STORYWORLDS AND NARRATIVE ETHICS

AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF
IAN MCEWAN'S
ATONEMENT AND *SATURDAY*

Storyworlds and Narrative Ethics

An analysis and interpretation of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and *Saturday*

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Department of language and culture

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Helle Vigh Klausnitzer

Supervised by Jens Kirk

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1 Introduction

Measured on sales figures and popularity, the British author Ian McEwan knows how to write captivating novels. But what does it actually mean to write a captivating novel, and does McEwan seem to wish to achieve something with his novels? According to Professor of modern English literature Dominic Head, McEwan's "novels grace the bestseller lists, and he is well regarded by critics, both as a stylist and as a serious thinker about the function and capacities of narrative fiction" (2007:2). In other words, his understanding of how to capture his readers in fictional universes is accompanied by a self-conscious concern about the function of fictional narrative as a means for communication. In pursuing these reflections on McEwan's fiction with regard to both the construction and the function of narratives[1], I will in this thesis compare and contrast selected aspects of two recent novels by McEwan, *Atonement* (2002) and *Saturday* (2006). The novels are structurally differently built, but thematically discuss issues which have much in common. In this way, they provide an interesting analytical basis for dynamic, contrastive discussion. Obviously other factors come into play with regard to the captivating effect of the novels, however, I will here primarily focus on the narrative structures and link these to themes on the level of content.

The three main structural aspects[2] which I will concentrate on in this thesis are time, space and perspective as the two novels differ in these directions and the aim is to analyse how McEwan uses different techniques constructing fictional universes. I will show how an analysis of time, space and perspective helps understand crucial parts of the construction of fictional universes in the novels and give an impression of events taking place in identifiable surroundings. With regard to time, the first narrative, defined by narratologist Gérard Genette as "the temporal level of narrative with respect to which an anachrony is defined as such" (Rimmon-Kenan 2007:47), in *Saturday* spans just one day, February the 15th 2003, whereas the first narrative in *Atonement* spans almost a lifetime from 1935 to 1999. Both novels include – to use Genette's term – numerous external analepses, i.e. selected parts of the pasts before the starting points of the first narratives are included. Nevertheless, the differences in time span of the first narratives imply that seemingly most doings and thoughts of the main character Henry Perowne on this particular Saturday in *Saturday* are included, whereas on

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[1] In this thesis, I primarily distinguish between *narrative* as a genre designation for the telling of a (fictional) story and the term *story* for the sequence of events described in narrative. It should be noted that David Herman, whose theory I will draw on, at some points uses story in the same sense as narrative and that McEwan in his novels only uses the term story. When referring directly to such passages I also employ the term story as an inclusive term.

[2] What here for a start is termed structural aspects is what Herman terms 'narrative micro- and macrodesigns'. Time (temporalities), space (spatialization) and perspective are all macrodesigns of narrative (2002).

the other hand we find great jumps in time in *Atonement*, the three parts and the coda representing periods of various length on the timeline of the story. Also chronologically do the novels display differences; whereas the first narrative in *Saturday* is presented almost without exception as chronologically coherent only interrupted by the external analepses, *Atonement* is experimenting with the representation of time as in the first part the same events are retold from different perspectives. There is thus a difference in degree with regard to temporal experimentation in the two novels though the events in both cases are fairly easily placed on timelines in relation to each other. This relation between the representation of time as limited and more coherent versus time as elaborated and more fragmented is mirrored in the representations of space or the physical places mentioned in the novels. *Saturday* is confined to London, the movements of Perowne within London being narrated in detail, whereas *Atonement* refers to several places in England, including London, and France. Nevertheless, in both novels detailed description of the settings and the paths along which the characters move in these helps the reader visualize the fictional universes. Considering perspective, *Atonement* displays both shifts and alterations and is not easily categorized, whereas *Saturday* appears as an example of consistency with Perowne as focalizing agent, though this apparent consistency is also interrupted in some passages. Despite the heterogeneity of the novels, the different perspective-taking strategies result in coherently presented fictional universes and point to a shared concern with consciousness.

With regard to all three aspects, time, space and perspective, there is in thus a difference in degree of complexity between *Saturday* and *Atonement*. This difference illustrates, I will argue, not more or less captivating fictional universes, but different ways of creating elaborate, coherent and authentic fictional universes. In order to perform the analysis of these fictional universes, to move beyond a purely structural analysis and to account for how these aspects of the novels help create fictional universes in the minds of the readers, American linguist/narratologist David Herman's understanding of narrative comprehension and his term 'storyworld' as presented in *Story Logic* (2002) are useful.

According to Herman, artificial intelligence researchers have shown that narrative comprehension even with regard to the most minimal stories is based on "enourmously complex linguistic and cognitive operations" (2002:1). In order to expand the understanding of narrative comprehension, it is thus necessary to include concepts and methods from cognitive science in the narratological

analysis originally based on linguistic models resulting in "a jointly narratological and linguistic approach to stories construed as strategies for building mental models of the world" (Herman: 2002:2). This cognitive approach apparently implies a transhistoric notion of the reader. The understanding of narrative of all kinds, that is to be able to interpret the textual cues provided by the narrative, is viewed as solely a cognitive process. On this background, Herman defines storyworlds as "mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate – or make a deictic shift – as they work to comprehend a narrative" (2002:9).

In Herman's approach, the target of narrative analysis "is the process by which interpreters reconstruct the storyworld encoded in narrative" (2002:5). Similarly, the link between the construction of mental models and 'work' of narrative comprehension in the quotation above indicates that the cognitive processes, the construction of the mental models, are taking place in the mind of the reader[3]. Nevertheless, though the primary focus in Herman's discussion is on the reader as actor, the work involved in storyworld (re)construction is not limited to the reader. Herman defines narrative comprehension as "a process of (re)constructing storyworlds on the basis of textual cues and the inferences they make possible" (2002:6), and states further that "story recipients, whether readers, viewers, or listeners, work to interpret narratives by reconstructing the mental representations that have in turn guided their production" (2002:1). The reader is *re*constructing the storyworld, which has already been constructed. The author is the initial constructor of the storyworld, his mental model being realized into narrative. When reading this narrative, the reader is the reconstructor, reconstructing the storyworld. I view these two aspects of storyworld (re)construction as equally important. I simultaneously wish to examine how the textual cues of the narrative serve as basis for the active creation of a storyworld in the mind of the reader and thus capture the reader in a fictional universe, but also to underline the origin of the narrative as I am likewise interested in analysing the self-conscious aspects and the apparently intended function of *Saturday* and *Atonement*. For clarity's sake and to underline this doubleness I therefore use the term (re)construction, though both terms "reconstruction" and "(re)construction" are used by Herman.

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[3] As I analyse written literary narrative, I use the term *reader*. Herman discusses narrative in general including e.g. everyday speech, hence the reader is of course only one possible receiver in a narrative situation.

Both in the production and in the reception of narrative, storyworlds are thus (re)constructed. The narrative as such is unavoidably part of both: as product or origin, but can also be seen as actor. In explaining his term story*world*, Herman argues that this is supposed to indicate

> the world-creating power of narrative, its ability to transport interpreters from the here and now of face-to-face interaction, or the space-time coordinates of an encounter with a printed text or a cinematic narrative, to the here and now that constitute the deictic center of the world being told about (2002:14).

Narrative comprehension and the idea of a storyworld are thus connected both to author, narrative and reader. The author is identified as origin of an initial mental model, producing the narrative, and the specific textual cues in turn guide the reader in forming his own mental model – his own storyworld. This close link between reader, narrative and author implies that the power of narrative, referred to above, may be understood as a power more or less consciously made use of by the author. By constructing a narrative, an author exercise power over the reader, prompting the reader to make a deictic shift to a storyworld in whose (re)construction he actively takes part himself.

The word construction implies self-consciousness in the process of creation. This self-consciousness or self-awareness is necessary to address when discussing how McEwan creates fictional *worlds* to which the readers are mentally shifted. By making use of intertextuality and metafiction and thematizing the power of storytelling in both *Saturday* and *Atonement*, McEwan indirectly comments on the 'world-creating power' of narrative, referred to above. By evoking these themes, the novels of course point to the constructed nature of all narratives, and more or less explicitly to their own. It is my claim, however, that rather than definitively deconstructing or destabilizing the fictional universes, these self-conscious aspects seem to emphasize and point to an awareness of functions of narrative.

The power of fiction, self-consciously achieved by the construction and expected (re)construction of fictional universes, may of course be put to use for a given purpose. Herman argues that narrative may be seen as "a basic and general strategy for making sense of experience" (2002:24) and states further that "stories provide an optimal context in which to dispel confusion about human beings' motivations and aims" (2002:24). Narrative thus forms a platform for discussion of how to be a human being in the world. In this way, Herman's notion of the function of narrative may be seen as pointing in the direction of that of the ethical critics who, according to literary theorist Claudia Schemberg, claim that human beings are dependent on structures of meaning and that literature

presents such structures (2004:9). Despite their formal differences, *Saturday* and *Atonement* by means of their respective fictional universes present thematic similarities with a strong focus on emotions which render visible a concern with moral issues. In both novels themes such as guilt, atonement and, in the case of *Saturday* anxiety, are discussed. Accordingly, it is natural to view the novels in the light of narrative ethics, which, according to Head, "resuscitates an older conviction about the moral content of fiction, but with the hindsight bestowed by poststructuralist thinking" (2007:24). To return to the capacities and function of literature expressed in McEwan's fiction, which Head refers to in the passage quoted initially in this introduction, in this thesis I will discuss McEwan's apparent awareness of the capacity of narrative fiction to create universes in the mind of the readers, and the function (or one function) of narrative fiction *because of* this capacity will be interpreted as to serve as a basis for presenting emotions and thereby discuss moral issues.

1.1 Research questions

How does Ian McEwan self-consciously construct and prompt readers to (re)construct elaborate, coherent fictional universes in his recent novels *Atonement* (2002) and *Saturday* (2006)? How does this (re)construction allow an engagement with moral issues?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

In chapter two, I will discuss the choice of primary literature, the thoughts behind the structure of the thesis and of the chapters respectively and the link between formal and thematic analysis. Further, I will discuss the choice, use and combination of theoretical approaches to narrative and how my approach to McEwan differs from other approaches also including narrative ethics.

In chapter three, I will turn to the first aspect of narrative macrodesign: temporalities. Classical narratological terms such as order, duration and frequency will be combined with Herman's concept of fuzzy temporality. I will discuss how the different aspects of the temporal structure enable (re)constructions of overall coherently temporally structured storyworlds enhancing the notion of authenticity, but, as regards *Atonement*, also how temporal aspects point to the possibility of destabilization and to the theme of (mis)interpretation.

In chapter 4, I will base the analysis of the spatial structure on the notions of deictic shifts, regions, landmarks, paths and motion verbs. I will discuss how also the spatial aspects of the narratives enable (re)constructions of coherent – in this case geographically situated – storyworlds and how

the spatial references serve to draw attention to space in relation to the level of content both with regard to themes and character development.

In chapter 5, I will analyse the different perspective-taking strategies in the narratives, the modes of focalization employed. There are more or less overt references to destabilization and, in the case of *Atonement* to the possibility of (mis)interpretation, which serve to juxtapose different ways of viewing the world and point to the shared concern with consciousness in the two novels. Nevertheless, despite the differences both strategies of perspective taking enable (re)constructions of coherent storyworlds.

In both novels, storytelling is thematized on the formal level and on the level of content. This thematization, discussed in chapter 6, and various metafictional and intertextual references are intertwined. I will show how the thematization of storytelling in the novels paradoxically serves simultaneously to undermine the fictional universes by pointing to their construction *and* to emphasize the world-creating power of storytelling and open up for a discussion of different functions of storytelling and literature.

In chapter 7, I will turn to what I view as the apparent function of McEwan's narratives in *Saturday* and *Atonement*, namely to discuss moral issues through a thematization of emotions. By turning to the critical standpoint of narrative ethics, I will discuss the themes of guilt and anxiety and how individual narratives are bound up with collective narratives in the novels.

Chapter 8 will present the conclusion of this thesis.

2 Methodological and metatheoretical reflexions

2.1 Method

With *Saturday* and *Atonement*, I have chosen to focus on two of McEwan's most recent novels. Though McEwan's early fiction exemplified by e.g. *The Cement Garden* (1978) also implicitly addresses moral and ethical issues, there has been a shift in his work with *The Child in Time* (1987), which Schemberg describes as a move on "from a claustrophobic world of sexual and social aberrations to a fiction openly engaging in complex ethical, social, and historical issues" (2004:28). It is this overt engagement in McEwan's fiction which I will address aspects of in this thesis. The aim is thus not to explore the development in McEwan's work but to compare and contrast two novels which enable (re)construction of elaborate and authentic storyworlds by different means and which with reference to different contexts confront similar themes such as crime, atonement, guilt and anxiety.

The chapters in this thesis are similarly structured. After a short introduction, I have, in almost all chapters, chosen to write an initial section introducing relevant, theoretical key points in order to have a theoretical framework to build on and relate to in the following analyses. The only exception is chapter 6 concerning the thematization of storytelling in the novels, where I will draw on unavoidably superficial definitions of metafiction and intertextuality as the intention is not to enter a theoretical discussion of these terms but to focus on how McEwan incorporates self-consciousness in his work. For the sake of clarity and due to the differences in the macrodesign of the narratives, I analyse the novels separately in each chapter – of course comparing and contrasting these. As I have chosen to start with *Atonement* in each chapter, this analysis will often take up more space since some narrative terms must be introduced initially in the analysis and due to the more complex narrative structure of this novel.

The following three chapters will provide an analysis of three aspects of narrative macrodesign in *Atonement* and *Saturday*. I have chosen to analyse temporalities, spatialization and perspective because the narratives differ in these respects, opening up for comparative analysis, and because they form an essential basis for the overall understanding of the storyworlds. The inclusion of all three aspects necessarily implies that the chapters do not present exhaustive analyses; instead together they give an impression of how coherent and elaborate storyworlds are (re)constructed.

The analyses of perspective and temporalities will take up the most space, as the narratives are more complex with regard to these respects. I view the (re)construction of authentic storyworlds through the narratives as enabling an engagement with moral issues and thus as a point of departure for further analysis. In this way I go further than Herman (2002) in his analysis of narratives. For reasons of space and because the main focus is on the narrative structures, the discussion of emotions and morality in the narratives can only serve as an initial discussion. Nevertheless, I find it important to include in order to emphasize the link – continuously referred to throughout the thesis in the discussion of aspects of narrative macrodesign – between the levels of form and content.

2.2 Theoretical approach

Employing traditional narratological tools building on linguistic models, Herman's theoretical approach opens up for a narrative analysis of how readers are cued to (re)construct (fictional) universes or storyworlds. As I am interested in the world-creating power of fiction and how the captivating aspect of McEwan's fiction can be accounted for, I therefore draw on Herman's theory in the theoretical approach of the following three chapters. Herman's analysis of (post)modern texts puts traditional narratological terms, the utility of which he, however, does not raise doubt about, in a new perspective. Due to his aim to rethink how these terms may be put to use, Herman does not discuss terms such as duration, frequency and order, as regards temporalities, and external and internal focalization, as regards perspective taking, in detail. However, as these terms from structuralist narratology are basic in an analysis of the fairly conventional narrative structures in McEwan's novels, I will with regard to these aspects include narratologist Schlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2007) and Genette (1980) as well.

Concerning storytelling metafiction and intertextuality in chapter 6, I will draw on M.H. Abrams (1999) for standard definitions and in the brief discussion of metafiction include literary theorist Patricia Waugh's discussion (1995) of the different types of metafiction. Furthermore, I will refer to the literary critics Head (2007), who writes of McEwan's writings including both *Atonement* and *Saturday*, and professor of English literature Brian Finney (2004), who discusses *Atonement*, in order to account for aspects of the reception of McEwan's novels and put my own analysis of the thematization of storytelling into perspective. Head discusses the openly thematized constructedness of *Atonement* in connection with style and the fictive letter from Connolly, but also in connection with explicit reflections on storytelling. As regards *Saturday*, his focus is on the tension between science and literature, though the intertextual aspects are also touched upon as in

his discussion of Arnold's "Dover Beach". Finney's primary aim is to draw attention to the ongoing thematization of storytelling and thus to the emphasis on the constructedness in *Atonement* as a response to the reviewers who read the novel as a classic realist novel and dismiss the coda "as an instance of postmodern gimmickry" (2004:70). Further, Finney interprets the thematization of constructedness as pointing to how subjectivity is similarly constructed in the non-fictional world, and as undermining the naturalization of social and economic inequalities that characterised British society around the Second World War (2004:76). Though both Head and Finney focus on storytelling in *Atonement* and Head to a certain degree in *Saturday*, my approach thus differs from theirs. I focus solely on the function of metafictional and intertextual references in the narratives, how these point to the constructedness of the narratives, to the possibilities of interpretation and the power and influence of storytelling as a basis for ethical discussion. This I do both with regard to *Atonement* and *Saturday*. Obviously, the connection of my analysis of metafictional and intertextual aspects to the analysis of storyworld (re)construction *and* narrative ethics also marks my approach as different.

As basis for the discussion in chapter 7, I will draw on Head, again, and Schemberg's accounts of ethical criticism. Both Schemberg, who writes in 2004 focusing on the novels *The Child in Time*, *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love*, and *Atonement*, and Head, including both the previous shock-literature and *Saturday* in his discussion of McEwan's oeuvre, are concerned with the thematization of ethical issues in McEwan's fiction in general and thereby the link to ethical criticism. However, their approaches to McEwan's narratives differ. Schemberg is primarily concerned with narrative self-creation in McEwan's novels. Head, on the other hand, focuses on the problematization of the author role in connection with borrowing from other sources and how McEwan views national myths from a different perspective in *Atonement* and, concerning *Saturday*, on the moral stability presented through Perowne. Though also pursuing the ideas from narrative ethics of literature as meaning-giving and platform for moral discussion, my approach to *Saturday* and *Atonement* will differ from these approaches by solely focusing on the main themes of the feelings guilt and anxiety and their moral implications, thus analysing these in detail. Nevertheless, as guilt and anxiety are predominant themes in the two novels, Head, Schemberg and also Finney obviously refer to these in their analyses of *Atonement* (and Head also as regards *Saturday*) as well. Schemberg has actually dedicated a short section to emotions in McEwan's work and how they function in the narrative creation of the self (2004:81-86). My analysis may be seen as expanding on this focus on emotions,

and, though not entering the discussion of the self, linking these to the meaning-giving function of narrative. Most importantly, my approach differs as I view the (re)construction of authentic storyworlds as a precondition for ethical discussion in the novels.

