

# Showing Off Damaged Bodies: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*

by

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## I

When Ian McEwan's *Atonement* was published in 2001, it was highly praised on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>1)</sup> Though it missed prestigious prizes like the Booker (which the author had already won with his *Amsterdam* in 1998) and the Whitbread, it stayed in the US and UK bestseller lists for many weeks, before finally winning the WH Smith literary prize. There is also a report of it being made into a film.<sup>2)</sup>

The narrative structure of the novel, however, had a mixed reception. Some praised it for its technical success, while others, particularly the lay readers, blamed the final revelation as a 'trick' or 'cheating'. Examples of such criticism will be shown later. In addition to its structural endeavour, another major characteristic of the novel, which will be discussed in this paper, is an abundance of damaged bodies. As a human body cannot be clearly divided into the physical and metaphysical spheres, the term 'damaged bodies' necessarily includes not only physically wounded, but also psychologically damaged characters. In this paper, however, my emphasis is mostly on the physical side, as the text is saturated with physically wounded figures.

## II

*Atonement* consists of four parts. Fourteen chapters in Part One describe a summer day in 1935 in a country house, culminating in the arrest of Robbie Turner, the cleaning lady's son, for the alleged rape of a teenage girl, Lola Quincey. The arrest was mostly based on the testimony of Briony Tallis, a 13-year-old girl who wants to be a professional writer. Her innocent misunderstanding of the relationship between Robbie and her elder sister, Cecilia, among other things, has led her to testify against Robbie.

Part Two begins five years after the events in Part One, and is set in Dunkirk in 1940. Like many other prisoners at the time, Robbie was released into active military service. Along with thousands of fellow British soldiers, he is desperately trying to retreat to the shore. This part ends without telling the reader what happens to Robbie after he reaches the shore.

Part Three opens in London, 1940. Briony is working as a student nurse, and writing a story which describes the incident in the fatal summer. She goes to see her sister Cecilia, to vainly apologise for her crime against Robbie. To Briony's joy and horror, Robbie is there with Cecilia in her flat. It means that he has survived the retreat and has come back to London to be with his lover. It also means that Briony has to face the outcome of her adolescent crime. Part Three

his lover. It also means that Briony has to face the outcome of her adolescent crime. Part Three ends, to the reader's surprise and bewilderments, with a closing which reads 'BT / London, 1999' (349).<sup>3)</sup> Here, the reader realises that the book, up to that page, is written by Briony, now an accomplished writer.

The last part, titled 'London, 1999', can be read as a diary entry written by Briony. She is approaching the end of her days. The ageing writer has been writing versions of the story of Cecilia and her lover, to atone for her crime of falsely accusing him. And the reader learns that, in the 'real' world outside the story written by Briony, Robbie died at Dunkirk and Cecilia in London, without having the reunion described in Part Three.

John Sutherland praises its construction in an interview with the author: 'One of the things that strikes me about all your novels and *Atonement* in particular, is just how beautifully architectural it is – how well put together and constructed.'<sup>4)</sup> An anonymous reader from UK, on the other hand, complains: 'While McEwan's writing is gorgeous, with a deep undercurrent of suspense running throughout, I found that the 'tricks' he played on the reader towards the end were mean-spirited and disappointing.'<sup>5)</sup> The author himself acknowledges the mixed reception in an interview: '[t]he ending elicits "an incredible range of reaction," says McEwan, [...]. "Some are infuriated, as if they've had something stolen from them."<sup>6)</sup>

The reviews are generally favourable about the ending, and the following opinion by David Wiegand is typical of them, with some reservations about the technique but praising this particular work for its construction.

McEwan courageously employs a "gotcha" ending in "Atonement," [...]. The device, which usually doesn't work because it seems too gimmicky, causes our previous suspension of disbelief to double back on itself, and we are left feeling a bit at sea, trying to sort out what is "real" within fiction's artificial reality and what is invented. To say more in the case of "Atonement" would rob readers of the considerable pleasure of McEwan's brilliance. Let us just say that, here, the device works beautifully because it comes directly and credibly from the novel's constructed reality.<sup>7)</sup>

But the problem here is not only whether or not the reader can suspend disbelief in order to appreciate the artistic perfection of the work, but whether the writer is morally justified to play 'tricks' on the reader's mind. Technically speaking, a writer can do anything with words within his book, but does he have a right to manipulate the reader's emotions through narrative devices that seriously damage and destabilise even the most sacred novelistic conventions? In entering a contract with an author, a reader of modern novels tends to trust the fictional reality with which they are presented, and a betrayal of that trust inevitably creates an emotional reaction. We cannot avoid the ethical entailment of the technique here.

