defy any dialogical involvement with the literary text are implicitly but severely criticised. Furthermore, considering *Sweet Tooth* an explicating comment on *Atonement*, the writerly of the meta-fictional twist of *Atonement* is explicated in *Sweet Tooth*: dialogically defying monological structures and contents is both the writer's and the reader's responsibility.

4 Redeeming Dialogue of Dialogical Double Agency

D'Angelo, in her reading of *Atonement*, concludes that a reader, "faced with a multiplicity of interpretations" (91), must take a stance toward the text in committing to one interpretation and "defend and define that interpretation from the attack of others" (91). Reading this, let me rewrite Serena's monological denial into a dialogical challenge: *No*. And no again. A reader must take a stance not in insisting on a highly individual reading; a reader must take a stance in unbinding her reading and in developing her reading in daring multiplicity and criticism. Had I been committed to my interpretation of *Atonement* as presented in my Magisterarbeit, I would have been unable to write my textual analysis as offered in my dissertation. In 2008, I submitted a reading in which Briony Tallis's biological death was interpreted to symbolise the death of the author; and I argued that her death was necessary to finally liberate her readers from her authorial power. While this interpretation was perfectly "valid" within my discursive construction of 2008, a different reading of "London, 1999" has discursively and intertextually arisen in the years to follow: rereading *Atonement* in the context of *Sweet Tooth* inspired me to analyse Briony Tallis and Tom Haley in the function of acting writers for McEwan who encourage their readers into dialogical thought and action. In this reading, Briony Tallis's readers must not be liberated from her authorial power; instead, Briony Tallis writerly liberates her readers.

By means of the meta-fictional structure of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, McEwan introduces a writer who is constantly commenting on her writing and a reader who is constantly commenting on her reading. He investigates monological and dialogical writing and reading processes and intertextually explores the destructive consequences of monologue and the great redeeming quality of dialogue within the individual subject. Instead of confronting a writing and a reading subject within one novel, McEwan waited eleven years to confront them in the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*; when Briony is read as Serena's ideal author and Serena as Briony's ideal reader, Briony and Serena writerly meet between the(ir) texts. Thus McEwan involves his readers – including me – into the difficult task of daring dialogue. Writing *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, these spaces of "expressive freedom" in which "the clamorous democracy" of the novel takes its stance against "a total system" in which the individual subject is monologically situated (PMA xi and xviii), I trust in "human possibility" (PMA xi).

In my (inter)textual analysis of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, I focused on how **McEwan elucidates monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader; indeed,** I focused on how **McEwan,**

introducing a meta-level within his novels, writes two *acting writers*, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, who elucidate monological and dialogical writing and reading processes in writing two female protagonists: Briony, a writer and Serena, a reader. Each acting writer writes a readerly text of writerly potential when each acting writer traditionally represents the individual subject in its discursively determined setting only to undermine its ideological thought and action within this setting. Briony Tallis chooses an omniscient narrator which implicitly and explicitly criticises Briony's monological and monologising approach to the fictional and the real. Tom Haley chooses a first-person narrative situation in which Serena, the narrating I, is dialogically constructed to severely criticise Serena, the narrated I, and her fast-reading which denies any dialogical approach to the fictional and the real. Intending to mediate the destructive consequences of monologue and the challenging but redeeming possibilities of dialogue, **McEwan's acting writers,** familiar with intertextual theory and sharing McEwan's dialogical approach to the literary text, **focus on their respective protagonist's development from monological to dialogical subjectivity by personalising the development of intertextuality and its advancement of dialogue and dialogical subjectivity within her literary development.** In consequence, I discussed how, confronting both dialogue and monologue in their relationships and environments, **Briony and Serena, in comparison to those who share part of their social and historical situatedness, initially deny but gradually attempt and succeed in dialogue and dialogical subjectivity when they unlock the critical potential of the intertextual process in dialogising the readerly and the writerly.**

Considering that each stage of intertextual theory is critically and dialogically involving with previous stages and that this engagement is included in Briony's and Serena's personal development, I chose to explore the various stages of development within Briony and Serena in chronological order. Hence I divided the textual analysis of chapter **3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality in *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*** into five chapters: chapter 3.1 Saussure's Value, chapter 3.2 Bakhtin's Word, chapter 3.3 Kristeva's Text, chapter 3.4 Barthes's Intertext and chapter 3.5 Genette's Paratext and Metatext. Since each chapter and subchapter is concluded by a detailed summary, I will refrain from again summarising each chapter and subchapter in detail but will only recall major ideas which will hopefully become the starting point for future discussions.