3 Temporalities

3.1 Introduction

As the first aspect of narrative macrodesign, I will discuss how different narrative techniques regarding time in the novels serve to help the reader (re)construct coherent, authentic storyworlds. The events both in *Atonement* and *Saturday* are placed quite precisely in historical time. *Atonement* spans the period from the summer of 1935, cf. Robbie is sentenced in November 1935 (*A*:208)[4], over the war to 1999, the year to which the coda is dated (*A*:351). This span of years allows a retrospective view on the war and the time leading up to it from a present day perspective. *Saturday*, on the other hand, spans just *one* Saturday, and is written in the present tense[5], analepses excepted. This Saturday is explained to be in February (*S*:128) at a time in history almost 18 months after 9/11 (*S*:16) and references to the global antiwar protests that day help determine the exact date as February the 15th 2003. The placement in time in relation to 9/11 and antiwar protests emphasize fundamental themes of the novel such as terror and the growing anxiety all over the world.

Besides this placement in history, which lends authenticity to the narratives and points to discussions on the thematic level which I will return to in chapter 7 concerning narrative ethics, the two narratives make use of different techniques with regard to order, duration and frequency to enable (re)constructions of temporally coherent storyworlds. A comparison of the novels reveals a thematization of time both on the formal and the thematic level and this thematization draws attention to the importance of readers being able to decode the temporal structure of the narratives. As Herman puts it: "understanding a narrative requires, in part, using relevant cues to reconstruct the temporal profile of the emergent storyworld" (2002:22). From Herman's cognitive viewpoint the textual cues he refers to are obviously restricted to the narrative techniques. Nevertheless in his analysis of the temporal structure of Anna Segher's "Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen", Herman also includes the historical background – Germany in the time before and after the Second World War – in his discussion (2002:220-237). One of my claims in the analysis of the temporal structure of McEwan's two novels is that the temporal placement evoked in the narratives is crucial for the understanding of the narratives, e.g. a full comprehension of the anxious atmosphere in London in *Saturday* necessitates knowledge of 9/11. Furthermore, the fact that we as readers are able to

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[4] For references to the novels, I use the abbreviations *A* and *S*.
[5] The function of the use of tense will be discussed in chapter 5 with regard to perspective.

(re)construct coherent temporal profiles of the narratives indicates that McEwan wishes the reader to concentrate on issues discussed at the thematic level.

3.2 Classical vocabularies and fuzzy temporalization

In his discussion of temporalities in relation to storyworld (re)construction, Herman takes the classical narratological approach as his point of departure and states that "[i]n general, Genette's categories of duration, frequency, and order capture important ways in which narratives cue recipients to build *temporally organized* models of the situations, events, and entities told about over the course of the story" (2002:217, org. italics). These three aspects are thus the basis for analysing how storyworlds are (re)constructed. In his proposal for an enrichment of the classical accounts, Herman focuses on order: "one of the major factors bearing on the global design of storyworlds is the manner in which – or, for that matter, the extent to which – discourse cues prompt recipients to engage in a temporal ordering of events" (2002:211). By analysing how some narratives complicate an ordering of events and focusing on "ways in which the temporal ordering of events in narrative can either be *inexactly coded* […] or else *coded as inherently inexact* […]" (2002:213, org. italics), Herman points to the limits of the classical accounts to explain the techniques of these narratives. He therefore introduces the term *fuzzy temporality* in relation to narratives engaging in a "polychronic" style of narration (2002:212). These types of narratives complicate the concepts of *earlier* and *later* and Herman explains: "What I am calling polychronic narration entails a three-value system spanning Earlier, Later, and Indeterminate, where again, Indeterminate is shorthand for Indeterminately-situated-vis-à-vis-some-temporal-reference-point-X" (2002:212-13). It is Herman's argument that analysis of (post)modern fictional techniques both points to the need and helps develop enriched models for the study of narrative order (2002:234). "Stories marked by fuzzy temporal ordering […] introduce a specialized, reflexive modelling system […] one that spotlights the possibilities and limits of narrative's own capacity to model a world as consisting of events ordered in time" (Herman 2002:218).

This enrichment of the classical accounts does not imply abandonment of these, rather these should be "rethought as locally but not globally valid – as adequate for the description and analysis of many, perhaps even most, cases of narrative discourse, but certainly not all possible cases" (Herman 2002:234). In the following analysis of *Atonement* and *Saturday*, I will discuss the function of time including the three aspects, order, duration and frequency and link these to the (re)construction of the storyworlds. The focus will be primarily on order and secondarily on duration and frequency –

with regard to *Saturday* frequency will only be mentioned briefly – as a corollary of the temporal structures. Polychronic narration and fuzzy temporality is not predominant in McEwan's two novels, though, as I will show, some details of *Atonement* may fruitfully be discussed from this perspective. Both novels work primarily within a bivalent (earlier and later) not multivalent (earlier, later, indeterminate) temporal system which supports the impression that McEwan wishes to render possible the (re)construction of coherent temporal profiles and thus draw attention to discussions on the thematic level.

3.3 *Atonement* – A narrative of a life

> They were beyond the present, outside time, with no memories and no future (*A*:136).

This passage describing a transcendence of time refers to Robbie and Cecilia making love in the library for the first and only time. The feeling of being outside time is reflected by a similar feeling in Briony as she as a nurse trainee is overwhelmed by the inrush of wounded and dying soldiers "the sense of floating timelessness of those first twenty-four hours" (*A*:315). Extreme situations cause the characters to forget time, however only for a short period of time. Cecilia and Robbie are interrupted by Briony in the library, and the sense of time returns to the young Briony as her work the following days is ordered into shifts. Nevertheless, these two instances serve to mark out important events in a narrative which is otherwise very much concerned with events being placed in time and in a temporal relation to each other.

The first three parts of *Atonement*, written in the past tense, form together a retrospective narrative, which is not finally established until the end as originating from the old Briony. The coda takes the form of a kind of diary written by Briony on her 77th birthday, thus there are in this last part shifts to the present tense, e.g. "Now it is five in the morning and I am still at the writing desk" (*A*:369). The first three parts turn out to be a story told by Briony, and readers are, as Herman explains with regard to framed stories, cued "to reconstruct a storyworld temporally embedded within the storyworld of the present act of telling" (2002:223). The fact that the first parts are not revealed to be a framed tale within a frame tale till the end has a defamiliarizing effect on the reader. The abrupt jump from the time around the Second World War in the initial three parts to the present time of 1999 mirrors the destabilizing revelation that Briony has made (at least some of) the previous story up (cf. chapter 6 concerning storytelling). This retrospective status and the explicit characterization of the vantage point from where the story is told affect the storyworld

(re)construction and put a temporal distance to the story in the first parts. Herman states that typically "retrospective stories include (at least) two shifts of "deictic centers"" (2002:224). The reader must mentally relocate from the here and now of one storyworld to the here and now of another. In *Atonement*, although the first three parts are all part of the same story, the in medias res beginning of each part evokes a deictic shift, as both the historical time and place are dramatically different. The reader is prompted to relocate to several deictic centres throughout the novel. Anyhow the many references to exact dates make a temporal mapping of the storyworlds possible.[6] The defamiliarizing last deictic shift adds an illusory and distant feature to the former deictic centres thus drawing attention to the effect of narrative and storytelling on the reader.

The different storyworlds of course complement each other in the understanding of the narrative. Nevertheless, the narrative through its temporal structure does not encourage the reader to focus on the different parts of the novel to the same degree as the number of pages granted to each part of the novel does not correspond to the variations in length of the storytime. Genette defines duration as the relationship between the time of the narrative and that of the story (1980:86). Rimmon-Kenan explains it thus: "The relations in question are, in fact, not between two 'durations' but between duration in the story (measured in minutes, hours, days, months, years) and the length of text devoted to it (in lines and pages), i.e. a temporal/spatial relationship." What is crucial and interesting is the "constancy of pace" (2001:52). In *Atonement*, part one covers 187 out of 372 pages describing only one day, the hot summer day in 1935. Part two covers 76 pages describing Robbie's walk as part of the retreat to Dunkirk in 1940, recounting two days and two nights. Part three covers 82 pages and spans some months in 1941 (the year after the declaration of war (*A*:273)) of Briony's working in the hospital in London, there are references to the April rains (*A*:269), early May (*A*:282), last days of May (*A*:282) and early summer (*A*:316). The coda describing Briony's 77th birthday takes up 21 pages.[7] Thus, although the novel spans 64 years only 4 selected instances on this timeline are actually narrated as storytime and the pace varies from part to part. In the (re)construction of storyworlds, duration plays a role in indicating the degree of importance of the different parts of the narrative. Herman argues, "functionally speaking, longer or shorter duration can cue readers to focus on some narrative details as more salient than others" (2002:215). By only focusing on 4 selected points on the timeline of the 64 years these points are all emphasized, but the

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[6] I will return to the spatial aspect of the deictic shifts in the following chapter.
[7] In stating the time of the story here, I do not include the several analepses and prolepses. The function of the anachronies will be discussed below.

temporal structure of the narrative nevertheless cues readers to focus in particular on part one as it is presented at a far slower pace than the rest of the novel. The focus on this first part which makes an attempt to account for the complex reasons for Briony committing her crime fits the pervasion of guilt throughout the novel. The deceleration of pace (Rimmon-Kenan 2001:53) emphasizes the thematization of guilt on the level of content.

Another temporal aspect which cues readers to focus especially on the events of this part is frequency. Whereas the following parts are told quite conventionally from the perspective of just one character and the events of these are only accounted for once, some events in part one are told from more perspectives (cf. chapter 5 concerning perspective). This form of narrative, *repeating narrative* (Genette 1980:116), involves that the details of e.g. the fountain scene through repetition appear as salient on the background of other events. Drawing attention to these events by repeating them viewed from different perspectives both points to the importance of these, as well as it indicates a thematic concern with different ways of understanding and (mis)interpreting the world, cf. chapter 5. With regard to temporality, the use of repeating narrative disturbs and draws attention to the chronological order. Often the reader has to read a little into the chapters to determine their order in the story. Chapters 2 and 3 of part one for example must be perceived as describing simultaneous events with Cecilia thinking of Jackson being detained in the scullery (she does not actually know the reason (*A*:21)), followed by the scene by the fountain (*A*:27ff) in chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes *Briony* checking up on Jackson washing his sheets after wetting his bed (*A*:32) and thereafter *her watching* the scene by the fountain from the window (*A*:37ff). Through this repeating narrative and consequently the movement forwards and backwards in time in part one, we have a hint of polychronic narration, confusion between earlier and later. However it is possible to (re)construct the storyworld as temporally coherent, there are no indeterminate events as such. *Atonement* in this way points to the possibility of a disturbance of order without actually destabilizing the temporal structure of the storyworld. In this way, the temporal coherence of the narrative – though partly shown to be a construction – is maintained encouraging the reader to engage with complex of themes on the level of content.

Though only the four short spaces of time mentioned above on the timeline are narrated as actual time of the first narrative, many events in between these points and before 1935 are made known to the reader through anachrony, i.e. analepses and prolepses, which Genette describes as a traditional

resource of literary narrative (1980:36). In *Atonement* it may be seen to link the past and present, thus enabling the (re)construction of an elaborate, coherent storyworld. As Robbie lies sleepless in France, he thinks back on his only meeting with Cecilia in 1939 after he was released from prison and before he reported for duty (*A*:204-207). This analepsis is interrupted by another analepsis to his time in prison (*A*:204-205), and by a short shift back to the present of the first narrative (*A*:207). After the analepsis to their last meeting, the contact between Robbie and Cecilia up to the present is presented before the narrative again returns to Robbie lying sleepless in France. The analepsis fills in the gap between part one and part two of the novel. Accordingly, in Genette's terms, this is a *completing* analepsis, internal as it does not transgress the span of years which the novel covers. It permits a link between the two storyworlds in the process of (re)construction.

Also external analepses are found in *Atonement*, these serve primarily to introduce the past of the different characters, enriching the storyworld and sustaining the illusion of the realness of the characters' lives. These analepses seem to grow organically out of the first narrative. Events in the first narrative trigger a memory, as when Leon and Cecilia are entertaining Marshall in the garden: "[Leon] was staring politely at his friend and seemed determined not to meet her eye. *As children they used to torment each other with 'the look' at the Sunday lunches their parents gave for elderly relatives*" (*A*:50, my italics). From the present situation, where both Leon and Cecilia are bored there is a link to their childhood and how they could make each other laugh just by a look in situations where it was highly improper. The analepsis, marked by italics, both links the present to a detail of the past *and* presents the close relationship between the siblings. However, there are also analepses by which main events and relations of the past of a character are compressed. As Robbie sits with his mother before leaving for dinner at the Tallis' household there is an analepsis to Grace' (and Robbie's) past after having been left by her husband and employed by Jack Tallis (*A*:87-88). This analepsis is not directly triggered by a specific situation in the present of the first narrative, but is merely a short interruption filling the reader in on the relationship between Grace and Robbie and the Tallis familiy. Thus analepses in *Atonement* serve to elaborate on the storyworld by linking the past and the present and create coherence between the different parts of the novel.

Atonement also presents examples of prolepsis. As Briony uncomprehendingly watches the scene at the fountain, she realizes that this scene is perceived differently by different consciousnesses. A

description of this epiphany[8] leads directly into a prolepsis to a vantage point in the future from where the narrator (who turns out to be herself) describes her artistic development through her life: "Six decades later she would describe how at the age of thirteen she had written her way through a whole history of literature […] to arrive at an impartial psychological realism which she had discovered for herself, one special morning during a heat wave in 1935" (*A*:41). This prolepsis, which at the point seems external, must through the coda be reconsidered as internal and the relation between the coda and the first three parts is significant in connection with prolepsis. According to Genette, "[t]he "first-person" narrative lends itself better than any other to anticipation, by the very fact of its avowedly retrospective character, which authorizes the narrator to allude to the future and in particular to his present situation […]" (1980:67). The first three parts of the novel are, as I will return to in chapter 5, not first-person narratives, but third-person. However, as the old Briony is revealed to be the narrator she may be viewed as a kind of pseudo-first-person narrator. She is describing herself in the third-person with intimate knowledge of the child Briony. In this way, the prolepsis quoted above hints that the older version of Briony is the narrator of the first parts and defines the point from where the story is narrated. As Head writes, "[a]t this point, the narrator of the first section is implicated in the fictional authorial self-reflexiveness, and in such a way as to invite an equation between Briony and the narrator, revealed as her older self" (2007:165). The prolepses of the narrative thus serve as implicit warnings of the revelation in the coda.

Most aspects of the temporal structure of *Atonement* and how it cues the reader to read the narrative in a certain way may be described through the classical accounts. Yet, there are temporal aspects with regard to order in the novel which are difficult to account for through these terms. Cecilia's strange mood on the hot summer day of 1935 is partly explained by a paradoxical sense of time, in Herman's terms a sense of fuzzy temporality: "All day long, she realised, she had been feeling strange, and seeing strangely, as though everything was already long in the past, made more vivid by posthumous ironies she could not quite grasp" (*A*:48). Cecilia's thoughts and feelings at this moment seem to transcend the present of the first narrative and reflect a future which has not yet taken place. The vague reference to the future differs completely from the narratorial prolepsis referred to above, as here the originator of the thoughts is Cecilia, a character in the story. It is as if the narrator allows Cecilia a glimpse of these events viewed from the future and even a glimpse of

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[8] Also Schemberg uses this expression (2004:37).

the irony as stylistic aspect of the later narration of these events. As such the distinction between the present and the future are for an instance invalidated, and there is confusion between the notions of earlier and later. A little later, Cecilia seems to be granted a similar vague notion of what is going to happen: "Whatever happened in the future, however superficially strange or shocking, would also have an unsurprising, familiar quality, inviting her to say, but only to herself, Oh yes, of course. That. I should have known" (*A*:53). It is as if Cecilia is paradoxically aware of the story having been told many times before (in the future after her own death by a guilt-ridden, partly ironic Briony, cf. *A*:369). Again the blurring of the borderline between the future and the present of the first narrative locates these thoughts to an indeterminate time within the storyworld.[9]

Although the storyworld(s) of *Atonement* is (are) to a large degree traditionally structured and quite easily ordered temporally, there is thus a slight uncertainty inscribed through inexactly coded narration problematizing the concept of earlier and later. This uncertainty interrupts the otherwise quite exactly coded order of events in the narrative and it throws Briony's thoughts as she finds the raped Lola and instantaneously makes her conclusions in relief: "As far as she was concerned, everything fitted; the terrible present fulfilled the recent past" (*A*:168). In this quote, the reader, knowing that Briony with her inclination for the magical and dramatic (*A*:39) is misinterpreting the situation, is implicitly warned against a blind belief in causality and against the strive towards a total understanding of the connection between the present and the past. As such these aspects anticipate the defamiliarizing effect of the coda, where the fictitiousness of the previous parts is emphasized, and point to the thematization of the power of storytelling in the novel – through her uncompromising reasoning Briony sends Robbie to jail.

3.4 *Saturday* – A narrative of a day

> Everything belongs in the present (*S*:164).

These are Perowne's thoughts as he visits his demented mother and characterizes her mental state and her relation to time. His mother only remembers bits of her past and cannot relate to the future. This relation to time may be seen as an ironic contrast to the function of time in the novel as such. Most of Perowne's thoughts this Saturday are concerned with the past of his family, which the reader is allowed access to through analepsis, and his anxiety about the future. Only briefly when

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[9] Some of her feelings may be explained as unconsciously knowing that she and Robbie will get together (cf. *A*:133). Their story is after all a quite traditional love story, and she has been studying literature probably analysing uncountable love stories. Nevertheless, this does not explain things being already long in the past and the posthumous ironies she does not quite grasp.

working is he able to be fully in the present as described when he has operated Baxter: "He's been delivered into a pure present, free of the weight of the past or any anxieties about the future" (*S*:258). However at all other times it is impossible for Perowne to separate past, present and future. His many reflections on the past and the future serve to give an impression of how he views the world, but also help the reader (re)construct a mental model of a world, very recognizable through references to political states of affairs, in which the events of the novel take place. As I have discussed above, a vague uncertainty with regard to temporal ordering is inscribed in the otherwise temporally coherent storyworld of *Atonement*. In *Saturday*, we find a temporally coherent storyworld but without the indication of uncertainty. As I will return to in chapter 7, the anxiety and uncertainty on the level of content in *Saturday* is granted primary attention. The temporal profile with regard to order, duration and frequency in *Saturday* appears to mirror a stream-of-consciousness-like style of narration (Head 2007:192, cf. discussion in chap. 6), which is primarily focalized through the consciousness of Perowne (cf. chap. 5).