My contention is that McEwan prepares the reader enough for the final revelation, in the first place, with an epigraph from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, warning the reader not to trust the deceptive allure of surface meaning. Though, of course, unlike the small prints on the insurance policy, the warning does not necessarily give the author complete immunity against the

reader's criticism. Similarly, numerous allusions to the contemporary and classic works of fiction in the text offer coded warnings. Thus, the narrative acrobatics at the end are foreshadowed while McEwan, through minutely concrete and realistic descriptions of the worlds where the events happens, particularly as the descriptions of damaged bodies, imbues his novel with sufficient realism and depth to prevent *Atonement* from being a one-read novelty.

### III

A number of novels have influenced *Atonement*, either directly or indirectly. As Finny says, references in the text to other works of fiction clearly indicate the self-referential nature of this novel.<sup>8)</sup> The book which I would like to discuss here in relation to *Atonement* is *The Go-Between* by L. P. Hartley. McEwan acknowledges the influence.

A novel that was very important in this, and I wanted to fit in, was *The Go-Between*, so Connolly says, "I trust you've read *The Go-Between*." I was very disappointed when the copy editor informed me that it was written in 1952 and I had to take it out. But what does remain from *The Go-Between* is the long hot summer.<sup>9)</sup>

Much more remains from Hartley's book. In *The Go-Between*, Leo, a boy who is going to be thirteen years old, carries the letters between his friend's sister and a local farmer. It happens in a country house in a very hot summer. We see a secret love affair across the social classes, and an adolescent boy caught between them. The incident is being remembered fifty-two years later by the ageing protagonist, who has formed and kept a very pessimistic view of adult relationships since the tragic summer.

In *Atonement*, we can easily see the parallel: young Briony carries the letter, and she tries and fails to understand the adult relationship in her own way, only to create the disastrous outcome. There is an element of jealousy also: Leo's jealousy to Marian and Briony's possible jealousy to Robbie, as Briony once tells Robbie that she loves him when they are swimming.

The absence of fathers in both novels is also significant. Leo's father died when he was a little boy. Briony's father, Mr Tallis, is always away in London, working till late in the Whitehall, while Robbie's father disappeared when he was six. Leo has two father-like characters in the story: Ted, the farmer in the village, and Lord Hugh Trimmingham. Hugh is to be engaged to marry Marian, while Ted is secretly having an affair with her. Ted lets Leo play in his hay stack, and the farmer's strong masculinity is what Leo wants in his fatherless home. Ted even promises, reluctantly, to teach Leo the birds and the bees. Hugh shows Leo how a man can go on behaving as a civilised person despite the cruel experiences of war, thus directing a way of life for the essentially imaginative and fanciful boy to take among unimaginative and callous people. These two figures give Leo role models which are, in a traditional home, usually supplied by a father. Ultimately, however, these two men could not fulfil their promise as paternal surrogates. Ted kills himself when the secret is found out, and Leo leaves the country house without knowing what happens afterwards.

#### IV

One of the most striking aspects of the Tallis household, and also of the novel as a whole, is the absence of fathers, which connects this novel with *The Go-Between* in a deeper level than similarities of characters and situations.

Jack Tallis, father of Briony and Cecilia, works in the Whitehall in London. His wife thinks that he must be having an affair: 'That he works late she did not doubt, but she knew he did not sleep at his club, and he knew that she knew this' (148). Even at the moment of crisis, it was not Mr Tallis who is the centre of the movements. When the twins disappear and Lola is raped, it is Mrs Tallis who takes control of the situation. Mr. Tallis cannot come home in time.

Mr Tallis's driver had rung from a phone box near Croydon airport. The department car, made available at short notice through kindness of the minister, had broken down in the suburbs. Jack Tallis was asleep under the rug on the back seat and would probably have to continue by the first morning train. (180)

Later in Part Three, Briony tries to contact her father after he writes to her to tell her about the imminent marriage between Paul and Lola, but the telephone line goes dead without letting her talk to her father in the ministry.