I preceded the textual analysis by chapter **2 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality** which contains a method of research, chapter 2.1 Method of Research, including an introduction into Bakhtinian dialogue and Barthesian myth (2.1.1 Dialogue), into monological and dialogical

individual subjectivity (2.1.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity) and into intertextual theory and its relevance for dialogical individual subjectivity (2.1.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality). It, furthermore, contains a state of research, chapter 2.2 State of Research, including an introduction into McEwan's dialogical approach to a literature of abeyance and ambivalence (2.2.1 Dialogue), into the monological and dialogical discussion of monological and dialogical individual subjectivity in McEwan's literature (2.2.2 Dialogue and Subjectivity) and into the discussion of intertextual theory in McEwan's writing (2.2.3 Dialogue, Subjectivity and Intertextuality). In the method and state of research, the theses which I discussed in the textual analysis were developed in dialogical engagement with the already-written – in the hope to contribute to a dialogue which, considering the current anti-dialogical developments in (political) society, is more relevant to be continued than ever before.

In chapter 3.1 Saussure's Value, I analysed how Briony Tallis (3.1.1 Briony) and Tom Haley (3.1.2 Serena), in their functions of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their protagonists in the Saussurean concepts of gap and value and the (post)Saussurean concepts of transcendental signified and readerly text. In the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Serena, the narrated I, is established as Briony's reading counterpart: considering the author the interpretive centre of the (literary) text and refraining from any textual analysis which might disintegrate the (linguistic) sign and admit ambivalence and dialogue, the latter is claiming readerly obedience, the former authorial guidance. However, both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley work against their protagonists' monological and monologising approaches. Personalising (post)Saussurean theory of the (linguistic) sign within their writing and reading protagonists, they protect their readers against authorial manipulation and emphasise the writer's *and* the reader's power and responsibility to unravel the (linguistic) sign and its ideological signification.

In chapter 3.2 Bakhtin's Word, I discussed how Briony Tallis (3.2.1 Briony / 3.2.2 Emily, Cecilia and Robbie) and Tom Haley (3.2.3 Serena), in their functions of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their characters in Bakhtin's handling of Saussurean *langue* and *parole*, in his ideas on the polyphonic novel and in his concept of externally authoritative (monological) and internally persuasive (dialogical) discourse. In the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Serena, the narrated I, encounter the ambivalence of life and consider (the value of) the polyphonic novel. Nevertheless, despite their first apprehension of complexity, they ignore abeyance and ambivalence to protect their monological and thus manageable approach to life and individual subjectivity. However, processing Bakhtinian concepts within their protagonists and those interacting with their protagonists, Briony Tallis

and Tom Haley mediate that disregarding ambivalence in the authoritative word of ideological discourse, which ignores the historical and social context of the speech act, is destructive – to the (individual) self and the (individual) other.

In chapter 3.3 Kristeva's Text, I analysed how Briony Tallis (3.3.1 Briony, Cecilia and Robbie) and Tom Haley (3.3.2 Serena and Tom), in their functions of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their protagonists in different aspects of Kristeva's intertextual theory – including the existential threat intertextuality involves (3.3.3 Robbie / 3.3.4 Tom). Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, Briony, facing the monologically destructive moment in the denotative and the objectified word and welcoming the dialogically liberating moment in the ambivalent word, develops towards the writerly responsibility of dialogue and stops being Serena's ideal author. Briony Tallis visualises the intertextual process within her leitmotif *Come back.* which continuously rewrites the relationship of Briony, Cecilia and Robbie and denies authorial and authoritative signification. Serena equally starts to grasp the impossibility of clearly defining authorial intention when necessarily slow-reading Tom's short stories. In mediating Briony's and Serena's handling of their writing and reading experiences, their uncertainty and helplessness, their anger and despair, but also their daring, Briony Tallis and Tom Haley encourage their readers to shake off the author's centralising and guiding function while always being aware of the difficulty the individual subject faces in questioning and undermining its historical and social situatedness.