Saturday is not to the same degree as *Atonement* concerned with formal experimentation. McEwan limits himself to the singulative narrative with regard to frequency, this obviously being the most common, the conventional form of narrative (Genette 1980:114). Also concerning duration, there are no extreme deviations in pace on the level of the first narrative as we find it in *Atonement*. Although pace of any narrative is impossibly constant, the pace appears quite stable throughout the novel. Nevertheless, some events are emphasized as e.g. Perowne's first meeting with Baxter (*S*:81-99) which probably only spans some minutes, but nevertheless is narrated in great detail and covers 19 pages, his squash game with Jay Strauss (*S*:99-117) covering 18 pages and the final confrontation with Baxter in his own home (*S*:206-31) covering 26 pages. The passages described in decelerated pace all emphasize the development Perowne goes through during the day from he wakes up and stands by the window in his elated mood, "his back and his legs feel(ing) unusually strong" (*S*:3), to the end of the day where he again stands by the window this time "timid, vulnerable" (*S*:277). The first meeting with Baxter after which he phones Rosalind with trembling hands (*S*:99) obviously upsets him. The aggressive squash game takes place directly after and indicates how unbalanced Perowne is. Nevertheless he does not have the strength to interrupt the game (*S*:102). In the final confrontation between Baxter and the Perowne family, the underlying anxiety through the novel has turned into a real, personal threat. The deceleration of pace

emphasizes turning points in the story and Perowne's mental development, thus implicitly indicating McEwan's concern with consciousness and morality in *Saturday*.

Concerning order, there are several analepses throughout the novel as the narrative presents Perowne's thoughts. As in *Atonement*, these primarily serve to tell stories of the past and relations of the family. Also Perowne's immediate past, his Friday, is recalled through analepsis (*S*:7-12). This analepsis functions both to give an impression of his work as a neurosurgeon but also to emphasize how great a deal of his life is taken up by work. However, many analepses in *Saturday* span a longer period in time[10] and explain the more distant past, as e.g. the story of how he met the young Rosalind having surgery, fell in love with her and decided to marry her (*S*:41-48). Analepses in *Saturday* are, due to the short time the story actually spans, primarily external. However, at one point there is a gap in the narrative, which then is filled by a completing analepsis. After Perowne and Theo have thrown Baxter down the stairs the next passage starts some time later in the evening, the family members "are in various forms of shock, and remain so for hours after the police have left and the paramedics have taken Baxter away in their ambulance" (*S*:228). A few pages later, this gap is filled in: "As he sits listening to the others, his anger grows, until he almost begins to regret the care he routinely gave Baxter after his fall […] he went straight down with Theo and, finding Baxter semi-conscious, opened his airway with a jaw thrust" (*S*:230). The extraordinariness of this gap and of the following completing analepsis serves to draw attention to the shock the family is in. The gap is not a gap evoking suspense, as the danger has been warded off at this point; rather it formally serves to underline the unusualness of the situation and underline how the general anxiety has turned into a personal danger, making Perowne's vulnerability clear to himself and the reader.

The analepses in *Saturday* generally grow organically out of the first narrative as in *Atonement*. An event, a thought or even a smell in the present triggers a memory and starts the analepsis, as when Perowne leaves the fishmonger: "he thinks he can taste sweetness in the air, like warm hay drying in the fields in August. The smell – surely an illusion generated by contrast – persists, even with the traffic and the February chill. *All those summers at his father-in-law's place in the Ariège, in a south-west corner of France* […]" (*S*:128, my italics). The last sentence starts a longer analepsis, marked by italics, telling of their summers in France and especially of the problematic relationship between Daisy and her grandfather. As this shift to the past illustrates, the analepsis is integrated in

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[10] Thus, as opposed to the level of the first narrative, on the level of analepses the pace is more varied.

the first narrative. According to Rimmon-Kenan, "[t]he status of the character-motivated anachronies is different from that of the narrator's in that they do not fully deviate from chronology" (2007:51). As the narrative consists of Perowne's thoughts, these thoughts, although about the past, are still thought in the present of the first narrative and thereby do not in actual fact break the chronological order. The analepsis appears as a chain of thoughts eventually leading back to the present with thoughts on the recently resumed communication between Daisy and her grandfather leading up to the approaching reunion in the Perowne home in London this evening: "She said his remarks thrilled her and she was reading them over and over again and was giddy with his praise. *Now the old man and Daisy are converging from Toulouse and Paris*" (*S*:139, my italics). The shift from the analepsis back to the present, marked by italics, seems plausible and does not interrupt the chronologically ordered understanding of the narrative.

There are no prolepses in *Saturday*, but reflections on what may happen in the future, as when Perowne reflects on Iraq: "There might not be a second UN resolution. The next weapons inspectors' report could also be inconclusive. The Iraqis might use biological weapons against the invasion force" (*S*:144-45). The use of the subjunctive mood in these sentences underlines the hypothetical character of the statements. These are Perowne's (and many others') fears of the future, which are presented. Also his personal destiny is reflected on in this way, as he visits his demented mother, he imagines "how in thirty-five years or less it could be him, stripped of everything he does and owns, a shrivelled figure meandering in front of Theo or Daisy, while they wait to leave and return to a life of which he'll have no comprehension" (*S*:165). Reflections like these are the only references to the future, besides such everyday references of things planned as e.g. Daisy coming home in the evening (*S*:6). The missing examples of prolepsis transcending the present of the first narrative mirror the theme of anxiety. The lack of prolepsis underlines the uncertainty of the future but the reflections on the future anyhow serve to elaborate on the storyworld by referring to a time after the present of the first narrative.

As such all events in the story and Perowne's thoughts are easily placed on a timeline in relation to each other, it does not seem to be McEwan's intention to complicate the temporal storyworld (re)construction in *Saturday*. The quite traditional temporal structure of *Saturday* implies that the storyworld is easily (re)constructed by the reader. The many analepses only serve to explain events leading up to the present and fill out gaps, furthermore, as they are integrated in the first narrative in

a stream-of-consciousness-like style of narration, there are no problems of understanding the connections between the past and the present. Stylistically, *Saturday* has been compared to modernist texts such as Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Joyce's *Ulysses* (Head 2007:192). However, a main difference to those novels is the specific placement in history of *Saturday*. Whereas *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses* likewise cover just one day these are no particular dates. In *Saturday*, the date for the anti-war protest has been chosen in order to set the temporal background for reflections regarding the approaching conflict in Iraq.

The precise placement in time evoked in both narratives indicates not only a wish to construct temporally coherent and authentic storyworlds but also to comment on the specific historical events through these storyworlds, which I will return to in chapter 7 from the perspective of narrative ethics. The historical settings of the Second World War viewed in retrospect and the present facing an unknown and surely conflict-ridden future form the basis of a discussion of themes of guilt, atonement, anxiety and personal responsibility. *Atonement* and *Saturday* temporally differently structured are examples of alternative ways of cueing readers to map temporally coherent storyworlds. McEwan's aim is not to destabilize and question (though he indicates the possibility of destabilization in *Atonement*). Rather he exploits the temporal possibilities of narratives in the construction of storyworlds which form the platform for thematic discussion. By employing traditional narrative means such as anachronies, the storyworlds are expanded upon and rendered more realistic and by exploiting the possibilities of duration and frequency, McEwan shows how these temporal aspects of narrative may be used to draw attention to certain aspects in the story. The incorporated destabilizing aspects of temporality reveal an awareness of also the limitations of narrative's capacity to pass on storyworlds with ordered events. These limitations are, as I have discussed, more hinted at than explicitly discussed. The temporal aspect of narrative is not problematized but thematized in *Atonement* and *Saturday* and this thematization of time does not imply an ontological destabilization of the storyworld, but draws attention to the importance of time in narrative and storyworld (re)construction.

4 Spatialization

41. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have discussed how the placement in time and the temporal relationships between events in *Atonement* and *Saturday* help readers (re)construct predominantly coherent storyworlds. Another crucial aspect of storyworld (re)construction is spatial reference, how narrative helps create mental representations of space. Herman states that "telling a story necessitates modelling and enabling others to model, an emergent constellation of spatially related entities" (2002:296). Both in *Atonement* and *Saturday* there are numerous spatial references which help the reader follow where in the storyworld the events take place and to track the movements of the characters in the storyworld. Spatial reference in both novels involves the overall geographical placement, i.e. *Saturday* takes place in London and part two of *Atonement* near and in the resort of Bray in France. However, also more specific spatial references are to be found; Briony looks at the Houses of Parliament (*A*:281) and Perowne sits in his car in Huntley Street (*S*:121). The references concern actual geographical places and enhance the illusion of the realness of the storyworld.

Compared to temporal aspects and the strategies of perspective taking, spatial aspects have been neglected by narratologists. Rimmon-Kenan writes in her afterword to *Narrative Fiction*, written almost twenty years later than her first edition, of space as one of many important aspects of narrative which were previously not discussed under the influence of structuralism (2007:138). On the other hand, she discusses in *Narrative Fiction* "models of coherence" in stories and states that "[c]ontiguity in space is [a] […] seemingly natural model" (2007:125), thus indicating how spatial reference may lend coherence to our perception of the world. Also Herman points to the failure in the structuralist tradition to follow up on A.-J. Greimas work "to make space a focal point of narratological research by the late 1960s" and argues that "[i]t is only now, when (socio)linguistic, cognitive, and narratological approaches to the study of narrative have finally started to converge that Greimas's prescient observations on space can be extended and refined" (2002:264). In the discussion of spatialization in relation to the cognitive processing of narrative, I will discuss how spatial reference plays a crucial role in the (re)construction of coherent, authentic storyworlds *and* functions to support themes on the level of content in *Atonement* and *Saturday*.

4.2 Rethinking the role of space in narrative

Herman refers to research in narrative theory showing "how ideas deriving from the analysis of narrative in general can be brought to bear on literary narrative in particular" (2002:263-64) and argues that readers are able to understand literary narratives "because they rely on many of the same linguistic and cognitive parameters guiding interpretation of stories told in conversational contexts" (2002:264). Accordingly, Herman in his discussion of spatialization combines narratological, linguistic, cognitive-scientific resources in order to make the claim that "spatial reference plays a crucial, not an optional or derivative role in stories" (2002:264). In other words, spatial reference is necessary to the (re)construction of a storyworld and of vital importance for the understanding of narratives. Later Herman defines spatial reference as a "core property that helps *constitute* narrative domains" (2002:296) using the locution *narrative domain* to underline how "narratives represent the world being told about as one having a specific spatial structure" (2002:264)

Herman's cognitive approach to narrative obviously involves a perspective on narrative different from the structuralist, he defines narrative as "a pattern of thinking and communicating, a cognitive style as well as a discourse genre, on the strength of which humans spatialize and thereby comprehend the world" (2002:298). Through linguistic or more broadly semiotic cues, narrative helps the reader map the emerging spatial structure of storyworlds as entities and individuals move through this (Herman 2002:22). In other words, narrative helps the reader create "mental representations of space" and to "*spatialize* storyworlds into evolving configurations of participants, objects, and places" (2002:263, org. italics).

Narrative may in this way be seen as making possible a "cognitive mapping" where readers are able to place things and events at locations within the storyworld (Herman 2002:265). This cognitive mapping on behalf of the reader is crucial and necessary in the understanding of narrative: "To know who or what is being referred to at a given point in a narrative text is to have the ability to build (or update) a mental model of where, within the storyworld, the thing referred to is located in time and space" (Herman 2002:270). The understanding of narrative is thus viewed as a dynamic process in which the reader, among many other things, is able to (re)construct the spatial frames of a storyworld and constantly revise these as required through the narrative. This, according to Herman, implies a rethinking of the relation between narrative and other text types and a blurring of the initial boundary of narrative and description (2002:265). Description previously being excluded

from narrative analysis results in a wrongful disregard of the importance of spatial reference in the understanding of narrative, however "[r]eference assignment is made possible when narrative texts cue readers to activate contextual frames, that is knowledge representations that store specific configurations of characters located at specific space-time coordinates in the storyworld" (Herman 2002:270). In the following sections, I will discuss this (re)construction of spatial contextual frames and encoding of emergent spatial relationships with regard to *Atonement* and *Saturday*.

4.3 *Atonement* – Several deictic shifts

> Beyond a certain age, a journey across the city becomes uncomfortably reflective (*A*:355).

In this quote, Briony driving in a cab through London on her 77th birthday refers to the many memories attached to various places around London. The quote expresses the importance of places in life and by implication in narrative and the emotional or cognitive response places may evoke. The description of the journey through the city includes numerous references to specific places in London, exemplifying the many spatial references in *Atonement* in general, helping the reader mentally build contextual frames – or spatially (re)construct the storyworld.

Crucial to the comprehension of spatial (re)construction is the notion of narrative prompting the reader to perform deictic shifts which may be seen as a revision of contextual frames. As mentioned in the previous chapter, deictic shifts in storytelling involve that the reader must relocate temporally *and* spatially. Herman explains how a frame story often before a framed story begins may prepare the listener/reader for such a shift (2002:272), but in *Atonement* this is obviously not the case causing a brief defamiliarization initially in each part. In part one, the actions are confined to the Tallis' country house and the grounds around it. Part two, on the other hand, is obviously located in a very different setting, which is at first not identified. The walk of Robbie and his two companions is described before they are spatially placed in the storyworld. A few pages later there are references to the "countryside" and it is made clear that they are heading for the coast (*A*:193), the Channel (*A*:203). The countryside is then identified as French (*A*:194) and the reference to the order to fall back on Dunkirk and Northern France (*A*:210) finally helps to place the events more specifically geographically. In this part there are several references to Robbie consulting the map (e.g. *A*:191). This mirrors the cognitive process of the reader gradually mapping the location in the storyworld by reference to specific places which Herman terms *landmarks* in the *region*[11] of

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[11] The terms regions, landmarks and paths were coined by Barbara Landau and Ray Jackendoff (Herman 2002:277).

Northern France. By initially not introducing the exact spatial placement, the narrative draws attention to the exhausting walk of the men and the universality of the horrors of war which the men encounter as emphasized in the first sentence: "There were horrors enough" (*A*:191).

Also in part three which starts by introducing an unspecified hospital (*A*:269), the reader is not immediately presented with the spatial location. There is a reference to the river and the unlit city (*A*:277), but not until the reference to how Briony "stared across at the Houses of Parliament" (*A*:281), a specific landmark, is the reader assured that this part takes place in London. Again this points to how the work in the hospital could have taken place in other cities and countries. The coda is as the only part of the novel directly introduced by spatio-temporal coordinates: "London, 1999" (351). This specific reference by doing the exact opposite than the previous parts also causes defamiliarization as it breaks the fictional illusion to a certain degree, which I will discuss further in chapter 6 concerning storytelling. Nevertheless, even though the in medias res beginnings of the first parts demand an abrupt mental relocation of the reader, which is maybe only gradually possible and not as quickly comprehended as with the coda, the many spatial references enable the reader to (re)construct contextual frames – a spatially coherent storyworld – and to place the different events, characters and their movements within it. Regarding landmarks, Herman argues that references to actual places "help readers map [the] progress through subregions […] and lend a sense of authenticity and credibility to the [narrative] account" (2002:281)[12]. The references to e.g. specific buildings in London enhance the illusion of the story taking place in the real world. The inclusion of various places shows how war affects different people in different parts of the world, both in the confined space and in the wider world.

The movements of the characters or the paths which they track through the storyworld of varying length are predominant in *Atonement*. Briony's run through the grounds around the country house (*A*:156-172), which I will discuss below, is confined to a smaller area than her walk as a young nurse through London (*A*:318-349) or Robbie's walk through northern France in part two, but these are all examples of how the description of the movements of the characters plays a major part in the narrative. As Herman explains it: "The notion of paths is an especially important one in narrative domains, since paths imply motion from one place to another and thus dynamic or emergent spatial properties of the sort characteristic of narratives" (2002:278). The detailed description of the

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[12] Herman makes this statement in connection with an analysis of a passage of Hemmingway's *A Moveable Feast*. The references to actual places have the same effect in McEwan's two novels.

movements of the characters through a storyworld substantiates the dynamic cognitive processing of the spatial structure of the storyworld. It is my claim that the paths in *Atonement* also serve to underline themes on the level of content.

Briony's movements in her search for the missing twins around the garden (part one, chapter thirteen) are described through detailed spatial references for the reader to be able to (re)construct her path through and the spatial structure of the storyworld. The description of her movements interrupts long passages representing her excited thoughts of the twins being gone, Robbie being a maniac and her epiphany of how to reflect the world in writing. The insertions of her location and movements in the storyworld constantly remind the reader of how this excited chain of thoughts corresponds with her running through the night:

> she kept close to the shadowed walls of the house at first, and ducked beneath the sills whenever she passed in front of a lighted window […] swung out boldly from the house in a wide arc that took her towards the stable block and the swimming pool […] broke into a loping run across the grass […] made her way round the stable block and stopped under the arched entrance, beneath the clock tower […] turned and continued towards the swimming pool (*A*:156-59).

Briony's run through the landscape around the house continues, but the quote above gives an idea of how the reader is invited to (re)construct her movements in the spatial dimensions of the storyworld. The quote is rich in motion verbs such as *swung*, *stopped*, *turned* and *continued* which obviously function to help spatialize the storyword, and as Herman argues motion verbs are "instrumental for the construction and updating of cognitive maps for storyworlds" (2002:282). The motion verbs in this passage are necessary in order to express the path Briony takes through the region of the grounds of the house passing several landmarks such as the stable block and the swimming pool. Herman states: "Landmarks, regions, and paths all play an important role in the report, facilitating cognitive mapping of the storyworld and, in particular, enabling the reader to chart the spatial trajectories along which the narrated events unfold" (2002:279). The reader is able to construct a mental map of the grounds around the house in a dynamic process as Briony tracks a path through the region. The description of the trajectory through the storyworld thus enables a spatial (re)construction. On the level of content, however, Briony's fast movements reflect her quickly developing chain of thoughts – echoing Cecilia running with her flowers through the grounds of the house earlier in the day (*A*:18). It seems impossible for Briony to keep still in her wish to act upon what she sees as Robbie's betrayal: "The pretence, and how she ached to expose

it!" (*A*:158). Ironically this aimless run through the grounds actually leads her to the raped Lola and the accusations of Robbie.

4.4 *Saturday* – Intense focus on London

> The street is fine, and the city, grand achievement of the living and all the dead
> who've ever lived here, is fine too, and robust. It won't easily be destroyed (*S*:77).

These are some of Perowne's thoughts as he is driving through London on his way to his squash game, before meeting Baxter. Optimism both about the traffic and the future of the city, linked to the people who created and are creating it, is expressed. Despite the optimism and the emphasis on the robustness of the city, the last sentence springs from a fear of terror. In other words, place in this passage represents people and is connected to anxiety, an anxiety caused by the inherent vulnerability of the city in the light of terrorism. The passage makes apparent how the many spatial references – the mentioning of numerous landmarks in the region of London – in *Saturday* not only serve to prompt the reader (re)construct a coherent storyworld and lend authenticity to this but also to draw attention to the constant threat to the city as possible target for a future terror attack.

Right from the beginning of the novel, the focus on space in *Saturday* is apparent. At first Perowne's bed and the bedroom are described in detail, then his walk to the three bedroom windows (*S*:3). As he opens the shutters and looks out, the room is located to be on the second floor (*S*:4) and the following description of Perowne's view from the window locates the house in the city of London. The bedroom is the spatial point of departure, and the end of *Saturday* is spatially marked as the return to this. Perowne moves through London on different errands during the day, however finishes the day at exactly the same place, this time closing the shutters of the bedroom windows and walking over to lie down in the bed (*S*:279). In this way, the spatial references enter a dialogue with the events in the story. The return to the spatial point of departure serves to put Perowne's development through the day, as referred to in the previous chapter, into perspective. The sleeping room is just the same, but Perowne has become more vulnerable.