Robbie is a fatherless boy. His father walked

away from his job as the Tallises' gardener, away from the bungalow, without luggage, without even a farewell note on the kitchen table, leaving his wife and their six-year-old son to wonder about him for the rest of their lives. (83)

Cecil Quincey, the father of the twins and Lola, is also an absent father. When the children are sent to their aunt's house to avoid the family trouble, their parents are already walking in the different directions. Hermione, the mother, is in Paris with her lover, while Cecil has fled to his college in Oxford. Hermione's lover cannot possibly be a new father. Cecil appears later at Lola's wedding, only to be 'anxious to be done with his duty before hurrying back to the sanctuary of All Souls, Oxford' (325).

The only figure who performs a paternal role is Danny Hardman's father. Cecilia and Robbie believe Danny must be the real rapist, but he is saved by his father: 'Danny was at home all evening with his father who was able to vouch for him' (181). The lovers think that the father must have lied in order to save his son. In Part Three they are told by Briony that the true rapist is not Danny, but Paul Marshall. Mr Hardman is not a desperate father but an ordinary parent who is telling the truth. Because fathers are the traditional authority figures in an emergency situation, an acute absence of fathers means an absence of masculine authority, and absence of male bodies. The only notable male body we see in Part One is Robbie's, which is soon to be confined in a prison cell, and later, killed in the war.

When we examine other male figures, Leon's body is not shown in any particular way in the text. Though he seems to be taking control of the situation at the beginning of the emergency,

he retreats into background once his mother emerges. Paul Marshall's body is described only with the cynical observation by Cecilia that he has 'pubic hair growing from his ears' (51). His millionaire's body gets stained, during his stay, with 'a two-inch scratch, [...] from the corner of [his] eye, running parallel to his nose' (127), which may be the result of his first attempt at molesting Lola. Thus, in Part One, where young men gather to have a roast dinner in the stiflingly hot dining room, we have no fatherly figures, nor healthy masculine bodies. In Part two, however, there is an abundance of damaged male bodies.

## V

Among the numerous damaged bodies in the text, Lola's raped body is the first to appear, and then, after the inundation of thousands of wounded soldiers, we are presented with the corpses of the unfortunate lovers, Robbie and Cecilia, though their deaths are hidden in the layers of the text.

The following is all the information we have about the ordeal Lola must have undergone: 'Then came Briony with an arm round her cousin's shoulders. Lola's face was so white and rigid, like a clay mask, that Emily, unable to read an expression, there, instantly knew the worst' (154). Until the day of her wedding, we do not know what happens to her afterwards. Compared to the descriptions of other damaged bodies, her damage is not described as fully and as minutely. Curiously, after the incident, Lola disappears and recedes, and it seems like Briony does all the talking necessary to send Robbie to jail. There is no information about how Lola has suffered, or how she has recovered from her trauma. Speech is denied her and, it is only through Briony's narrative that we discover she becomes Mrs Paul Marshall, and later, Lady Marshall.

The reader is not completely sure that the rapist is Paul Marshall. Though Briony tells her sister and Robbie in Part Three that the true assailant was not Danny Hardman but Paul Marshall, we are not given enough evidence in the text to reach the conclusion by ourselves. Briony can convince the couple, but not the reader, because she does not seem to have enough proof to decide that Marshall is the rapist, except for her sudden realisation at their wedding.

Theoretically, we have four possible suspects: Danny Hardman, who is 'hanging around the children lately' (48); Paul Marshall with his scratch; Robbie Turner with his pornographic letter; and lastly someone else from outside. That Marshall is the attacker is most probable, from the cut in his face and later marriage with the victim. Nevertheless, it is possible to think that Briony may be telling a lie, deliberately or unintentionally. She is either trying to hide her jealousy to the happily married couple, who have no remorse like hers, or trying to make her story much more dramatic by making the millionaire couple responsible for the tragedy.

It is not exactly stated how the assailant and the victim end up getting married. Briony thinks Lola 'saved herself from humiliation by falling in love' (324). It is also possible to imagine that the secret sharers' necessary intimacy may be the main reason why Paul Marshall and Lola Quincey get married. We can even go one step further and think that Lola uses her wound to be a millionaire's wife. Lola has utilised her weakness in order to get something she wants.