In chapter 3.4 Barthes's Intertext, I discussed how Briony Tallis (3.4.1 Briony and Emily, Cecilia and Robbie) and Tom Haley (3.4.2 Serena and Tom), in their functions of acting writers for McEwan, contextualise their protagonists in the Barthesian concepts of work, Text and intertext and write readerly texts of writerly potential. The library is doubled into a space of monological work (Briony and Emily) and dialogical Text (Cecilia and Robbie) when individual subjectivity is rewritten into a readerly text of writerly potential which develops from the intertext and emphasises the individual subject's power to bind or unbind the literary text. Serena, the narrated I, switching her perspective from the reading to the writing process also realises the limitations of the finalised literary product. Hence Briony Tallis and Tom Haley both translate Barthes's lover's discourse, which is strongly influenced by the lover's semiotic background, into everyday language and situation to practically mediate the productivity of intertextual language in the phrase *I love you* (3.4.3 I love you). Considering the intertext of *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth*, both Briony and Serena undergo a development from monological to dialogical subjectivity when their writing and reading is gradually dialogised by intertextual processes. In the end, both Briony and Serena dare the uncertainty of the writerly in its readerly

form to atone for their monological approach to the real. Emancipating their readers within readerly texts of writerly potential which are de-finalised in a final draft, McEwan and his acting writers, all analysed as Barthesian *paper authors* waiting to be rewritten (3.4.4 Briony Tallis and Tom Haley), cede interpretive power and prepare their readers to de-finalise their narratives and thereby to enter into the redeeming process of dialogical thought and action.

In chapter 3.5 Genettes's Paratext and Metatext, *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* are analysed in the context of Genette's paratextuality and metatextuality. While the first concept allows both novels to be analysed in the context of spy fiction and the act of spying to be rewritten into a dialogical and dialogising process (3.5.1 McEwan's Paratextuality), the concept of metatextuality allows *Sweet Tooth* to be read as a critical comment on monological reading approaches to *Atonement* and an explicating comment on *Atonement* itself (3.5.2 McEwan's Metatextuality).

In McEwan's (literary) texts, monological reading approaches are the cause of destructive thoughts and actions which deny the individual self and other its complexity. Tom quotes Othello when feeling betrayed by Serena's monological double agency: "it is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" (ST 360). However, while the repetition of *it is the cause* can be read emphatic in the context of Othello's and Tom's anger and despair, it can equally be read as Tom's first step into dialogical double agency. The noun *cause* ambivalently shares its Latin origin with *ac-cuse* and *ex-cuse*. The novel Tom Haley has written from Serena's perspective will both *ac-cuse* and *ex-cuse* Serena's crime: "it is the cause [ac-cuse], it is the cause [ex-cuse]" (ST 306). Equally, Briony Tallis's novel will *ac-cuse* and *ex-cuse* Briony's crime. Both Serena and Briony have committed the crime of monologising the real. And both Briony Tallis and Tom Haley, in their function of acting writers for McEwan, have written narratives which ambivalently accuse the individual subject for its monological strive in structure and order and excuse the individual subject in pointing out the difficulty the individual subject faces in overcoming its monological construction. However, accusing and excusing without showing alternative actions is as destructive as monological action itself. Hence McEwan's acting writers do not only accuse and excuse – while they accuse and excuse the destructive consequences of monological thought and action, they equally show the individual subject narrative possibilities to protect itself from monological occupation. Both Briony (Tallis) and Serena (Frome) finally atone by encouraging their readers into redeeming dialogue.