In *Saturday*, the first narrative does not demand mental spatio-temporal shifts of the reader as it does in *Atonement*. As described in the previous chapter, there are no defamiliarizing jumps in time, and the spatial references match this temporal coherence. Whereas *Atonement* includes several geographical regions in England and France, the first narrative of *Saturday* is confined to London, the furthest away Perowne gets is to the suburb of Perivale as he visits his mother there (*S*:125). The

movements of Perowne from place to place – his paths – within the storyworld are narrated in detail, which I will discuss further below. These detailed descriptions serve to help the reader constantly locate Perowne precisely in the storyworld at any point in the narrative. The reader thus only needs to perform one initial deictic shift[13] and is then led through a spatio-temporal coherent path through London and Perowne's Saturday. As stated in the previous chapter, it seems to be McEwan's intention to enable easy storyworld (re)construction so that primary attention is given to the thematic level.

As in *Atonement*, the paths or trajectories which Perowne tracks through the storyworld cover longer or shorter distances. As Perowne arrives to the hospital to operate on Baxter the short walk towards the changing room is described: "[…] he steps out into the broad area that gives onto the double doors of the neurosurgical suite […] takes a long route down a corridor that will bring him through intensive care […] goes down the wide space between the beds […] goes straight to the changing room" (*S*:246). Perowne tracks a path through the subregion of the hospital passing several landmarks such as the neurosurgical suite and intensive care. There are several examples of motion verbs, e.g. *steps* and twice *goes*. Interestingly, the landmarks as such are presented as actors through verbal phrases – the broad area *gives onto* and the corridor *will bring* – though obviously the action is performed by Perowne moving through space. This way of focusing on the role of space as pseudo-active draws attention to the concern with spatialization in *Saturday*. The detailed description of this walk, an example of a deceleration of pace, emphasizes the importance of the coming operation, which may be seen as a sort of moral fulfilment, where Perowne makes up for his privileged position, cf. chapter 7.

An example of a path through the storyworld covering a long distance is to be found as Perowne goes to pick up his car and drive to the squash court. His path through the city may be mapped by references to several landmarks in the region of London:

> [Perowne] goes slowly up the mews and turns left, back into Warren Street. His squash club is in Huntley Street […]. He's heading a couple of blocks south in order to loop eastwards across the Tottenham Court Road […] swings the Mercedes east into Maple Street […]. He's passing the building at the foot of the Post Office Tower […] Henry is now parallel to and two blocks south of Warren Street (*S*:76-79).

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[13] The numerous analepses, of course, may be said to prompt several deictic shifts throughout the novel.

The verbal phrases of motion in this passage such as *goes*, *turn*, *is heading* etc. and the adverbs such as *left* and *south* serve to illustrate how Perowne tracks a path through London and the directionality of his movements. The landmarks mentioned in this passage are primarily names of actual streets of London lending authenticity to the (re)constructed storyworld. The alternative possible world which readers are prompted to make a deictic shift to (Herman 2002:271, referring to Ryan) appears more real as it is apparently spatially identical with the world as we know it. Again the detailed description of the path – a relative deceleration of pace – serves to draw attention to the passage. The whole part leading up to the meeting with Baxter (*S*:87) is described in detail. In this way, the walk and the drive, where nothing really happens, appear as a prolonged foreboding and stand in sharp contrast to the eventual confrontation with Baxter. The path leads to a turning point for Perowne and marks the stage just before this.

Both in *Atonement* and *Saturday* numerous spatial references, many to actual places, and a thematic concern with the importance of space in life and narrative are to be found. The descriptions of paths which the characters track through the storyworld by reference to various landmarks within specific regions simultaneously help the cognitive process of spatial (re)construction of the storyworld on behalf of the reader but also make the storyworlds appear both coherent and authentic as they seem to a large extent spatially identical to the world outside the narrative. Furthermore, the spatial references serve to underline points on the level of content. They reflect a concern with war affecting broadly in *Atonement* and a fear of terror in London in *Saturday* and the paths which the characters track through the storyworlds parallel their emotional development. With regard to space there is no destabilization in the narratives as I have shown and will show partly to be the case with temporalities and perspective – apart from the deictic shifts in *Atonement* which only result in a brief disorientation of the reader. An actual destabilization with regard to space would unsettle the (re)construction of the storyworlds, since spatial orientation, as stated above with reference to Herman, is crucial with regard to the understanding of narrative. A destabilization with regard to space is too radical in the light of the seeming concern with narrative as means for presenting moral discussions on the thematic level.

5 Perspective

5.1 Introduction

Having discussed the function of spatial and temporal aspects of the narratives, I will now turn to the perspective-taking strategies and how they function both to confirm the coherence of the storyworlds and to express a concern with consciousness and different ways of viewing the world in *Saturday* and *Atonement*. According to Herman "[t]here is no such thing as an aperspectival or nonprojective story, but rather ways of presenting a narrative in which the exigencies of perspective taking are more or less accentuated" (2002:302). A story will always be communicated through a certain perspective or certain perspectives; however, it may be more or less difficult for the reader to decipher aspects of perspective taking. Nevertheless, so Herman: "To comprehend a story, interpreters must be able to grasp the mode or modes of perspectival filtering that predominate within it" (2002:22). The modes of perspectival filtering are explicitly thematized in *Atonement* which is narrated from various perspectives, but also in *Saturday*, which is apparently consistently filtered perspectivally through the consciousness of the main character, there are alterations drawing attention to the problems and possibilities of perspective taking in the (re)construction of storyworlds.

In this chapter, I will briefly outline Herman's rethinking of perspective taking in narrative. Being interested in the cognitive dimensions of narrative perspective, Herman argues that it is necessary to bridge narratological accounts of focalization and ideas drawn from semantic theory (2002:328, cf. the following section). By drawing on possible-world semantics, he points to

> possibilities for an enriched typology of focalization – one that shifts emphasis from the (quasi-primitive) distinction between internal and external focalization, personal and impersonal narration, to the discrimination between modes of focalization as ways of encoding epistemic modalities in narrative discourse (2002:323).

In other words, focalization may be seen as a means of presenting different ways of seeing the world, which then in turn needs to be interpreted and decoded by the reader. On this theoretical basis, I will analyse aspects of focalization and discuss the function or meaning of these in storyworld (re)construction in *Atonement* and *Saturday*.

5.2 A new typology of focalization

To avoid confusion in narrative analysis "between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator? –* or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*" (Genette 1980:186), Genette called for a discrimination between narration and what he suggested to call focalization to avoid the visual connotations of previous terms such as point of view (1972:189), (Herman 2002:301-2). What both Rimmon-Kenan (2007:72) and, according to Herman (2002: 302, n. 1), Genette himself later pointed out is that this definition of focalization as 'who sees?' is not without visual connotations. Rimmon-Kenan suggests a broadening of the term "to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation" (2007:72). Herman formulates it thus:

> focalization is a way of talking about perceptual and conceptual frames, more or less inclusive or restricted, through which participants, situations, and events are presented in a narrative. Modes of focalization thus serve as markers of the way in which any mental model of narrated events will be perspectivally constrained, that is, built up in a projective fashion (2002:302).

Within the limits of structuralist typologies, it is not possible to account for what Herman terms *hypothetical focalization* (2002:310), referring to narratives that prompt speculation about a non-existent focalizor or about focalizing activity possibly performed by a participant in the story (2002:309). These limitations of structuralist typologies draw attention to the need "to rethink the nature and dynamics of focalization in general" (Herman 2002:310). In his cognitive approach to narratology, Herman reviews focalization including possible-worlds semantics. In the possible-worlds framework, the meanings of propositions are true in some possible world, though not necessarily in the reference world (2002:325). Assuming an analogy between modes of focalization and propositional attitudes, "focalization itself can be redescribed as the narrative transcription of attitudes of seeing, believing, speculating, and so forth, anchored in particular contexts or frames, that is, particular models of the way the world is" (Herman 2002:325-26). This implies that "by studying how language theorists have drawn on the semantics of possible worlds to map grammatical moods into epistemic modalities, and vice versa, narratologists can work toward a richer, better typology of focalization" (Herman 2002:326). As substitution for "the discontinuous model based on the distinction between internal and external focalization", Herman therefore suggests "a continuous model in which a range of perspective-taking strategies are distributed along a scale" (2002:310). These strategies encode different degrees of certainty in a storyworld and the

scale, along which the different types of focalization may be seen as distributed, can be defined as "a scale of epistemic deixis" (Herman 2002:326):

Figure 11. Modes of Focalization on a Scale of Epistemic Deixis

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     SHF   WHF EF<small>G</small>   IF   EF<small>R-K</small>/ZF
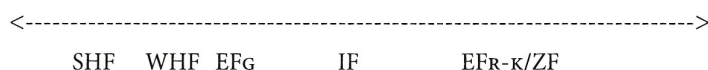
SHF = "Strong" Hypothetical Focalization

WHF = "Weak" Hypothetical Focalization

EF<small>G</small> = External Focalization in Genette's terms

IF = Internal Focalization (including fixed, variable, and multiple subtypes)

EF<small>R-K</small> = External Focalization in Rimmon-Kenan's terms

ZF = Zero Focalization (the equivalent of EF<small>R-K</small>)

(Herman 2002:327)

The upper boundary to the right expresses a high degree of certainty and represents "an epistemic stance encoding congruence between the expressed world and the reference world subtending the narrative" (Herman 2002:326). Down the scale are distributed types of focalization indicating an increasingly low degree of certainty. This understanding of types of focalization as expressing epistemic stances and as distributed along a continuous scale will be the point of departure for the analysis of focalization in *Atonement* and *Saturday*.

5.3 *Atonement* – Experimenting with perspective taking

> Cecilia knew she could not go on wasting her days in the stews of her untidied room, lying on her bed in a haze of smoke, chin propped on her hand, pins and needles spreading up through her arm as she read her way through Richardson's *Clarissa* (*A*:21).

This description of Cecilia's restlessness and emotional state in the beginning of *Atonement* is fairly easily recognized as filtered through the consciousness of Cecilia herself, cf. the verb *knew*. However, generally speaking the perspective-taking strategies in *Atonement* avoid any final definition. To use Rimmon-Kenan's expression, *Atonement* presents a low "degree of persistence" with regard to focalization (2007:78) as it shifts between variable, multiple and fixed internal focalization which are again interrupted by alterations. All three initial parts are narrated in third-person by an extradiegetic narrator, who initially also seems heterodiegetic. However, as the coda written in first-person reveals the old Briony to be the narrator of the first three parts, the reader

must revise his view on the narrator as homodiegetic in the first three parts.[14] As Head explains, "a full comprehension of the narrative technique is inevitably retrospective" (2007:163). There is thus interplay between the levels of focalization and narration, focalization in the framed story is (through the frame story) shown to be an illusion, a product of the consciousness of the old Briony. The understanding of the narrator as hetero- or homodiegetic is therefore indirectly linked with focalization.[15]

Part one is the most complex with regard to perspective taking. The fourteen chapters of part one all seem to be examples of fixed internal focalization with varying characters as focalizers. Six of the fourteen chapters are focalized primarily through Briony, three through Cecilia, two through Robbie, two through Emily, and one through Lola (and partly the twins). Accordingly part one may be defined as variable internal focalization. However, some events are narrated from a new perspective in the different chapters. Hence part of part one must be considered as an example of multiple internal focalization which, according to Herman, may be characterized as "the embedding or at least layering of belief contexts" (2002:326). The reader is presented with different ways of understanding the world. The most obvious example – and crucial to the understanding of the story – is of course the scene by the fountain, which is initially focalized through the perspective of Cecilia (*A*:26-31) and then through the misinterpreting Briony (*A*:38-39).[16] The different understandings of the scene by the fountain mirror the thematization of misinterpretation in the novel as such.[17] The shifts and alterations with regard to perspective-taking strategies complicate the storyworld (re)construction or, to use Fawley's terminology, the understanding of the reference world (Herman 2002:310). However, the reader is not really in doubt about what should be considered as true with regard to the reference world. Briony is shown to misinterpret the situation. She actually admits not comprehending the situation, but anyway is convinced that Robbie has a strange power over Cecilia (*A*:38). Rather than inscribing unsettling uncertainty in the storyworld, the employment of multiple internal focalization points to different ways of seeing, experiencing and (mis)interpreting the world.

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[14] The narrator of *Atonement* may be described as paradoxically extra-homodiegetic (Head 2007:164).

[15] I am aware of the problem pointed out by Genette about commenting on 'who speaks?' in a discussion of perspective, as this belongs to a different aspect of the narrative situation, which he terms voice (1972:186-89). Nevertheless it is relevant to explain here as it contributes to the understanding of aspects of perspective.

[16] Also Robbie's version of the scene is presented (*A*:79), but only as he thinks back on parts of it later, therefore it is not comparable to the two different versions presented through Cecilia and Briony as focalizers.

[17] Finney views the various instances of misinterpretation in *Atonement* as a warning to the reader of reading the novel as a classic realist text (2004:80).

Categorising part one as an example of variable internal focalization incorporating multiple internal focalization, with one fixed internal focalizer in each chapter, on a closer look turns out to be a simplification. In the first chapter, Briony is apparently the focalizer, which is obvious in the description of her thoughts on the casting of her freckled cousins for the play of Arabella which she has written for Leon: "Before lunch Briony slipped away to the empty rehearsal room – the nursery – and walked up and down the painted floorboards, *considering* her casting options. On the face of it, Arabella, whose hair was as dark as Briony's, was unlikely to be descended from freckled parents […]" (*A*:10, my italics). The verb *considering* makes clear that we now have access to Briony's thoughts, and the following passage, from which only the start is quoted here, is clearly the thoughts of the strong-minded child Briony, who takes her play very seriously. The self-important aspect of Briony's thoughts, however, suggests an ironic undertone here indicating a distance to these and thus the presence of another consciousness, the one of a critical narrator. This is strengthened by the later knowledge that the narrator is the old Briony taking a critical view on herself as a child. In chapter thirteen, an external[18] narrator-focalizer is likewise evoked initially: "*Within the half hour* Briony *would* commit her crime" (*A*:156, my italics). Both the initial adverbial evoking an instance of time beyond the presence of the first narrative and the use of *would* pointing towards the future from the past indicate a knowledge transcending what Briony knows at this point. The restrictions otherwise imposed on the narration by the narrator in order to limit herself to what Briony knows at the moment of action – 'paralipsis' (Genette 1980:199) – is thus interrupted here.

But it is not only the narrator-focalizer who is also evoked in chapter 1. Though the chapter seems almost entirely experienced by Briony, the perspective is not limited to her consciousness. As Briony presents her play to her mother, who proudly reads it and enjoys the physical nearness of her daughter, a short access to *her* consciousness is granted: "She took her daughter in her arms, onto her lap – ah, *that* hot smooth little body she *remembered* from its infancy, and still not gone from her, not quite yet – […]" (*A*:4, my italics). The use of the demonstrative pronoun *that* and the verb *remembering* signal that this insertion is focalized through Emily's consciousness which strictly speaking means that the chapter should be classified as variable instead of fixed internal focalization. As this insertion is an exception, however, I consider it an alteration in the

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[18] Herman uses the term external focalization in Rimmon-Kenan's sense (2002:304, note 5), which is also how I will use it. The distinction between external and internal focalization, thus refers to the position of the perceiver in relation to the story (Rimmon-Kenan 2007:75-76).

focalization, an excess of information, which Genette terms 'paralepsis' (1980:197), involving access to a consciousness otherwise hidden.

Finney briefly comments on the function of focalization in part one:

> McEwan employs this particular "modal determination" partly to distinguish his narrative from the classic realist novel's association with an omniscient narrator (Briony's lie came from positioning herself as such a narrator in her fictionalized scenario of events), partly to demonstrate Briony's, the adult narrator's, attempt to project herself into the thoughts and feelings of her characters, an act which we will see is crucial to her search for forgiveness (2004:75).

The perspective-taking strategies in part one in *Atonement* not only mirrors Briony's attempt to view events from various perspectives, but also on the next level McEwan's thematic concern with morality, guilt and anxiety. The interference of the narrator as focalizer both serves to underline the old Briony's relation to her characters with whom she is obviously personally involved and to lend more certainty to the narrative, cf. Herman's model of types of focalization.

In part two, not divided into chapters, fixed internal focalization is employed. This part starts in medias res with Robbie as focal character, who is not identified by name until pages later[19], as a soldier in France retreating to Dunkirk with two others:

> There were horrors enough, but it was *the* unexpected detail that threw him and afterwards would not let him go. When they reached *the* level crossing, after a three-mile walk along a narrow road, he *saw the* path he was looking for meandering off to *the* right, then dipping and rising towards a copse that covered a low hill to the north-west. They stopped so that he could consult *the* map. But it wasn't in his pocket, or tucked into his belt. Had he dropped it, or put it down at the last stop? He let his greatcoat fall on the ground and was reaching inside his jacket when he *realised. The* map was in his left hand and *must have been* there for over an hour (*A*:191, my italics).

The sentence "Had he dropped it, or put it down at the last stop?" must be interpreted as questions Robbie asks himself. The fact that the sentence is not marked out from the rest indicates that the whole passage should be seen as internal focalization. This claim is supported by grammatical markers. The use of the definite articles in the passage marks the description as filtered through the consciousness of Robbie. It says *the* path, even though the path has not been mentioned before, to indicate that for Robbie this is a particular path which he has been looking for and *the* right indicates a spatial orientation from a certain perspective. The verbs of cognition *saw* and *realised*

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[19] By his full name, Robbie Turner, (*A*:193) indicating the difference to the unworried Robbie of part one.

also points to the action as filtered through Robbie's perspective. The modal verb *must*, here expressing necessity, followed by the infinitive perfect illustrates Robbie reasoning that the map was there all the time. The passage thus illustrates the intense concern with Robbie's consciousness in part two. The fact that this part is dedicated to Robbie as focal character points to Briony's search for forgiveness, which Robbie is the only one who can grant. As he is dead she instead tries to project herself into his thoughts and feelings, but importantly does not let him forgive her, cf. chapter 7.

However, there are also passages in part two, as here a few pages later, where it is not so easy to determine whether we are dealing with fixed internal focalization or external focalization:

> He took out a cigarette and Corporal Mace lit it for him. Then, to conceal the trembling in his hands, Robbie Turner walked on, and they followed him, as they had followed him for two days now. Or was it three? He was lower in rank, but they followed and did everything he suggested, and to preserve their dignity, they teased him (*A*:193).