In Part One, she uses her status as a poor girl whose parents are going to get a divorce, to get the leading role in young Briony's play. Briony was convinced, before the rehearsal, that she

would play the role, but then Lola manipulates the young playwright with a little emotional blackmail: 'Do say yes. It would be the only good thing that's happened to me in *months*' (14). She may have used the same kind of strategy in getting married with her rapist. A victim can sometimes be a blackmailer and use her wound as an effective weapon. For Lola, the damage is not only an incurable trauma. It can also be the most effective weapon a weak person can have.

Lola's raped body is not described as scrupulously as other damaged bodies are in the text. That is because, unlike her male counterparts, she can transform her damage into a subtle weapon, and can ultimately assimilate her attacker into her own body. When Briony last sees the couple, Lola, now Lady Marshall, is '[n]ear-on eighty years old, and still wearing high heels' (358), whereas her husband is walking feebly on a stick.

## VI

Mr Tallis works in Whitehall, calculating the possible number of casualties in the event of German bombing of London. As noted above, he does not appear or act positively in the text, but his statistical calculation looms menacingly over the horizon, just like Mrs Tallis accidentally finds the number in her husband's opened file in a room filled with 'winter birdsong that came from somewhere beyond the lawn' (149).

In Part Two, damaged soldiers are the ultimate material, fundamental weight to support the realities of the story. From the world of the upper middle-class country house, we plunge straight into the world of bombs, severed limbs, collective fears of the raid, and the endless walk to survival. This change of the world, along with the change of characters, with only Robbie remaining in the main action from the previous chapter, gives the whole book a sense of weight and material.

In Part Three, Nurse Tallis attends to the wounded soldiers. Some of them are easily cured, like the airman with eight shrapnel pieces in his leg. She takes out the pieces and it is done. But some of the patients are beyond help and, like the young French soldier, all she can do is watch them die. The emotional support her presence brings, however, does help him cope with his imminent death. Even if she cannot stop them from dying, she provides comfort and support before they die.

Robbie's interests in the human body in Part One, though quite natural for a man of his age, especially one intending to study medicine, causes his mistake in sending the wrong letter to Cecilia, thus making him vulnerable to Briony's false accusation. In Part Two, Private Turner is just one of the thousands of miserable soldiers. Their bodies are dehumanised, reduced to killing machines. Unlike machines, however, they cannot stop loving and wanting to go home. Robbie has a wound in his right side, where he has a 'piece of shrapnel perhaps' (192). It hurts and delays his walk. Although we are not given any detail of his death, it may have delayed his retreat fatally. Unlike frail Lola, who has absorbed and assimilated the attacker, Robbie, with his soldier's body, cannot digest this foreign metal in his stomach.

When Briony visited Cecilia in London in Part Three, Robbie's strong body is presented quite vividly and realistically.

He moved away impatiently to the adjacent wall, a distance of seven feet or so, and leaned against it, arms crossed, looking from Briony to Cecilia. Almost immediately he moved again, down the room to the bedroom door where he turned to come back, changed his mind and stood there, hands in pockets. He was a large man, and the room seemed to have shrunk. In the confined space he was desperate in his movements, as though suffocating. He took his hands from his pockets and smoothed the hair at the back of his neck. Then he rested his hands on his hips. Then he let them drop. It took all this time, all this movement, for Briony to realise that he was angry, very angry. (340)

Here in the above quotation and elsewhere in this scene, we see words directly connected with body being used to describe the enormous presence of the returned soldier: 'how much older he looked' (339), 'added height' (341), 'cheeks were sunken' (342), 'his sinewy arm' (343). His wound in his side, which must be still fresh, even if it is treated after his return, is not mentioned while describing his movements in Cecilia's room.

This scene is of course an imagined one, not a report of what actually happened in Briony's life. Outside Briony's story, Robbie is dead at that time. Then why is he so vividly portrayed? It is because he is the evocation Briony uses to atone for her crime. He must be alive and well, and he must be walking around without suffering from the pains in his side. The foreign metal in his body must disappear, and his dead body must be hidden deep in the text, so that she can make the dead couple have a happy reunion in her imagined world. By showing off multitude of damaged bodies in the previous pages, Briony has succeeded in concealing the dead bodies of Robbie and Cecilia, and creating another reality for the lovers.