Tellingly, the individual subject aiming at dialogue and ambivalence is always a double agent: placing itself in a system while undermining it. Indeed, while Serena, the narrated I,

denies the double agent any room in the novel, each (literary) text requires the double agent in both author and reader if it wants to become the fertile ground of redeeming dialogue. Briony Tallis and Tom Haley turn double agents when they undermine their narrative in the writerly of the readerly form. And in a writerly showdown which exposes his writerly strategy, McEwan turns double agent when he undermines his reader's expectations. "The past decade has seen a growing and overtly expressed uneasiness about McEwan's story-telling ethics, and especially his tendency to pull the rug from underneath the reader's feet by introducing narrative twists that upset established readerly expectations has raised concerns" (Groes, Mapping Newness 4). Departing from the argument of those literary scholars who express such uneasiness, I think that McEwan, the double agent who roams the realm of social and historical discourse to undermine the naturalising moment in the authoritative word of ideological discourse, the double agent who pulls the rug, acts thoroughly ethical.

And the literary scholar? Academic texts, following rules established by academic institutions, focus on the signified, on unambiguous statement and result, and are hence often monological and monologising. Tom, the academic, "had finished his thesis over the summer, had it especially bound in hard covers with gold embossed title" (ST 183). And, in line with academic standard, "it contained acknowledgements, abstract, footnotes, bibliography, index and four hundred pages of minute examination" (ST 183). Tom's dissertation, *bound* in hard cover and *titled* in gold, symbolises institutional significance (independent of the content) and institutional inviolability. Tom's dissertation, an academically sanctioned work presented in catalogue and library (Barthes, T 1212), functions like a (linguistic) sign: on the one hand, the signifier and, on the other hand, the signified, a definitive meaning (TT 1677). Now the time has come when my dissertation, containing acknowledgments, abstract, footnotes and bibliography, is expected to be bound in hard covers. Ironically, this happens at a time when I am more anxious than ever to refuse such binding. While I never minded writing a Magisterarbeit which perfectly suited academic standard, writing and rewriting a dissertation made me live through the conflict Barthes so perfectly describes: at times, I felt utterly constrained by (academic) language and form. It was, for example, incredibly difficult to critically engage with secondary literature without saying or implying that an analysis differing from my own is wrong. And yet, working within intertextual theory, a reading is never wrong merely determined by monological and/or dialogical, monologising and/or dialogising discourses which differ from those discourses determining me. Consequently, there have been times when my thesis has driven me to despair – beyond the common self-doubt and the chaos which often filled my mind.

Tom's dissertation does not, focussing on the signified, allow for the readers' productivity. He is hence relieved "to contemplate the *relative* freedom of fiction" (ST 183; emphasis added). I am relieved to contemplate the relative freedom of teaching which, if dialogical in approach, allows for active and playful production of those involved in the teaching-learning process. Even fiction and teaching, however, can only offer *relative* freedom (ST 183), for both are bound to institutional rules if they are meant to be perceived. And, most certainly, monological structure offers a lulling sense of security. When Tom finds himself in a creative crisis, "nostalgia was creeping in – nostalgia for the quiet integrity of scholarship, its exacting protocols" (ST 226). Rules *do* stabilise and order; constantly defying them and their authoritative discourses requires courage and perseverance.

After more than 17 years in the higher education system, I am situated in academic tradition while trying to undermine it. First as a student, then as a lecturer, then as an educational developer, I have met many lecturers who continue to fail in their responsibility to practice dialogue. In consequence, I turned double agent: working within a system which allows me to teach students and lecturers but working against the educational system's monologising structure in proposing critical thought of expertise within a dialogical environment. Thus I present you a reading bound in academic form, but I do not mean to persuade you of my reading; after ten years of rewriting my dissertation and of rewriting myself within my dissertation, I am offering you a final draft written to dialogise. I will most gladly join in any dialogue about Ian McEwan, about *Atonement* and *Sweet Tooth* and my (inter)textual analysis. This dissertation is ours now. It's up to you.

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