Again the question "Or was it three?" indicates doubt probably to be associated with Robbie's consciousness, which would justify ascribing the whole passage to his consciousness. In this case, the following sentence would be his interpretation of the behaviour of the two others. On the other hand, the last part could be seen as a shift to external focalization, the narrator observing the three from an extradiegetic vantage point thus indicating the narratorial presence of the old Briony and her involvement in the story.

Part three also starts in medias res: "The unease was not confined to the hospital. It *seemed* to rise with the turbulent brown river swollen by the April rains" (*A*:269, my italics). The use of *seemed*, a verb of perception, indicates again that the description is focalized through a consciousness, which is identified further down as belonging to the young nurse trainee, Briony. Through use of emotion and cognitive verbs, Briony's emotional state is passed on: "Briony's state of mind largely depended on how she stood that hour in the ward sister's opinion. She *felt* a coolness in her stomach whenever Sister Drummond's gaze fell on her. It was impossible to *know* whether you had done well. Briony *dreaded* her bad opinion" (*A*:274-75, my italics). The last three sentences all contain a verb pointing to the description as filtered through a consciousness, where the first *felt* and the last *dreaded* is clearly connected to Briony, the verb of cognition *know* is used with the third person pronoun one, thus simultaneously evoking Briony's consciousness but also those of the other

trainees, this collective access, however, is only granted with regard to the mutual fear of Sister Drummond. The focus on the young Briony's consciousness in part three is obviously due to a wish to explore her own feeling of guilt which already at this point permeates her life.

Thus both in parts two and three we find pretty stable presentations of perspectival filtering with Robbie and the young Briony as primary focalizers respectively. The in medias res start of the coda means that the reader must again at first decipher the perspectival filtering. The old Briony is now the intra- and homodiegetic, first person narrator. The coda is also an example of fixed internal focalization, which is linguistically identifiable by the many verbs of perception, cognition, and emotion in Briony's description of her last work on her book and her reflections on just having been diagnosed suffering from vascular dementia. She describes her way to the library:

> It was cold and wet, and I *was feeling* too troubled to go by public transport. I took a taxi from Regent's Park, and in the long crawl through central London I *thought* of those sad inmates of Bedlam who were once a source of general entertainment, and I *reflected* in a self-pitying way on how I was soon to join their ranks (*A*:353-54).

The coda being presented as a kind of diary results in the only stable presentation of perspectival filtering we encounter in *Atonement*. Everything is told from the old Briony's perspective. In this way, only one way of viewing the world is presented indicating a higher degree of certainty which is, however, undermined by her confession of adding a happy end to her story, cf. the discussion in the following chapter on storytelling.

The many shifts and alterations as regards focalization represent an experimenting approach to perspective taking. However, though different possible versions of events, different possible worlds are presented, these do not inscribe epistemological uncertainty in the narrative. Readers are never in doubt about what is true in the reference world, and as we are finally confronted with Briony as the author of the different parts, we are reassured of the coherence of the storyworld (although the fictionality of this is impossible to determine). The storyworld (re)construction is complicated through experimentation with perspective taking but not rendered impossible. The recurrent switches to external focalization in the previous parts, representing the far right on Herman's scale of epistemic deixis, furthermore indicate a firmly anchored certainty in the narration viewed as a whole, though an undermining of this cannot be excluded.

5.4 *Saturday* – Relative consistency through perspective taking

> Henry knows it's a trick of vision that makes him think he can see an outline now,
> a deeper black shape, a deeper black shape against the dark (*S*:16).

In this passage, Perowne observes the burning plane, and the verbs of cognition and perception clearly present him as focal character. *Saturday* is consistently narrated in third-person by an extra- and heterodiegetic narrator. As the novel describes one day in the life of Perowne, his actions and thoughts *are* the story, which is then – not surprisingly – focalized through his consciousness. Even though *Saturday* is characterized by a relative consistency with regard to perspective taking compared to *Atonement*, there are also alterations to the apparently easily definable fixed internal focalization. As Perowne wakes up and steps to the window, the reader is presented with the view through his eyes: "His vision – always good – *seems* to have sharpened. He *sees* the paving stone mica glistening in the pedestrianised square, pigeon excrement hardened by distance and cold into something almost beautiful, like a scattering of snow" (*S*:4-5, my italics). The visual aspect of focalization – Perowne is literally the one *who sees* here, the focalizer – is connected to the cognitive aspect, how Perowne perceives his sight, how it *seems* to him. Later on, as he sees the plane make a forced landing, the cognitive and the visual aspects are again connected: "He *does*n't immediately *understand* what he *sees*, though he *thinks* he does" (*S*:13, my italics). The verbs of cognition point to Perowne's consciousness, however, there seems to be a paradox in this sentence if it should origin from Perowne's consciousness; he thinks he understands what he sees, but this understanding is rendered false. As the story is narrated in present tense, Perowne cannot yet know that his understanding is wrong. The presence of another focalizing agent, i.e. the narrator as focalizer, is implicitly interfering, undermining the authority of Perowne's judgemental abilities at this moment.[20]

This evoking of external focalization is present throughout the novel as an example of paralepsis. As Perowne is preparing to operate on Baxter, the remark: "It is said that no one opens up faster than Henry Perowne" (*S*:251) might originate from another perspective, the one of an external narrator-focalizer having access to how other people see and discuss Perowne. If the mark is interpreted as focalized through Perowne it seems self-important and awkward. The same may be said of the description of the Perownes as parents, who are, "though permissive to a high degree, […] also possessive parents" (*S*:182). Again the comment seems to be evaluating from a position

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[20] The scene with Perowne observing and misinterpreting a situation from his bedroom window mirrors Briony's observation and misinterpretation of the scene at the fountain in *Atonement*.

outside Perowne's consciousness, and the use of *the Perownes* indicates a distance. The possible interference of an external narrator as focalizer partly serves to undermine the authority Perowne as main focal character and allows the reader to view his reflections and development from a distance.

The use of paralepsis also involves brief access to the consciousness of other characters. As the intruders enter the house in the evening, we seem to get – though very limited – access to the consciousness of the other family members "From Rosalind's reaction they *sense* a figure coming into the room before they *see* it. And still, the shape Perowne can see in the hall hangs back: he *realises* well *before* the others that there are two intruders in the house, not one" (*S*:206, my italics). This passage appears as if focalized through the family as a collective, what they *sense* and *see*, which points to their probably shared feelings in the traumatic experience. Though these verbs of perception could be Perowne transferring his own perception of the situation to the others, the claim that Perowne *realises* something *before* the others presupposes knowledge of when the others realise this. This utterance must – due to the fact that they cannot communicate within the family at this point – originate from an external focalizer. Later the feelings of Rosalind are narrated, presenting her as possible focalizer, when Perowne parts with her in order to operate on Baxter: "She is fingering the lapel of his coat, keeping him close. She doesn't want him to leave" (*S*:239). It is of course possible and probable that this is Perowne communicating how he interprets her feelings, however, the possibility of a shift to Rosalind as focal character cannot be excluded. Like in *Atonement* these shifts underline a concern with different ways of viewing the world. In the last example, Rosalind is actually afraid that Perowne goes to operate on Baxter to take revenge on him.

Another alteration to the otherwise seemingly fixed internal focalization is to be found, as Perowne has the aggressive game of squash with Jay Strauss and a possible focalizing act is attributed to an (imagined) passer-by: "If a passer-by *were to pause* by the glass back wall to watch, she'*d surely think* these elderly players were once rated, and even now still have a little fire. She *might* also wonder if this is a grudge match, there'*s* such straining desperation in the play" (*S*:113, my italics). This is an example of what Herman terms as direct hypothetical focalization as it "entails explicit mention of a counterfactual witness or observer" (2002:311). The hypotheticality is apparent in grammatical markers, the conjunction *if* and the subjunctive mood *were* express the possible but not actualized situation, or, to use Herman's terminology, a "candidate mental model" (2002:312). The adverb *surely* indicates certainty; the situation would look like this from the outside. But the use of

the subjunctive mood of the auxiliary verb *might* questions the truth value of the expressed world in relation to the reference world. The last part of the quote is narrated in the indicative, *there is*. This is not open for hypothetical wondering, but the actual situation, the reference world, which could cause this wondering. As such the quotation entails a confrontation between the expressed world and the reference world. The game between Strauss and Perowne is viewed from the distance, from outside the court. However due to the demonstrations, the squash courts (*S*:99) and the changing room (*S*:107) are described as deserted, and it is unlikely that someone should pass by and watch their game. Nevertheless it is not impossible and does not disturb the reference world; therefore this must be seen as an example of weak hypothetical focalization (Herman 2002:315). The expressed world does not deviate from the reference world. This is thus not an example of an ontological questioning of the reference world. To use Herman's expression, "the basic (ontological) contours are ultimately not in question" (2002:315). The use of hypothetical focalization here rather works to draw attention to the focalizing aspect of narrative in a self-aware manner, cf. Herman determining the function of hypothetical focalization as a counter-narrative device (2002:327), it evokes "possible worlds – in which the events *might* be represented as such" (2002:310). The employment of hypothetical focalization in this passage serves to draw attention to the aggression – obvious even to an outsider – in the game, cf. the discussion of the game as a turning point for Perowne in the previous chapters.

Another and more serious destabilizing factor in *Saturday* is the use of tense. Throughout the novel, *Saturday* is narrated in the present tense thus breaking with the conventional third person, past tense narrative. Herman does not include tense in his theoretical discussion; however it remains an important aspect of the narrative situation, which must be considered with regard to storyworld (re)construction here because, as regards *Saturday*, it involves an alienating break with conventions. The use of the present tense gives an illusionary feeling of the story taking place as one reads thus increasing the suspense and the authenticity of the storyworld and as Head observes, it is connected to McEwan's apparent wish to "engage with the immediacy of human consciousness" (2007:192) which I will return to in chapter 7 on narrative ethics. On the other hand, the use of the present tense also involves that the narrator does not have the same authority as the narrator in *Atonement* who narrates from a vantage point in the future and thus has an overview of the storyworld as it is being narrated. Narrating in the present tense strictly speaking implies that the narrating self, like the agent in the narrative, does not have this overview. The questioning – through the use of the present

tense – of the external narrator, which according to Herman involves most certainty, necessarily inscribes an unsettling instability in the narrative paradoxically at the same time as this aspect of the narrative situation increases the presence and authenticity of the storyworld. Nevertheless, as discussed above, the external narrator seems to have knowledge beyond Perowne's basis of experience adding more certainty to the storyworld.

Though a degree of uncertainty is inscribed through use of hypothetical focalization and especially the use of the present tense, the representation of the story pretty consistently through Perowne's consciousness implies a high degree of narrative certainty. The storyworld, or the reference world, is easily constructed and understood as seen from his perspective. Even though shifts to external focalization may inscribe some distance to the way he sees himself, the interference of an external narrator, who after all understands more of the storyworld than Perowne, only lends further certainty to the narrative. Both *Atonement* and *Saturday* thus seem to inscribe some uncertainty – by different means – which however does not affect the general understanding of the storyworlds. The variety of focalizing consciousness and the intense presence of one consciousness are both means of creating elaborate storyworlds, and the stability of these storyworlds is apparently secured by the more or less discrete and more or less authoritative presence of an external narrator. Both variable, multiple and fixed internal focalization, the access to the consciousness of several characters – though these turn out all to originate from one consciousness – and the limited but intense access to one consciousness, draw attention to an interest in psychological portrayal and open up for juxtaposition of different ways of perceiving the world. Both aspects function as suitable point of departure for presenting moral discussion.

6 Storytelling as theme – Metafiction and intertextuality

6.1 Introduction

I have discussed how coherent storyworlds may be (re)constructed with regard to temporalities, spatialization and perspective in the reading of *Atonement* and *Saturday* and shown how in most respects the two narratives operate within conventional frames of storytelling, but also how the possibility of destabilization is hinted at e.g. by a brief employment of fuzzy temporality and hypothetical focalization. It is my claim in this thesis that these deviations do not disturb the (re)construction of overall coherent storyworlds. Rather they indirectly point to the narratives as construction and to the world-creating power and function of narrative. These aspects in the narrative structures of the novels are reflected in a self-conscious thematization of storytelling both at the thematic and the formal level. In both *Atonement* and *Saturday*, storytelling is a main theme emphasized by the characters for different reasons being concerned with literature. It is shown to have great impact on readers and listeners and both novels display metafictional as well as intertextual aspects.

Waugh explains how metafiction has become "particularly prominent in the fiction of the last twenty years" but how it is nevertheless "a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels" (1995:42, org. italics). Furthermore, it is an "elastic term" covering a wide range of fiction (Waugh 1995:53). Metafiction is not limited to postmodern ontological destabilizing texts but also covers novels which in Waugh's words "take fictionality as theme to be explored" (1995:53). The tendency is that British fiction is placed in this less extreme half of the spectrum of metafictional texts (Waugh 1995:54) where the metafictional aspect primarily presents itself as a thematization of storytelling. Certainly fictionality is explored in McEwan's two novels, and this exploration points to the works as constructions. But in my opinion, the drawing attention to the constructed nature of the narratives is a necessary aspect of contemporary writing and should not be granted too much influence in an interpretation. As Finney formulates it: "McEwan shows himself to be a writer of his time, one whose fictions necessarily leave a trace of their own production" (2002:2). I interpret the self-conscious aspect of McEwan's fiction discussed in this chapter not as a postmodern exhaustion or problematization of representation, but rather as linked to an awareness of the power of fiction and what purposes it may serve. This chapter together with the previous ones lays the groundwork for the discussion of the coherent (re)constructed storyworlds pointing to their own construction

through aspects of their narrative macrodesigns and through a thematization of storytelling as basis of moral discussion in the following chapter.

6.2 *Atonement* – A work of fiction concerned with the making of fiction

> Did she really think she could hide behind some borrowed notions of modern writing, and drown her guilt in a stream – three streams! – of consciousness? (*A*:320).

This quote expresses Briony's reflections on her attempt to atone for her crime through writing her novella obviously inspired by Virginia Woolf[21]. It expresses a self-conscious understanding of the function of writing, draws attention to writing and the writer and admits a borrowing from modernist conventions. Briony draws attention to the impossibility of confronting her guilt if only the various consciousnesses are depicted as she initially plans watching the scene by the fountain[22]: "There did not have to be a moral. She need only show separate minds, as alive as her own, struggling with the idea that other minds were equally alive" (*A*:40). In first parts of *Atonement*, her final draft, she obviously has left her initial aim solely to present the streams-of-consciousness of different minds for a more plot-oriented style.[23] Briony's literary development goes from melodrama (cf. the following discussion of her play), through an amoral, modernist, stylistic experiment to a style incorporating modernist conventions but also discussing moral issues. These allusions to the production of fiction and literary conventions represent numerous implicit and explicit metafictional and intertextual references concerning storytelling in one way or the other in *Atonement*. As Finney observes, *Atonement* is "a work of fiction that is from beginning to the end concerned with the making of fiction" (2004:69).

Abrams defines the term intertextuality referring to Julia Kristeva:

> The term **intertextuality** […] is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and *allusions*, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are "always already" in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born (1999:317, org. boldface).

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[21] Cf. Cyril Connolly's letter of reply (*A*:312).
[22] With reference to an interview with McEwan, Finney interprets the quote above also as a critique of the ideology of modernism, as an indication that the modernist "prioritization of stylistic innovation" has "hidden moral consequences" (2004:72).
[23] Taking Connolly's letter and Briony's final draft as point of departure, Head discusses how *Atonement* may be seen as "an experiment in competing styles" (2007:158).

In these terms, the quotes from *Atonement* above are examples of an open and a more covert reference to and discussion of literary styles and conventions, to the stream-of-consciousness style, and the position of moral in narrative. The intertextual references draw attention to the production of fiction and are connected to the metafictional aspects. Like intertextuality, metafiction is a broad term which Abrams with reference to Robert Scholes explains as "an overall term for the growing class of novels which depart from realism and foreground the role of the author and reader in inventing and receiving fiction" (1999:196). The foregrounding of the author through the reference to Briony's literary production and development is obvious in the quoted passages even though this takes place on a fictional level. The foregrounding of Briony as author implicitly draws attention to McEwan as author of the novel on the next level.

Two of the main characters in *Atonement*, Cecilia and Robbie have studied literature at Cambridge. As Robbie is in prison and their letters are censored, they invent their own system of intertextual reference and coding. As replacement for affectionate expressions "they wrote about literature, and used characters as codes" (*A*:204). To express their longing, they refer to literary examples of other couples tragically separated. According to one of Cecilia's letters to Robbie in France, Briony also intended to study literature at Cambridge, but decided on nurse's training as a form of atonement (*A*:211) reflecting the atonement she throughout her lifetime seeks through writing. As a writer she is, however, also extremely conscious of literary conventions. The connection between the main characters and literary practise and analysis forms the point of departure for a natural integration of various intertextual references and metafictional aspects.

A passage from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, where, as Finney points out, "Catherine Moorland […] is reprimanded by Henry Tilney […] for her naïve response to events around her, [and] the victim of reading fiction - the Gothic romances of her day and failing to make a distinction between the fictive and the real" (2004:70), functions as epigraph for *Atonement*. As Finney argues, this initial reference to *Northanger Abbey* serves both as a warning and a guide to how the reader should understand and approach *Atonement*. Indirectly the reader is invited to compare Catherine Moorland to the main character Briony with her tendency to fictionalize life around her. As in *Northanger Abbey* we see a juxtaposition of experience and knowledge on the one hand and naivety on the other. The epigraph indicates how the adult Briony as narrator/author dissociates herself from the naïve 13-year-old Briony. It points to the child Briony's tendency to

confuse life and fiction and her wish to see the present as caused by how she jumps to conclusions about the past – a tendency referred to in chapter three concerning temporalities. This warning is of course supported by the thematization of (mis)interpretation evoked by the employment of multiple internal focalization as discussed in the previous chapter.[24] It is not possible to determine the originator of this epigraph as paratext, since it is not as the acknowledgements ended by McEwan's initials. This implicitly points to the problem of determining McEwan's role as author and if he distances himself to the old Briony as she to the child Briony, which I will return to below. Nevertheless, the reader is warned against the possible fatal consequences of fiction-making. But, as Finney argues, fiction-making is also Briony's way of atoning for her crime (2004:70). Hence an ambivalent relationship to fiction-making and the function of storytelling is presented in *Atonement*.

Also Head picks up on ambivalence towards storytelling and literature in *Atonement*: "What is most unsettling about *Atonement*, however, is the manner in which its own aesthetic structure, and the inherited literary tradition on which it feeds, is implicitly undermined" (2007:173). Head here refers to the thematic level. Robbie, having finished his literary studies, wishes to study medicine and the study of English literature seems to him "an absorbing parlour game, and reading books and having opinions about them, the desirable adjunct to a civilised existence" (*A*:91). As Head points out, Robbie's view on literature and the function of writing for Briony in *Atonement* suggest that "literature can offer no more than a form of consolation" (*A*:173). Nevertheless Robbie imagines himself being a better doctor having studied literature because what he has learned from literature about life is transferable to the real tragedies he would face as a doctor (*A*:93). Also Head, even though he focuses on an undermining of literature, continues:

> this anti-literary gesture is itself overtaken by Briony's faith in the consoling power of fiction […] Indeed, the empathetic creativity of complex fiction-making, underpinned by atonement and kindness, and signalled through metafictional device, is what *Atonement* pits against the horrors of the twentieth century (2007:174).