## VII

At the beginning of this novel, preparations are going on for the staging of the play, 'The Trials of Arabella', only to be abandoned the next day by the playwright herself. After 64 years, we see it actually played in front of 77-year-old Briony. The fact that the play is both at the beginning and the end of the novel indicates the importance McEwan attributes to this childhood work. The final presentation of the play is to mark the completion of what Briony began when she was young, not only 'The Trials of Arabella' itself, but also the long and laborious process of writing and rewriting the story of her sister and her lover. And the appearance of children on the stage, in contrast to their ageing relatives in the audience, points to the emergence of future from the past, and indicates a hope for something new, even though the seemingly innocent children are beginning to enjoy the taste of vanity on the stage.

The repetitive use of the play seems to direct the reader's attention to an aspect of the human nature, i.e., vanity. It is deeply rooted in the art of storytelling. A desire to play someone other than oneself, and 'a childlike desire to be told a story' (314), mentioned in the rejection letter to young Briony, are two main desires concerning fiction. These two kinds of desire, to play a role and to be told a story, form the fundamental components of this novel. Pierrot says to young Briony when she forces him to play in her early work, that the play is 'just showing off' (11).

To this, 'Briony knew he had a point. This was precisely why she loved plays, or hers at least; everyone would adore her' (11). Briony cannot help telling stories, as she is destined to write a story to atone for her crime, and she cannot help playing in her own story, because she has this desire to 'show off'. The important question, therefore, is does she succeed in telling a story to atone for her crime, or does 'showing off' prevent her from achieving the goal?

In an interview with Jonathan Nokes, McEwan says:

The danger of an imagination that can't quite see the boundaries of what is real and what is unreal, drawn again from Jane Austen—another writer who is crucial to this novel—plays a part in Briony's sense that her atonement has consisted of a lifetime of writing this novel. She's condemned to write it over and over again. Now she's a dying woman, she has vascular dementia, her mind is emptying, and finally she writes a draft which is different from all the others. She fails, as she sees it, to have the courage of her pessimism, and rewrites the love story so that the lovers survive.<sup>10)</sup>

The author sees what Briony has done at the end of her revisions as a failure. Briony describes in Part Three how she finds Cecilia and Robbie together in her sister's flat in wartime London, when in reality Robbie is already dead and Cecilia is going to die in the near future. Briony fails to have 'the courage of her pessimism', McEwan accuses. What she does with her talent as a writer, however, is to imagine and describe how the two lovers meet, talk, and love. Even if she does not give all the facts to the reader in her story, the vivid figures of the lovers she depicts remain as a positive image in the reader's mind. It is the fundamental task of an artist to evoke something from oblivion, create its image, and imprint it on the reader's mind. Even if the reader knows that the image does not faithfully reflect the physical reality, the fact remains that the image is evoked and imprinted on their mind.

Even though McEwan sees it as a lack of courage, Briony has at least succeeded in creating the image of a happy reunion of the lovers. It is an achievement which remains, however far the image is from reality, if it can find a place in the reader's mind and stay there. McEwan seems to be judging Briony as a fellow writer, and it is through her that he is thinking about the meaning of fiction. As McEwan says, 'part of the intention of *Atonement* is to look at storytelling itself'.<sup>11)</sup>

If we regard Briony as a novelist from a reader's point of view, however, this female author has magically transformed the tragedy into a story where you can still believe in the power of honesty and love to sustain and support people. We know that the story Briony writes is not completely true to facts. Her story ends, however, when she writes 'BT/London 1999' at the end of Part Three. It is McEwan who opens her diary for the reader to show that her story is not a report of what really happened, and it is McEwan who criticises her for lacking courage.

Cecilia used to whisper to Briony when her younger sister is having a nightmare, saying 'It's only a dream. Come back.' (44). It is based on a solid belief that the nightmare is evil and reality is better than the dream world, and that awakening always assures the return to normality. Cecilia later uses the expression 'come back' at the end of all her letters to Robbie, to tell him



that she is waiting for his return. Those words must also be a way of assuring herself in her loneliness and despair that not only his but her nightmare would also end in the future. The basic belief here is that the prison and battlefield are not places to stay in, but places to come back from.

