



# **Ian McEwan's 'Atonement' and 'Saturday'**

*Bernie C. Byrnes*

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In 2002 'The Work Of Ian McEwan: A Psychodynamic Approach' was published by Paupers' Press. In it Bernie C. Byrnes traced the 'metaplot' of Ian McEwan's fiction and offered psychodynamic interpretations of his published work, culminating in the Booker prize winning 'Amsterdam' (1998). Since then McEwan has published two more books: 'Atonement' (2001) and 'Saturday' (2005). This booklet is intended as a supplement to that main work and deals with these later novels in detail.

With the publication of 'Atonement', several critics, and many readers, hailed him as the 'greatest living English writer.' And Byrnes believes that 'Saturday' places McEwan firmly at the forefront of the search for new values, independent of the traditional wisdom received from the past.

However, she observes that McEwan appears to have almost exhausted the spontaneous gifts from his unconscious that permeate his earlier work. For someone so committed to the imagination as a source of fiction, he devotes increasingly large parts of his novels to historical and scientific information, and relies increasingly on conscious structuring of characters and plots. This does not necessarily mean that creativity is at an end. But with diminishing amounts of new unconscious material being included in his writing, it could be argued that Byrnes' assessment of his work has reached its conclusion.

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