Head interprets the relation to fiction as occupying an important position in society, as a sort of counterweight. Both Head and Finney thus point to the possibility of consolation through literature – on a personal and collective level. However, they also both observe reservations towards literature; the danger of blindly believing in fiction and the minor role of fiction in relation to more palpable facets of life. In my opinion, all these aspects point to literature as a basis for discussion of

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[24] Also Finney comments on the successions of misinterpretations, and with focus on genre suggests that these are intended "to prevent the reader from misinterpreting the long Part One as a classic realist text" (2002:9).

emotions and moral questions while simultaneously warning against reaching any final conclusions through fiction.

The beginning of *Atonement* concerns *The Trials of Arabella* (*A*:3), the moralizing play which Briony has written for her brother Leon's homecoming to make him settle down (*A*:4). The play is described as her "first excursion into drama" (*A*:7) and ironically classified by the narrator as melodrama, which is simultaneously excused by Briony's naivety: "*The Trials of Arabella* may have been melodrama, but its author had yet to hear the term" (*A*:8). As Finney points out, the title of the play is another covert intertextual reference. Cecilia and Robbie at various instances discuss Richardson's *Clarissa*, and Arabella is the name of the sister of Clarissa (2004:73). As Finney states, the ironic literary references in *Atonement*, such as this one referring to another narrative very much concerned with morality, function "as a continuous reminder that the entire book is the final literary artefact of Briony, a professional author" (2004:74). This of course on the next level indirectly points to the novel as McEwan's construction.

The play of Arabella gives Briony many frustrations and as such marks her decision to become a prose writer: "In a story you only had to wish, you only had to write it down and you could have the world" (*A*:37). In her childish reflections on literature, stories and drama, Briony reflects on the possibilities of representation in a story:

> Reading a sentence and understanding it were the same thing […] There was no gap during which the symbols were unravelled. You saw the word *castle*, and it was there, seen from some distance, with woods in high summer spread before it, the air bluish and soft with smoke rising from the blacksmith's forge, and a cobbled road twisting away into the green shade (*A*:37).

This implicitly refers to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of signs as constituted by, in Abrams' rendering, "**signifier** (the speech sounds or written marks composing the sign) and **signified** (the conceptual meaning of the sign)" (1999:142, org. boldface). The connotations of just one word are for Briony the basis for the production and reception of fiction. In *Atonement* the interpretation, the individual connotations, of a word is shown to be dependent on the reader and may have fatal consequences. As Briony unallowed reads (the wrong version of) Robbie's letter to Cecilia (*A*:94)[25], she becomes acquainted with the word "cunt". The taboo-word is never actually mentioned in the

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[25] The more indirect version of Robbie's declaration of love to Cecilia should have been delivered. These two direct and indirect versions of the letter mirror the old Briony and McEwan's direct and indirect way of expressing themselves, cf. the end of this section.

chapter focalized through Briony and the reader only knows the actual word from a previous chapter focalized through Robbie (*A*:86). Rather Briony reflects for a long time on the meaning and the almost "onomatopoeic" appearance of the word, by which she refers to its *visual* expression (*A*:114). As she reveals the secret to the crying Lola she does not say the word out loud, but "spell[s] it out for her, backwards" (*A*:119). The unfamiliarity with the word does not prevent her from decoding its meaning. Instinctively she understands its denotations and on the basis of the letter makes up a story of Robbie as a great threat to her sister (*A*:114). Thus, Briony's naïve reflections on representation in stories are juxtaposed with the complex process of interpretation.

The individual connotations, the (mis)interpretations, of words and stories are linked to the power and influence of storytelling which in *Atonement* is to have devastating consequences and point to Briony's confusion of life and fiction. As she finds Lola raped she quickly draws her conclusions and expresses these in literary terms: "Everything connected. It was her own discovery. It was her story, the one that was writing itself around her" (*A*:166). Paradoxically, she both finds the story to be writing itself, to be autonomous, and to be hers indicating a notion of the story as possession and/or product of her imagination. A similar explicit reference to how storytelling has permeated life is found in a passage focalized through Robbie. Before going to dinner at the Tallis' house in the summer evening of 1935, he reflects on his life, and his previous and future education are expressed through literary terms: "There was a story he was plotting with himself as the hero, and already its opening had caused a little shock among his friends" (*A*:91). Robbie's reflections here and how Celia and he use characters as codes in their letters as referred to above emphasize how as Finney puts it "literature has […] entered deeply into the fabric of [their] lives" (2004:78). Literary terminology forms the basis of how they understand the world and express themselves. Robbie and Cecilia actually being characters in, on one level, Briony's and, on the next level, McEwan's novel has the effect that these reflections and actions in an ironic metafictional manner point to their fictive status as exactly characters (cf. Cecilia's strange awareness of being in a story in the discussion of fuzzy temporality). Simultaneously, the characters' way of reflecting and communicating through literary terminology points to literature and storytelling as a means for comprehending the world and expressing emotions.

As stated earlier, this function of storytelling is put into perspective by destabilizing aspects in *Atonement*, the most prominent of which are the initials and date *BT 1999* after the last part (*A*:349)

and the coda. These are obvious examples of how the role of the author is foregrounded. Briony Tallis of 1999 is revealed to be the author of the previous parts. In the coda, she refers to the letters from Mr Nettle (*A*:353) which have helped her reconstruct the retreat from Dunkirk with Robbie and to a colonel who corrected small details in her account such as the right expression for a weapon (*A*:359-60) adding verisimilitude to her story and enhancing the illusion of authenticity.[26] But the reader is disillusioned as the three parts of the book are shown to be her final novel: "I've been thinking about my last novel, the one that should have been my first. The earliest version, January 1940, the latest, March 1999, and in between, half a dozen of different drafts […] my fifty-nine-year assignment is over" (*A*:369). This novel is thus the last in a chain starting with the novella, she wrote as a young nurse. However, even though the illusion is partly broken, there is a sort of ambivalence towards the truthfulness of Briony's account. On the one hand, she emphasizes how she has changed nothing: "I've regarded it as my duty to disguise nothing – the names, the places, the exact circumstances – I put it all there as a matter of historical record" (*A*:369) and how this will have juridical consequences if she publishes her book (*A*:359). On the other hand, she defines her writing as a novel and admits having added a happy end to the story, not revealing that both Robbie and Cecilia actually died separately under the war (*A*:370). Thus, it is impossible to determine how to regard the previous parts as a novel or a historical account, a family biography, and what is truth and what is fiction.

The coda simultaneously verifies and disillusions and presents a very explicit author-type. This explicitness stands in sharp contrast to McEwan as an implicit author-type. He does not interrupt the coda like Briony includes shifts to external focalization in the first parts, and the only judgment he makes on Briony is through her own confession of fiction-making. This confession of having led the reader astray is openly made and does thus therefore not really disturb her reliability. Yet, that she suffers from vascular dementia might be seen to question her reliability with regard to a story mainly based on her own memory. Nevertheless even though the initials, the date and the coda draw attention to the story as a construct and confuse life and fiction, this is significantly done on the level of the story. Briony not McEwan is revealed as the author. As with the inscription of

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[26] With regard to part two, Head points out that the reader is invited to assume that it "is not pure invention, but […] a fictionalized account based on the testimony of Nettle" (2007:166). However, even this information leaves it indeterminable what is fact and what is fiction. With regard to the other parts, Briony's memory seems to be the only source.

destabilizing elements in otherwise coherent storyworlds, the disillusion is not total and the story is not rendered totally fictitious.

6.3 *Saturday* – Storytelling from a different perspective

> […] they left her with forty-one pages to go. When they returned they found her under a tree by the dovecote weeping, not for the story but because she had reached the end and emerged from a dream to grasp that it was all the creation of a woman she would never meet. She cried, she said, out of admiration, out of joy that such things could be made up (*S*:133).

> He thinks it would be no bad thing to understand what's meant, what Daisy means, by literary genius. He's not sure he's ever experienced it at first hand, despite various attempts. He even half doubts it existence (*S*:66).

In the first quote above, Perowne in an analepsis thinks back on his then 13-year-old daughter Daisy reading *Jane Eyre* at her grandfather's, the poet John Grammaticus, suggestion. Daisy ends up studying English literature at Oxford and later becomes a published poet (*S*:138). Parallel to the also 13-year-old Briony's reflections on writing discussed above, Daisy's awakening literary consciousness is described in this quote. Perowne explains how John Grammaticus "took charge of Daisy's reading" and made her read and recite passages from "all the obvious stuff", the classics of English literature (*S*:134). As opposed to Briony in *Atonement*, Daisy in *Saturday* is described through the eyes of her father, who tries to understand literature and dutifully reads what his adult daughter requests him to (*S*:134). The second quote expresses his wish – though not very heartfelt – to understand literary genius, and in this way come closer to his daughter, as well as his doubts about the existence of this. Thus *Saturday* like *Atonement* is based on characters concerned with literature and many overt intertextual references are made in connection with Perowne's readings on Daisy's suggestion. But with Perowne as focal character, literature is viewed from another perspective. Head discusses how the juxtaposition of Perowne and his "too literate daughter" (*S*:6) Daisy, despite the flaunting of Perowne's philistinism concerning literature, results in "scientific discovery [being] lauded as having a far greater social significance" than the study of literature (2007:178).

Saturday is also prefaced with an epigraph; an extract from Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (1964), which like the quote from *Northanger Abbey* in *Atonement* invites the reader to approach the novel in a certain way. Here, however, the paratext is obviously to be ascribed to the author as is convention.

McEwan wishes to draw a parallel between *Herzog* and *Saturday*. The main character Herzog's primary concern in this extract is what it means to be a man in an unequal world of constant change and how America exploits its superior role. The focus is on scientific progress and its (moral) consequences. This reference places *Saturday* in a literary tradition and points to thematic similarities. Also Perowne is concerned with the privileged life of himself and the West, which I will return to in the next chapter. Furthermore, this intertextual reference to a work also primarily employing the perspectival strategy of fixed internal focalization alludes to the problem of determining the focalizer in some passages in *Saturday*. In the passage quoted, the identity of the focalizer is initially unclear, no pronouns are mentioned until the last part where the second person singular pronoun 'you' is used in first a question then a statement. The last line of the extract "There, Herzog, thought Herzog, since you ask for the instance, is the way it runs" reveals Herzog as focalizer oddly in dialogue with himself. The previous part thus appears as an example of the narrative method of stream-of-consciousness. The pseudo-dialogue indicates a split personality and draws attention to divisions in *Saturday* between brain and consciousness, science and literature. The extract from *Herzog* thus both emphasizes thematic similarities, the problem of determining the focalizer and thereby the problem of interpretation and a shared concern with consciousness through stylistic similarities.

Like in *Atonement* there are in *Saturday*, though in this case covert, intertextual references to modernism, e.g. through stylistic resemblance to stream-of-consciousness. As Head puts it: "From a technical point of view, *Saturday* reveals literary parallels, of course, the most pertinent of which is the modernist stream-of-consciousness especially as enacted in novels that span a day, like *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway*" (2007:192). According to Abrams, stream-of-consciousness is most properly used as the inclusive term "denoting all the diverse means employed by authors to communicate the inclusive state and process of consciousness in a character" as opposed to the interior monologue where the author does not intervene or only minimally and does not "tidy the vagaries of the mental process into grammatical sentences or into logical or coherent order" (1999:299). In *Saturday*, Perowne's thoughts are presented as coherent and ordered and the analepses and anxious thoughts about the future grow organically out of the first narrative, as explained in relation to the temporal structure.

Supporting the stylistic resemblance, the ending of *Saturday* implicitly refers to modernism by alluding to James Joyce's "The Dead". As Perowne turns away from the window, he lies down by his wife and finally goes to sleep: "Blindly, he kisses her nape. There's always this, is one of his remaining thoughts. And then: there's only this. And at last, faintly, falling: this day's over" (*S*:279). This ending with the day faintly falling echoes the ending of "The Dead" where Gabriel at night lies next to his wife and realizes simultaneously what love must be and never to have felt it looking to the window hearing the snow: "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" (1996:256). The reference besides pointing to a connection to modernism underlines a difference between the two narratives and juxtaposes Gabriel's understanding of love with Perowne's. As opposed to Gabriel, Perowne finds the love he shares with his wife to be the only reliable fixed point in a world of anxiety. The stylistic parallel and intertextual allusion to modernism again draws attention to the prioritization of consciousness in the novel. There is very little conversation in *Saturday* and most of the story consists of Perowne's thoughts. The concern with consciousness which in McEwan's work is connected to a plot and specific historical events forms McEwan's point of departure for a reflective discussion of politics, ethics and moral. Also the covert reference to "The Dead" points to the problem of focalization in *Saturday*. As with the other covert intertextual allusions, it is not possible definitively to determine if this last sentence alluding to Joyce is to be ascribed to Perowne or the narrator, if he compares himself or is compared to Gabriel. Intertextuality in *Saturday* generally as in *Atonement* both functions to produce further meanings and expand on the possibilities of interpretation, and simultaneously points to the impossibility of any final interpretation.

The literary references in *Saturday* are connected to scientific references and reflections, as Perowne on Daisy's suggestion reads the biography of Darwin and a summary of *The Origin of Species* as preparation for a Conrad novel (*S*:6). Obviously, Darwin's theory of evolution suits Perowne better than the various literary works. As Perowne wakes up in part two of the novel, he hears again and again the quote from Darwin "*There is grandeur in this view of life*" (*S*:55, org. italics) which serves as a sort of leitmotif in *Saturday*. For Perowne as for Darwin the evolution is the grandeur of life. Referring to a walk once with Daisy, he again displays the conspicuous difference between them. Walking by a river, Daisy quotes the English poet Philip Larkin "If I were called in/ To construct a religion/ I should make use of water." Perowne's matter-of-fact answer to

this quote from Larkin's "Water", through which the beauty and purity of nature is expressed, is that "if he ever got the call, he'd make use of evolution. What better creation myth" (*S*:56). Science, evolution and rationalism make up the only sort of religion possible for Perowne. As a brain surgeon he does not doubt that one day "the [scientific] explanations will refine themselves into an irrefutable truth about consciousness […] That's the only kind of faith he has. There's grandeur in this view of life" (*S*:255). To Perowne consciousness is a product of physical processes, and as Head puts it "the grandeur is rooted in the rapidly advancing scientific understanding of consciousness" (2007:191). This juxtaposition of the scientific approach to consciousness through intertextual references to Darwin emphasized by Perowne's work and the modernist attempt to present consciousness through literature evokes an underlying tension between literature and science in the novel.

The intertextual references of course inscribe *Saturday* in a literary tradition and indirectly emphasize the constructed nature of the novel. On the other hand, the role of the author is not foregrounded in such a destabilizing fashion as in the coda of *Atonement*. Nevertheless, the power of storytelling, expressing the world-creating power of narrative[27], as discussed with regard to *Atonement* is also evoked in *Saturday* in connection with Daisy reciting Arnold's "Dover Beach"[28] from 1867 in an extreme situation. Baxter and Nigel have forced their way into the house where the whole Perowne family is gathered. Holding a knife at Rosalind (*S*:215ff), Baxter forces Daisy to take her clothes off and read aloud one of her poems from her proof copy of her first collection (*S*:219). The balance of power is disturbed as Daisy recites Arnold's poem pretending to read from her collection. As she is asked to read her poem a second time, "she turns back a page, and with more confidence, attempting the seductive, varied tone of a storyteller, entrancing a child, begins again" (*S*:221). The seductive tone indicates the power the storyteller has over the listener. The reference to an entranced child reflects the unpredictable, childish reaction of Baxter. But the situation also reflects the suspense which the reader of *Saturday* is held in, intensified by the use of the present tense. Baxter meanwhile has put away his knife and is unable to conceal his admiration of and excitement about the poem (*S*:222). The power of storytelling seems to conquer the physical threat in the situation. Daisy's proof copy is all Baxter wants to take from the Perownes (*S*:223). In

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[27] I here understand the term storytelling very broadly also to include poetry recital and news, cf. Herman's argument that his theory is applicable to all forms of narrative.

[28] This overt intertextual reference to "Dover Beach", which is printed at the end of *Saturday* of course invites the reader to draw parallels between the two texts. Head comments on the common theme of love at a personal level, individual responsibility and the absence of divine intervention (2007:190). The reference to the Peloponnesian war in the poem is echoed in the conflict in Iraq and the growing anxiety all over the world represented in *Saturday*.

this episode, literature and storytelling are revealed as serving actual purposes as exercising a power over the listeners. The subordinate position of literature to science and rationalism is for a moment forgotten.

According to Head, this scene is however more complex and not just "a simple celebration of the 'power' of poetry, though the emotional impact of poetry is strongly registered. The scene also emphasizes the unpredictability and subjectivity of the aesthetic response, as well as the contingency of life" (2007:189). It is not actually revealed what aspects of the poem make Baxter so excited, the situation being focalized through Perowne and Baxter's illness with its sudden mood shifts might be some of the cause for his reactions which would change the focus to neurological processes. But the reader is given access to Perowne's interpretations of the poem, which even in this situation also has a great impact on Perowne not comprehending that the poem is not Daisy's. At the first reading, where Perowne has just discovered Daisy's pregnancy, he sees before him the pregnant Daisy and her lover on a terrace overlooking a beach (*S*:220-1). At the second reading his focus is on Baxter and he imagines him alone standing at a window looking at the waves (*S*:221-2). Thus the world-creating power of narrative is also hinted at in *Saturday*. Hearing the poem Perowne constructs different storyworlds and "feels himself slipping through the words into the things they describe" (*S*:220). The fact that Perowne's interpretations vary and that Baxter's excited response may partly be ascribed to his condition[29] (*S*:223-24) indicate a view that also external circumstances play an important role in storyworld (re)construction and aesthetic response corresponding to Briony's misinterpretation of Robbie's letter in *Atonement*.

Storytelling in *Saturday* is shown to have the greatest impact connected to the fear of terror and the news story about the forced landing of the plane which Perowne is unable to put out of his mind (*S*:29,150,166). In a remark, which it is not possible with regard to focalization to ascribe definitely to Perowne or a superior narrator, this urge to follow the news is explained: "It's a condition of the times, this compulsion to hear how it stands with the world, and be joined to the generality, to a community of anxiety" (*S*:176). Just as Briony is doomed to rewrite her story again and again to confront her guilt, Perowne seems dependent on the development in the story about the plane. The information value in the news as opposed to the, for him, missing value of literary stories is what Perowne achieves from storytelling.

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[29] Despite this condition, Perowne realizes that Baxter intuitively has understood something about literature, which he never will, that the poem cast a spell on him (*S*:278-9).