In Briony's story, Robbie comes back alive from the battlefield. Briony herself, however, does not come back from her nightmare of a terrible crime, and keeps on writing about the one who comes back. Her dementia is a punishment to her because the illness prevents her from being able to enjoy writing a story and playing a role in it. And her terminal ailment is also a reward for her efforts to help Robbie out of the nightmare of prison and war, because she is at last allowed to forget the crime she has committed. Her 'showing off' works beautifully, and even if she lacks courage to be realistic, then at least McEwan has the courage to show us the deep and pathetic differences between what Briony writes and what really happens in the world of his creation. Briony then does not need to have the courage. She has never come back from her nightmare, but she has tried her utmost best to call her sister and her lover back from theirs.

## Notes

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Chris Walmsley for his valuable comments and suggestions on a draft of this paper.

1) For example, Kellaway says '[i]t is the best thing he has ever written and I read it (at first) as one might drink a good wine, relishing every word, not wishing to swig too fast, not wanting it to be over.' Kate Kellaway, 'At home with his worries', *The Observer*, 16 September, 2001, <<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,552417,00.html>>.

Tonkin says that '*Atonement* is a magnificent novel, shaped and paced with awesome confidence and eloquence'. Boyd Tonkin, 'Out of clear blue skies, McEwan conjures evil—and hope', *The Independent*, 15 September 2001, <<http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/books/reviews/story.jsp?story=94704>>.

And according to Clark and Gordon, 'McEwan's most recent novel has struck some kind of powerful resonance with the reading public and the extraordinary popular success of *Atonement*—it achieved third place in the UK list of best-selling books in 2002—has confirmed McEwan's place as perhaps the most significant British novelist of his generation.' Roger Clark and Andy Gordon, *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love: a Reader's Guide*, New York: Continuum, 2003, p. 25.

2) Angelique Chrisafis, 'Film project atones for Booker prize failure', *The Guardian*, 11 September, 2002, <[http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,789809,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,789809,00.html)>.

3) Ian McEwan, *Atonement*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2001. Henceforth cited in the text.

4) John Sutherland, 'Life was clearly too interesting in the war', *The Guardian*, 3 January 2002, <<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,627239,00.html>>.

5) Anonymous reviewer, 11 February 2004, <<http://www.reviewcentre.com/review41197.html>>.

- 6) Kyle Smith, 'Talking with ... Ian McEwan', *People*, 6 February 2003, vol. 59, issue 21, p. 47.
- 7) David Wiegand, 'Stumbling into fate: Accidents and choices trip up the characters in Ian McEwan's new novel', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 March 2002.
- 8) For a comprehensive coverage of the influences, see Brian Finney, 'Briony's Stand Against Oblivion: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*', 2002, <<http://www.csulb.edu/~bhfinney/McEwan.html>>. Finney regards this abundance of literary texts in *Atonement* as intertextuality which points clearly at the metafictional side of the book, thus making it a complete mistake to read even the first half of this novel simply as a realistic narrative.
- 9) Sutherland, 'Life was clearly too interesting in the war'.
- 10) Jonathan Noakes, 'Interview with Ian McEwan', in Jonathan Noakes and Margaret Reynolds, *Ian McEwan: The child in time, Enduring love, Atonement*, London: Vintage, 2002, p.19.
- 11) Noakes, p. 19.

## 概 要

イアン・マキューアンの『贖罪』は大変な好評で迎えられた。しかし、その手法に関しては賛否両論があり、フィクションのあり方を改めて考えさせた。本論では、作品中に現れる傷ついた身体を焦点にしてこの作品を考察した。傷ついた肉体を具体的かつ劇的に描き出すことで、作者はこの作品のメタフィクション的手法の空転を防ぎ、作品全体の内容と手法とのバランスを取っていると思われるからである。

また、「父の不在」という点に注目し、それは男性的身体の不在であり、この作品の傷ついた兵士たちや、無実の罪で投獄されやがて戦死する青年などへと続いていく概念であると論じた。さらに、「アラベラの試練」という劇や「悲観的であるという勇氣」という言葉を手がかりに、ここでは女主人公の「贖罪」が限定的ながら成立していると論じた。