As in *Atonement*, literature in *Saturday* appears as a means for communicating and comprehending the world. The communication between Daisy and Perowne is apparently centred on the novels she sends him from Paris. However, whereas the literary works of course take up some of Perowne's thoughts, he primarily brushes them aside with simplifying reflections such as these on *Anna Karenina* and *Madame Bovary*: "What did he grasp, after all? That adultery is understandable but wrong, that nineteenth-century women had a hard time of it, that Moscow and the Russian countryside and provincial France were just so" (*S*:67). Perowne does not understand life through literary terms like Briony, Cecilia and Robbie. Nevertheless, the literary allusions permeate *Saturday* as they do *Atonement* drawing attention to the constructed nature of the novels, placing them in a literary tradition and at times also guiding the reader how to approach the narratives. The act and power of storytelling is thematized in both novels. Briony both commits her crime and spends her life atoning for this through storytelling. In *Saturday*, storytelling is the turning point at the final confrontation between Baxter and the Perowne family and with regard to news stories, storytelling is essential for Perowne. The primary function of storytelling is connected to the anxiety of terror permeating *Saturday*, reflecting how storytelling is connected to the themes of guilt and atonement permeating *Atonement*.

7 Narrative ethics – Coherent storyworlds as a precondition of moral discussion

7.1 Introduction

In both *Atonement* and *Saturday*, emotions connected to moral issues are thematized. In *Atonement*, the sense of guilt permeates the narrative and is on the extradiegetic level of the coda explicitly pointed to as the reason for the writing of the initial parts of the novel. Connected to the sense of guilt are the themes of atonement, forgiveness and crime. The focus on guilt and crime on a personal level in relation to Briony is contextualized by and reflecting the historical background of the horrors of the Second World War. These themes and the focus on consciousness and different ways of interpreting the world, as discussed with regard to both focalization and storytelling, point to a thematization of – basically – how to live together with other people in the world. In *Saturday*, moral issues are likewise essential. They preoccupy the thoughts of the primary focal character, Perowne, and are thus given intense focus. Again the sense of guilt and the urge to atone on a personal level characterizing Perowne's encounter with Baxter reflects similar problems in the surrounding world, namely Saddam's regime and the approaching invasion of Iraq. These moral issues and the predominant feeling of anxiety are intertwined in *Saturday*.

In the previous chapters, with focus on temporalities, spatialization and perspective, I have shown how overall coherent storyworlds are (re)constructed in the process of reading *Saturday* and *Atonement* and explained how an analysis of the three macrodesigns points to themes on the level of content. The fact that the narratives evoke a mental representation of recognizable time and space eases the deictic shifts. The themes in the narratives are thereby granted primary attention and it becomes easier for the reader to relate to these. The self-consciousness hinted at through alterations in the macrodesign of the narratives and made overt in the formal and thematic focus on storytelling point to a concern with the function of literature in McEwan's novels. In this chapter, drawing on ideas from narrative ethics, I turn to this apparently intended function, i.e. to discuss moral issues, and thus to the second of my research questions in this thesis. Having established the coherent storyworld-(re)construction with regard to both novels, I will take this as basis of a discussion of how guilt and anxiety are thematized in *Atonement* and *Saturday*, and how these emotions point to moral issues.

7.2 Ethical criticism and McEwan's fiction

In his discussion of storyworld (re)construction, Herman argues that readers respond emotionally and imaginatively to the storyworlds they encounter: "[…] storyworlds are mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response, encompassing sympathy, the drawing of causal inferences, identification, evaluation, suspense, and so on" (2002:16). Feelings of sympathy and identification are necessarily linked to a presentation of emotions which the reader can relate to in the narrative. Furthermore, Herman defines one aspect of story logic as "the logic by virtue of which people (including writers) know when, how and why to use stories to enable themselves and others to find their way in the world" (2002:24). In other words, narratives may be seen as a means used consciously by writers and readers to navigate in and come to terms with living in the world in a cognitive process where emotions necessarily play a role. On this background, and because the novels thematically invite such an approach, I now introduce narrative ethics to expand on the more formal analysis carried out with regard to (re)construction of storyworlds.

Narrative ethics has emerged as a response to poststructuralism (Head 2007:13) and Schemberg explains the nature of this response thus:

> While "ethical critics" like Rorty, Booth, and Taylor agree with deconstructive critics that there is no such thing as an unequivocal, single, or stable meaning, they reject the Derridean dogma of turning *différance*, i.e. the principle of "the continuous (and endless) postponement or deferral of meaning", into an absolute. Ethical critics claim that in order to gain orientation in a world of uncharted diversity, human beings depend on structures of meaning. They hold that the pluriform discourse of literature constitutes an irreplaceable mode of acquainting us with a great number of meaningful ways of living "the good life" (2004:9).

Ethical critics thus represent a stand that literature may be meaning-giving with regard to moral living. They incorporate the poststructuralist notion of no final meaning and are, as Schemberg states, fully aware that patterns of meaning are "narratively created and recreated" (2004:31-32). Nevertheless, in ethical criticism this does not obstruct, as Schemberg expresses it, the striving towards "unity and wholeness in our lives" in which language and narrative (re)construction play a crucial role (2004:8).

This stance of the ethical critics involves a new view of the function of the novel. As Head puts it, ethical critics "reclaim the novel as a key site for the exploration of the human domain and moral

being", and in their view the novel as genre has "the capacity to achieve a unique form of moral philosophy, and particularly through its investigation of character, dilemma and moral agency" (2007:14). Further, Schemberg emphasizes literature as an obvious point of departure for moral discussion as it is "concerned with the circumstantial or singular aspects of moral living" (2004:13). A concern with morality and the basic and fundamental question of how one should live in literature implies that the reader can relate to the fictional universes and identify with the moral problems posed. Hence, according to Schemberg, who points to storytelling as "a mode of world-making", the turn in literature corresponding to the ethical turn in criticism is represented by novels which "evoke the existence of a real and familiar world outside the text in which the respective story could have taken place, but involve at the same time a significant degree of metafictional self-consciousness about their status as fiction" (2004:25). Schemberg does not comment on how this existence of a real and familiar world is evoked except from pointing to the "clearly mapped out temporal and geographical background[s]" in McEwan's novels (2004:26). However, this "world-making" and emphasis on authentic worlds with which the reader can identify is parallel to the cognitive process of coherent storyworld (re)construction which I have accounted for in the previous chapters. The possibility of (re)construction of coherent and authentic storyworlds may be seen as a precondition for moral and ethical discussion in literature in general and in McEwan's novels as representatives.

Schemberg and Head both point to a parallel between McEwan's fiction and the emergence of ethical criticism (Schemberg 2004:28, Head 2007:13). Schemberg emphasizes a general turn in British fiction beginning in the 1980s and 1990s where a new concern with plot-orientated storytelling as a reaction to postmodernism combines an interest in culture and history with social and ethical questions. Simultaneously she points to the inescapability of ethical questions (2004: 12,25). Head singles McEwan out as "the most significant of a number of writers […] who have resuscitated the link between morality and the novel for a whole generation, in ways that befit the historical pressures of their time" (2007:1). The concern in McEwan's writings with ethics corresponds with what Schemberg describes as "a keen awareness [characterising his novels] of the important structuring and meaning-giving task that narrative in general and fictional storytelling in particular perform in our lives" (2004:9). Schemberg, as Head also states in a note (2007:35), takes the parallel between McEwan's novels and ethical criticism further and observes how the growing interest in emotions in McEwan's fiction reflects a subtle turn in ethical criticism to focus on the

importance of emotions (2004:30-31). Ethical critic Martha Nussbaum emphasizes the connection between emotions and morality: "Instead of viewing morality as a system of principles to be grasped by the detached intellect, and emotions as motivations that either support or subvert our choices to act according to principle, we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning" (2003:1), (cf. Schemberg 2004:31). In the following sections, I wish to follow this turn in ethical criticism and focus on emotions. By taking the central emotions of guilt and anxiety in *Saturday* and *Atonement* as point of departure, I wish to explore the moral issues, which the reader is confronted with in the novels through the presentation of the emotions, and by implication the indirect discussion of how to live in the world.

7.3 *Atonement* – individual and collective guilt

> The problem these fifty-nine years has been this: how can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her absolute power of deciding the outcomes, she is also God? There is no one, no entity or higher form that she can appeal to, or be reconciled with, or that can forgive her. There is nothing outside her (*A*:371).

In the previous chapter, I referred to a connection between morality and fiction in the discussion of the young Briony realizing the importance of a moral aspect in storytelling. In this overt metafictional passage, the 77-year-old Briony reflects on a lifetime of rewriting the story of her false accusations of Robbie and their consequences as a sort of atonement. Disillusioned, she has realized the impossibility of forgiveness and relief from her guilt as she, being the author, has the final decision in all matters in her fictional universe.[30] The sense of guilt, which Briony cannot write herself out of, is presented in *Atonement* in more or less serious variants. Feelings of guilt on a more everyday level – Cecilia feels guilty for not looking out for the twins (*A*:100) and Briony feels guilty about, though justified in, opening the letter addressed to her sister (*A*:113) – anticipate the enormous guilt Briony is ridden by through her life.

Already in part one, Briony's continuous guilt is addressed in prolepses. The narrator reflects on Briony's reactions after her crime and describes, "[h]ow guilt refined the methods of self-torture, threading the beads of detail into an eternal loop, a rosary to be fingered for a lifetime" (*A*:173). The rosary as a metaphor for her lifelong rewriting of the story, her atonement, evokes connotations of Catholicism, confession and the possibility of absolution. But, as the previous quote indicates, the

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[30] Head takes this argument further and interprets the reflections on morality and fiction in *Atonement* as a problematization of the role of the author also in relation to McEwan's role as an author and the way he bases his stories on accounts from real life (2007:166ff).

religious reference is merely a metaphor and does not originate in a religious worldview. As author Briony is the highest authority and therefore not in a position where it is possible to receive absolution from a higher entity. In another prolepsis, the isolation caused by the sense of guilt is emphasized. The positions which Briony and Lola together agree to take up after the rape, Lola under pressure from the insistent Briony, were to "be pursued as demons *in private* for many years afterwards" (*A*:167, my italics). The girls do not keep in contact. Briony only sees Lola briefly at Lola's wedding (*A*:232-27) and when passing the Marshalls on her 77th birthday (*A*:358). The promise to Robbie to tell the truth to her parents and make a new statement signed by a solicitor (*A*:345) is shown to be fictitious as Robbie at that point is already dead at Dunkirk. She might have intended to make a new statement as referred to in Cecilia's letter to Robbie (*A*:212). Nevertheless, it is assumable that the only statement Briony makes is through her novel, which cannot be published as long as Lola and Marshall are alive (*A*:359). This isolated atonement of Briony's is countered by her practical work as a nurse during the war, where she pictures how one of the men could be Robbie and how she might help him (*A*:298). But as Robbie is already dead, this atonement likewise turns out to be fruitless, though as a nurse she is, as Cecilia puts it in her letter, useful in a practical way (*A*:212).

The crime Briony commits through fiction-making, her attempt to atone and the impossibility of forgiveness are reflected in other aspects of the novel. The crime of the rape, which Briony ascribes to Robbie, and Cecilia and Robbie to Danny Hardman (*A*:346), is committed by the chocolate magnate, Paul Marshall. A fact that is hinted at already before the rape takes place, e.g. when Marshall offers Lola one of his Amo bars and closely watches her eat it (*A*:62). This Amo bar becomes a recurrent symbol of Marshall's guilt through the novel. It manifests his first meeting with Lola and how he sullies her.[31] As Lola later becomes Marshall's wife, she will, as Cecilia points out, always cover for him (*A*:347) and is thus his (and Briony's) accomplice. The Amo bar also symbolises Marshall taking advantage of the war to promote his chocolate and lay the foundation of his fortune. Marshal hopes for a war for personal benefit which becomes clear e.g. in his discussion with Lola's brothers (*A*:62). The theoretical idea of an Amo bar in every soldier's bag, which is Marshall's vision, is later linked to the actual horrors of the war. After a Stuka attack crushing among others a young terrified woman and her little son, Nettle and the shocked Robbie share an Amo bar (*A*:239) and Briony taking care of the unending flow of badly wounded soldiers

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[31] Lola's name may be an implicit intertextual reference to Nabokov's *Lolita* (Finney referring to a review of Phil Baker 2004:74).

finds crumbs of Amo bars in their pockets (*A*:304). Marshall's selfish wish for a war is thus juxtaposed with the tragic consequences of war and he stands as a symbol for both individual and collective crime, taking advantage of Lola (and letting Robbie take the blame) *and* of the situation of war. In the coda, Briony refers to the charity of Marshall's foundation. No passages are focalized through Marshall, but Briony speculates "[p]erhaps he's spent a lifetime making amends. Or perhaps he just swept onwards without a thought, to live the life that was always his" (*A*:357:58). For Marshall there can obviously be no forgiveness, but it remains unclear if he feels guilt and seeks atonement the way Briony does.

Marshall thus encompasses the individual and the collective guilt. However, also for Briony the war and her personal guilt become interlinked as she realizes how the war might hinder a reunion between Cecilia and Robbie: "Her secret torment and the public upheaval of war had always seemed separate worlds, but now she understood how the war might compound her crime" (*A*:288). Expanding on Briony's reflections here, crime and guilt are treated as a general condition of society during the war in *Atonement*. The horrors are made explicit both in part two focalized through Robbie as a soldier and in part three focalized through Briony taking care of the wounded soldiers. Robbie himself reflects on the parallel between his personal destiny and the state of the world when thinking of his previous life in Cambridge: "It seemed another man's life to him now. A dead civilisation. First his own life ruined, then everybody else's" (*A*:217). This ruin is connected to a collective moral degeneration pictured through how the soldiers are forced to leave wounded in the need of help (*A*:242) and through the episode with the RAF man almost being lynched as an impotent reaction of the frustrated soldiers holding him responsible for the RAF's incapability of protecting the army (*A*:250-54). But the moral responsibility is described as extending to the whole community not just the war zones, cf. the inclusion of various regions through spatial references. As the wounded soldiers start coming in in London, Briony feels shame that she and her friend Fiona had been laughing in the park minutes ago (*A*:292).

The crimes of the war are put into perspective by an emphasis on innocent victims epitomized by Briony's meeting the dying French boy (*A*:305-10) and the torn off child's leg, which Robbie sees in France (*A*:192). In the loss of innocence, everyone is declared guilty, and Robbie reflects on the guilt falsely attached to himself:

> But what was guilt these days? It was cheap. Everyone was guilty, and no one was. No one would be redeemed by a change of evidence, for there weren't enough people, enough paper and pens, enough patience and peace, to take down the statements of all the witnesses and gather in the facts. The witnesses were guilty too (*A*:261).[32]

Though long in the past, the horrors of the war and this collective guilt stay relevant. The old Briony states "scholars now gather to research the collective insanity of war" in the Imperial War Museum (*A*:353) and the inclusion of the present of 1999 in *Atonement* indicates how the moral problems of war reflected in Briony's sense of guilt are still relevant to discuss.

Atonement may be viewed as an exploration of the insanity of the Second World War in particular and more generally of moral problems of guilt and atonement. Guilt in *Atonement* is connected to a thoroughly unsympathetic character like Marshall, a connection which the reader can easily comprehend and judge. The moral judgement is made easier as no part of the story is focalized through Marshall, which indicates a distance to him as a character in a narrative otherwise very much concerned with different perspectives and renders any reader-identification impossible. However, as Briony, who is both the primary focal character and who turns out to be the (apparently reliable) narrator, and everyone else are claimed to be somehow guilty, the complexity of guilt both on a collective and a personal level is flaunted. The novel provides no easy answers. Referring to a difference between Iris Murdoch and McEwan, Head observes this denial of any final meaning in the novel: "*Atonement* presents narrative fiction as having centrally *to do* with moral questions, without necessarily being able to *resolve* them. Indeed *Atonement* provokes reflection on moral responsibility that is *tortuous*, rather than efficacious" (2007:160, org. italics). This denial of moral judgment reflects a predominant trait in *Atonement* generally stressed by critics, namely the focus on fiction as a means of being able to imagine what it is like to be someone else (Finney 2004:80, Schemberg 2004:84-85,87, Head 2007:9). The use of different focalizers, as stated previously, is for Briony – and at the next level for McEwan – a means of putting oneself in the minds of the others without prejudice. The ongoing attempt of imaginative projection into the feelings of others is what *Atonement* pits against the guilt caused by self-absorption as manifested through the characters of the child Briony and the exploiter Marshall.

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[32] Head interprets these reflections as the old Briony's rhetorical trick to allow her crime to be subsumed in and overshadowed by the larger crimes of the twentieth-century (2007:171). In my opinion, the intense focus on Briony's guilt, however, rather indicates parallels between the collective and the individual crime than a relation of subordination.

7.4 *Saturday* – Anxiety as a condition of life

> ’[…] If you think that's a good idea, fine, say so, make the argument, but don't hedge your bets. Are we sending the troops in or not? It's happening now. And making guesses about the future is what you do sometimes when you make a moral choice. It's called thinking through the consequences. I'm against this war because I think terrible things are going to happen. You seem to think good will come of it, but you won't stand by what you believe.' He considers, and says, 'It's true. I honestly think I could be wrong' (*S*:188).

In this passage, Daisy and Perowne discuss the invasion of Iraq. Daisy coming directly from the antiwar demonstration is against the war (*S*:185). Perowne, who has treated an Iraqi professor, heard of his experiences with the regime of Saddam and subsequently read about it, is more reluctant to simply to be against an invasion though he might previously have taken up this point of view (*S*:72). He "can't feel, as the marchers themselves probably can, that they have an exclusive hold on moral discernment" (*S*:73). This hesitation to judge and make a moral choice, which mirrors the denial of moral judgment in *Atonement*, provokes his uncompromising daughter. In diametrical opposition to Daisy's conviction *against* the war, stands the view of the American Jay Strauss, Perowne's colleague and squash partner. According to Jay, "Iraq is a rotten state, a natural ally of terrorists, bound to cause mischief at some point and may as well be taken out now while the US military is feeling perky after Afghanistan. And by taken out, he insists he means liberated and democratised" (*S*:100). This crude view on the tensed situation has the opposite effect on Perowne: "Whenever he talks to Jay, Henry finds himself tending towards the anti-war camp" (*S*:100). Schemberg observes how "different versions of the world are juxtaposed" in McEwan's previous novels *The Child in Time*, *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* (2004:30). This juxtaposition is obviously also prominent in *Saturday*. Stylistically, like the employment of variable, multiple internal focalization in *Atonement*, the fixed internal focalization, echoing the style of stream-of-consciousness, and the immediacy evoked by the use of present tense (cf. chapter 5) foreground a concern with consciousness and thereby unavoidably moral reflection. In *Saturday*, Perowne's moral reflections circle around the predominating anxiety and the difficulty of finding appropriate solutions.

The moral choice, which Daisy refers to, is only to be made on a personal, hypothetical level. Perowne as an individual does not have any influence on the outcome of events. The approaching invasion seems to be a living condition like the general fear of terror and the growing anxiety of the present time. As mentioned previously, these problems connected to the problem of Iraq are present

throughout the novel adding a general feeling of insecurity to the storyworld. In the previous chapter, I pointed to news as occupying the sovereign position with regard to storytelling in *Saturday*. Perowne is addicted to hearing news especially about the story of the plane he saw in the morning. Oddly he thinks he can learn something about himself from the story (*S*:179) and thus expresses a connection about his emotional state, his anxiousness, and the story of the plane. Nevertheless, he is also paradoxically aware that it is "an illusion, to believe himself active in the story" (*S*:180). As the story is revealed to be harmless this does not comfort him: "Good news, but […] Henry feels no particular pleasure, not even relief. Have his anxieties been making a fool of him? It's part of the new order, this narrowing of mental freedom, of his right to roam. Not so long ago his thoughts ranged more unpredictably, over a longer list of subjects" (*S*:180). Despite the danger having been warded off this time, the possibility of a terror attack can never be excluded. The fear of terror and the troubling state of the world cannot be remedied and is everywhere in society (e.g. *S*:11-12, 80-81), and through the news Perowne finds himself connected to a "community of anxiety" (*S*:176). The anxiety everywhere around him preoccupies his mind throughout the day and is structurally underlined by the intense focus on London as a vulnerable big city through the many spatial references.

The collective anxiety and the reduced freedom are reflected on a more personal level. The house of the Perownes is safely secured against the outside world with "three stout Banham locks, two black iron bolts as old as the house, two tempered steel security chains, a spyhole with a brass cover, the box of electronics that works the Entryphone system, the red panic button, the alarm pad with its softly gleaming digits" (*S*:37). Nevertheless all these measures do not keep Baxter out like the security measures on the level of the society can never make any full guarantees against terror. The invasion of the Perowne house on a personal level mirrors the state of the world and epitomizes the feeling of anxiety.[33] Baxter's intrusion is both an example of the contingency of life – Perowne might as well not have hit Baxter's car in the morning –, and it points to inequalities both with regard to class and genetics. Henry is clearly aware of these inequalities in his way of observing Baxter "who has so little that is not wrecked by his defective gene, and who is soon to have even less" (*S*:228). The Perownes, on the other hand, are obviously leading a privileged life, exemplified e.g. by Perowne owning a "silver Mercedes S500 with cream upholstery". Apparently he is *no longer* embarrassed about it, but characterizes it as "simply a sensual part of what he regards as his

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[33] Head also draws the parallel between the threat to the security of the Perowne family and the broader insecurity of the West (2007:181).

overgenerous share of the world's goods. If he didn't own it, he tries to tell himself, someone else would" (*S*:75). Due to the problem of determining the mode of focalization here, it is difficult to judge whether Perowne himself is aware of his self-delusion or if this is attached to him by the narrator. Nevertheless, the passage points to the problem of unequally distributed goods in the world. The fact that Perowne is no longer embarrassed about his car as he used to be points to a resignation in his view on these inequalities, a feeling of not being able to change anything. This feeling is obvious already in the morning. As Perowne, from his window, watches a fight between a young drug addict girl with amphetamine-driven formication and her pusher boyfriend (*S*:60), he actually considers running after her with a prescription to reverse the effect (*S*:65). However realizing that she needs more than what he can offer, he instead goes down to the kitchen to watch the news.

The feeling of being able to live his privileged life only by chance is manifested in Perowne's brief meeting with a street sweeper in the morning: "For a vertiginous moment Henry feels himself bound to the other man, as though on a seesaw with him, pinned to an axis that could tip them into each other's life" (*S*:74). Perowne feels how the roles might as well have been differently distributed, and there is an echo of the extract from *Herzog*, referred to in the previous chapter, through the metaphoric brotherhood between the two men. In the evening on his way to the hospital to operate on Baxter, Perowne recognizes the sweeper, who has worked the whole day and now works overtime after the day's demonstrations (*S*:244). The two brief encounters underline the parallelism between the two men despite their very different fates.

The thematization of equality between people and contingency of fate disturbing this equality is manifested through focus on empathy and moral responsibility in *Saturday* broadened to the surrounding environment. As Perowne goes to the fishmonger, he thinks of "the emptying seas" and later refers to new knowledge that "even fish feel pain. This is the growing complication of the modern condition, the expanding circle of moral sympathy" (*S*:127). However, this empathy seems fruitless as the modern condition also implies a life based on exploitation of natural resources[34]. The moral sympathy may be seen as linked to Perowne's awareness and sense of guilt of being privileged in relation to men like Baxter and the street sweeper. Maybe this feeling plays a part in his reactions after Theo and he have thrown Baxter down the stairs. Immediately after the fall,

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[34] Discussing this passage, Head points to an ethical paradox in *Saturday* (2007:184).

Perowne provides first aid to Baxter, though he is aware he could have pleaded incapacity through shock (*S*:230). As Jay unknowing of Perowne's implication in the case later calls Perowne in to operate on Baxter, he accepts (*S*:233). Even though Perowne also feels anger towards Baxter: "What weakness, what delusional folly, to permit yourself sympathy towards a man, sick or not, who invades your house like this" (*S*:230), he decides to persuade the family not to pursue charges because of the nightmare Baxter already faces suffering from Huntingdon's disease (*S*:278). Perowne seems aware that forgiving Baxter might be linked to an attempt to achieve personal atonement[35]: "Is this forgiveness? Probably not, he doesn't know, and he's not the one to be granting it anyway. Or is he the one seeking forgiveness?" (*S*:278). Not regarding the motives, Perowne is clearly doing the right thing and not even thinking of revenge as Rosalind briefly fears (*S*:239). He goes through with the operation despite what happened and after the operation sits by the still anaesthetized Baxter and holds his hand as an act of sympathy (*S*:262:263). Because of these actions, Head claims that Perowne is "hailed as the champion of moral stability" (2007:185).

However, moral stability and responsibility on a personal level and the complexity of the moral problems in the wider world are juxtaposed. The empathy and moral responsibility on a personal level which Perowne acts upon in relation to Baxter appear as the only possibility like love on a personal level, cf. the discussion of his love for Rosalind in the previous chapter. No solutions are suggested to the greater problems in the world like the invasion of Iraq, fear of terror and the general anxiety permeating society. *Saturday* and *Atonement* thus in different ways discuss moral issues through a thematization of emotions without providing any final answers. In *Atonement*, the focus on personal and collective guilt draws on the Second World War and is transmitted through the (re)construction of a storyworld corresponding to this historical period. In *Saturday*, the underlying feeling of anxiety also connected to guilt on both the personal and collective level draws on the (re)constructed storyworld of an uncertain present achieving its power through the reader's prior knowledge of 9/11.

In *Atonement*, "Briony's crime is a crime of the imagination […] a crime caused by both an excess of imagination and a failure of imaginative projection into the other" (Schemberg 2004:86). Briony makes up her false accusation on the background of self-absorbed narrow-mindedness mirroring how Marshall cannot project himself into the feelings of others and hopes for a war solely for

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[35] Cf. Head (2007:195).

personal benefit. As Schemberg formulates it, Briony's continuous rewriting is a means of projecting herself into the feelings of Robbie and Cecilia and thus an act of compassion (2004:86). This compassion through projective imagination is what *Atonement* pits against the paramount guilt connected to the crime which can of course not be undone and indirectly against the crimes of the war. Perowne's decision to help Baxter and try to persuade the family not to bring a charge against him may also be seen as caused by his ability to project himself into Baxter's situation[36], as an act of compassion. Again this compassion is pitted against the overall feeling of anxiety caused exactly by the missing ability of groups in society to see things from other perspectives as represented by the Daisy and Jay Strauss' differing uncompromising standpoints. In line with the awareness of destabilization and fiction as construction, McEwan's novels do not provide any final answers or a final Truth. Instead both novels very simply suggest a compassionate approach to other people as a way of living the meaningful and good life.

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[36] Through the operation Perowne may be seen as symbolically entering the mind of Baxter, cf. the discussion of how Perowne views consciousness as neurological processes in the brain in the previous chapter.

8 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how the fictional universes of McEwan's two novels *Atonement* and *Saturday* captivate the reader, and further how this apparently self-consciously used captivating effect may be linked to a concern with the function of narrative fiction. Hence my two research questions:

How does Ian McEwan self-consciously construct and prompt readers to (re)construct elaborate, coherent fictional universes in his recent novels *Atonement* (2002) and *Saturday* (2006)? How does this (re)construction allow an engagement with moral issues?

In his editorial introduction to *Narratologies*, Herman points to a minor narratological renaissance recontextualising classical models for narratological research (1999:1), a move to a postclassical phase with new perspectives on the forms and functions of narrative itself (1999:2-3). The cognitive approach to narratology which Herman presents later in *Story Logic* (2002), where he problematizes and develops the structuralist approach, is one new perspective. Herman's ideas of the worldcreating power of narrative, and how storyworlds are (re)constructed through a cognitive processing of narrative – combined with discussions of classical narratological terms in order to explore the quite conventional structures of McEwan's narratives – have formed the theoretical basis for answering the first of my research questions.

Through the analysis of the selected three aspects of narrative macrodesign, temporalities, spatialization and perspective, I have argued that in the reading of both *Atonement* and *Saturday* overall coherent and elaborate storyworlds are (re)constructed. As discussed in chapter 3 concerning spatialization, Herman argues that references to non-fictional landmarks lend authenticity to the storyworlds. Expanding on this, I have claimed that both spatial and temporal references function as lending authenticity to the storyworlds. The precise spatio-temporal references in both narratives, prompting readers to make deictic shifts, locate *Atonement* and *Saturday* in geographical space and historical time: *Atonement* in England and France around the Second World War, including London in 1999 through the coda, and *Saturday* in London on February the 15th 2003. The comprehension of both narratives necessitates that the reader cannot only recognise the spatial and temporal (re)constructed storyworlds, but is also based on reader

associations, i.e. the full comprehension of the anxiety in *Saturday* presupposes a knowledge of the state of the world after 9/11, and the comprehension of part two in *Atonement* presupposes historical knowledge of the Second World War. This claim, involving a prior knowledge of the reader, contrasts with the apparent transhistoric notion of the reader in the cognitive approach which I referred to in the introduction. The transhistoric notion of the reader, the understanding of narrative as merely a cognitive process does not explain reader reactions to the particular temporal and spatial aspects of narratives. However, as discussed in chapter 3 concerning temporalities, though Herman represents a cognitive approach, he also includes the historical circumstances in his analysis of Segher's short story, where the particular (re)constructed spatio-temporal aspect of the storyworld is crucial to the narrative comprehension as in McEwan's narratives.

As regards the temporal structure of the narratives, I have discussed the relative complexity of *Atonement* compared to *Saturday*. It spans a longer period on the level of the first narrative, from 1935 to 1999, and thus presents jumps in time. The anachronies, both analepses and prolepses, elaborate on the storyworld and the prolepses anticipate the final revelation of the identity of the narrator and her declination to fiction-making. The narrative varies in pace and at certain points takes the form of a repeating narrative. Both aspects draw attention to certain events and emphasise the permeating sense of guilt. Further, there are aspects of *Atonement* which may fruitfully be discussed through Herman's term of fuzzy temporality hinting at the possibility of destabilization in an otherwise coherently temporally structured storyworld, where, despite the complexity, all events are fairly easily placed in temporal relation to each other. Also *Saturday* presents itself as temporally coherent. Being written in the present tense, it does not employ prolepses, but several analepses again expanding on the storyworld and the lives of the main character, Perowne, and his family. Covering only one day, there are no great jumps in time, as in *Atonement*, and the narrative presents itself as conventionally singulative. However, there are variations in pace drawing attention to certain events as crucial, reflecting Perowne's growing sense of guilt and anxiety. This emphasis through temporal aspects is reflected in spatial aspects. The paths which the characters track through the storyworld may be linked to their development in both *Saturday* and *Atonement* and the references to several regions and solely to London also serve to underline discussions on the level of content, i.e. the various effects of war and the fear of terror in the big city.

In the discussion of perspective, I have again pointed to the more complex structure of *Atonement* with its different strategies of perspective taking in the different parts including variable, multiple and fixed internal focalization as opposed to the fixed internal focalization employed in *Saturday*, though both narratives present alterations. In the case of *Saturday*, I have shown how a shift to hypothetical focalization and the use of the present tense may be seen as pointing to the possibility of destabilization in the narrative. I have shown how the perspectival strategies help (re)construct coherent storyworlds *and* underline a concern with consciousness and different ways of viewing the world. Especially the strategy of multiple internal focalization draws attention to the theme of (mis)interpretation in *Atonement*.[37] However, despite the focus on (mis)interpretation, the reader is not left in doubt about the actual course of events, thus the certainty in the narrative is maintained. The narrative of *Atonement* is structurally and on the level of content more complex and experimenting, and the destabilizing aspect in *Atonement* is much more salient, but in the reading of both narratives coherent, elaborate and authentic storyworlds are (re)constructed.

The self-consciousness in the narratives, pointed to in the first research question, is thus implicitly present on the formal level through experimentation and draws attention to the possibility of destabilization and the constructedness of the narratives. On the thematic level, I have discussed the thematization of storytelling which is apparent through various overt and covert intertextual and metafictional references. Through many of these references, the power and influence of storytelling of all kinds are emphasised and connected to the feelings of guilt and anxiety. Accordingly, I interpret this self-consciousness, though pointing to the constructedness of the narratives, primarily as serving to emphasizing the power and function of storytelling, thus indicating McEwan's apparent intention with his fiction. It is my claim that McEwan self-consciously uses his novels to discuss moral questions and that, in order to do this, he constructs storyworlds to which the reader can relate.

Answering the second of my research questions, I have in the discussion of McEwan's novels included the perspective of narrative ethics, an approach also taken up by Schemberg and Head primarily with regard to *Atonement*. However, I have chosen to focus solely on the thematization of emotions as my point of departure for moral discussion. Thus, I have discussed the sense of guilt in *Atonement* and the sense of anxiety connected to guilt in *Saturday*. I have explained how the

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[37] In *On Chesil Beach* (2007), McEwan also employs the narrative strategy of multiple internal focalization in order to account for the just married Florence and Edward tragically misunderstanding each other.

individual emotions mirror collective states, and how what both novels seem to underline, without providing any final solution to the problems presented, is the importance of being able to imaginatively project oneself into the feelings of others. I am aware that drawing attention to this emphasis in McEwan's novels on being able to project oneself into the mind of others is referred to also by Schemberg, Head and Finney, drawing on McEwan's own commentaries, and thus does not represent a rethinking – though the analytical concentration on the feelings of guilt and anxiety is specific to my approach. However, the primary aim in this thesis has been to show how this function is enabled in McEwan's narratives. In *Story Logic*, Herman primarily focuses on the laying bare of the problems and possibilities of storyworld (re)construction linking his formal analysis to thematic concerns as e.g. in his discussion of fuzzy temporality as countermanding the arrogance of fascist logic in Segher's short story. I view the (re)construction of coherent, authentic and identifiable storyworlds not only as pointing to themes on the level of content, but also as enabling discussion, as a precondition for the reader to be able to concentrate on, relate to and identify with moral issues presented in the novels.

Abstract – Storyworlds and Narrative Ethics

The aim of this thesis is twofold: Firstly, the thesis sets out to explore the (re)construction of elaborate and coherent fictional universes in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* (2001) and *Saturday* (2006) and how the narratives paradoxically simultaneously point to their own construction through a thematization of storytelling. Secondly, these fictional universes and the self-consciousness in the narratives are seen as basis for thematic similarities concerning emotions and moral issues in the two novels.

In order to analyse the fictional universes, I draw upon David Herman's theory of storyworlds (2002) representing a cognitive approach to narratology. According to Herman, narratives have world-creating power. When a reader reads a narrative, a mental world, initially constructed by the author and transmitted through the narrative, is (re)constructed in which the story takes place. It is the argument in this thesis that the (re)constructed storyworlds both with regard to *Atonement* and *Saturday* are overall coherent and authentic, though the possibility of destabilization is hinted at. In the analysis, three aspects of narrative macrodesign, temporalities, spatialization and perspective, are chosen because the novels differ in these directions and because an analysis of these gives a basic understanding of the (re)construction of storyworlds.

With regard to temporalization, the aspects of order, duration and frequency are discussed. Both narratives are shown to present coherently temporally structured storyworlds though these vary in complexity. Furthermore, it is shown how analepses expand on the storyworlds and, in the case of *Atonement*, how prolepses anticipate the defamiliarizing coda. Also aspects in *Atonement*, which may be seen as approaching what Herman's terms fuzzy temporality, point to the possibility of destabilization. Duration and frequency are shown to draw attention to certain events in the story and emphasize the thematization of guilt and anxiety. Both the temporal and spatial aspects of the mental representations evoked in the narratives are shown to lend authenticity to the storyworlds. The many spatial references in both narratives are shown to relate to the level of content. The paths which the characters track through the storyworlds may be linked to their developments and the references to different regions in England and France serve to underline how the horrors of the Second World War affect broadly in Europe in *Atonement*, whereas the many references to London serve to underline the anxiety and fear of terror in *Saturday*. As regards perspective, the modes of

focalization employed in the narratives are discussed drawing on Herman's discussion of different modes of focalizations as placed on a continuous scale indicating more or less certainty in the narration. Again the structure of *Atonement* employing multiple internal focalization, drawing attention to different ways of (mis)interpreting the world, variable and fixed internal focalization (with alterations) is more complex than *Saturday* employing fixed internal focalization (though some parts may be examples of external focalization and the possibility of destabilization is hinted at through a brief employment of hypothetical focalization). Nevertheless, both types of perspective-taking strategies represent a distinct concern with consciousness pointing to the importance of emotions and moral issues. Again, with regard to perspective the storyworlds are coherently (re)constructed. Even though more perpectives are offered, the reader is not in doubt what should be considered true with regard to the reference world.

The hints at destabilization and at the constructedness of the narratives in the narrative structure are reflected in a thematization of storytelling in both *Saturday* and *Atonement*. Thus, after the analysis of the (re)construction of the storyworlds, this thesis sets out to explore some of the many overt and covert metafictional and intertextual references in the narratives. It is, however, the claim of this thesis that the primary aim of this thematization is not to destabilize or deconstruct, but self-consciously to draw attention to the power and function of storytelling. Indirectly this self-consciousness points to the apparently intended function of the novels. Through a shared concern with emotions such as guilt and anxiety, they express a concern with moral issues and considerations. By drawing on the theoretical approach of narrative ethics, this focus on emotions in the two novels is explored. In this way, this thesis interprets *Atonement* and *Saturday* as examples of fiction reclaiming the novel as site for meaningful, moral discussion which is only possibly on the background of (re)construction of coherent, authentic and thereby identifiable storyworlds.

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