



Grotesque Representations of Deviant Sexuality in Ian McEwan's Selected Short Stories

Nahid Shahbazi Moghadam* and Arbaayah Ali Termizi

Department of English Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Themes of sexuality, particularly in excessive and extraordinary forms, can readily merge into the grotesque to ameliorate their depiction and thematic impact. Ian McEwan's early fiction best exemplifies such inclinations. The psychologically violent and excessive world of McEwan's early fiction is basically conceived in the milieu of sex and through grotesque representations. In this relation, the present work selectively focuses on "Solid Geometry" from *First Love, last Rites* (1975) and "Reflections of a kept Ape" and "Dead as they Come" from *In between the Sheets* (1978) to illustrate the implication and range of the grotesque in McEwan's short fiction. The selected stories are discussed for their portrayal of the grotesque, as represented through transgressive partnership and deviant sexuality. The portrayal of sexuality in McEwan's early short fiction offers a variety of the grotesque types of narrative mingling the mode both with the fantastic and the caricature.

Keywords: Ian McEwan, grotesque, deviant sexuality, "Solid Geometry", "Reflections of a Kept Ape", "Dead as they Come"

INTRODUCTION

In 1970s, two collections of short stories by Ian McEwan introduced an author who simply shocked not only the average but also the prolific intelligent readers. These

stories are plentiful in representing a wide range of scatological images such as "bodily fluid, excrement, genitalia, unsavoury odours" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 40) and subject matters involving "acts of sexual abuse, sadistic torment and pure insanity" (Ryan, 1994, p. 2). Such images and subject matters are among those very much inclined to the mode of the grotesque. Obviously, the trend is more prevalent in McEwan's early works, including his two collections of short

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 19 July 2012

Accepted: 31 July 2013

E-mail addresses:

nahid@live.com.my (Nahid Shahbazi Moghadam),

arbaayah@upm.edu.my (Arbaayah Ali Termizi)

* Corresponding author

stories, *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) and *In between the Sheet* (1979), as well as his first two novels, *The Cement Garden* (1979) and *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981). In this regard, the present work focuses on three of McEwan's short stories from both collections so as to discuss and interpret their portrayal of the grotesque. The aim is to show that some of his short fictions, as epitomized in the selected stories, convey inner conflicts and relationship pitfalls through a fundamental depiction of the grotesque in the context of sexual deviations and emotional failures.

BACKGROUND STUDY: MCEWAN'S EARLY FICTION

It is far from gross generalization to concisely describe Ian McEwan's collections of short stories with only one word, 'shocking,' in every sense of the word. The world we step in as we begin to read McEwan of the 70s is violent, excessive and extraordinary. Among his critics, Kiernan Ryan, considers him in his early career "as a writer obsessed with the perverse, the grotesque, the macabre" (1994, p. 2). Accordingly, he is of the opinion that McEwan displays "a more mature engagement with the wider world of history and society" as he leaves behind "the claustrophobic menace" of his early works (1994, p. 2). McEwan himself admits that his early fiction placed him "into too tight a corner" (quoted in Malcolm, 2002, p. 5), which implies his awareness of a self-limiting choice of subject matters. He refers to his short stories as "darkly comic" works, which deservedly earned him "the 'Ian

Macabre' tag" and caused him "an impasse" in early 80s (Jon Cook, 2009, p. 130).

Although McEwan later distanced himself from 'the claustrophobic menace' of his early fiction in favour of other topics of his interest such as women movement and environment, his short stories are significant not only in themselves but also for their impacts on his later works. As David Malcolm asserts, his short stories are in a sense sketch works from which characters and themes of his novels emerge (2002, p. 24). This, however, least recommends that his short stories be subordinated to his more popular later novels. In fact, his short stories are not only standing works of independent credibility but can also be considered as parts of critiques on the collections:

Each short story is ... a unique text ... and each requires and repays close individual analysis. Nevertheless, the stories do exist in the context of their collections, and those two collections do come from a particular period in the author's career and were published close together. It is tempting to see them not only as individual stories but also "as part of a unified group of texts" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 24).

The present work selectively focuses on selected short stories from both collections to illustrate the implications and range of the grotesque in McEwan's short fictions. Three stories are discussed in this study; "Solid Geometry" from *First Love, Last*

Rites and “Reflections of a Kept Ape” and “Dead As They Come” from *In between the Sheets*. A good deal of stories in both collections, especially in the first one, concentrates on adolescent life. The three selected stories are among those focusing on adult relationships, though “Reflection of a Kept Ape” involves an ape as a male partner. Our reading indicates that these stories enjoy the prevalence of the grotesque in a more profound manner than a mere portrayal of grotesqueries. They display a fundamental use of the grotesque depicted through various elements of the mode in the context of deviant sexuality.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: SEXUALITY AND THE GROTESQUE

Among critics theorizing about the grotesque, Ewa Kuryluk most emphasizes that the mode has to be read “in the context of the erotic and heretic” if it is to be fully understood (1987, p. 316). Taking advantage of the viewpoints proposed by Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, she stipulates that the world of the grotesque encompasses both Kayserian “mental asylum” and Bakhtinian “carnivalistic monstrosities” since this world can be associated with any “anti-world” which functions as a subculture against the dominant culture (e.g., “the anti-world of femininity as opposed to the world controlled by men”) (Kuryluk, 1987, p. 3). In line with Kuryluk’s notion of anti-worlds, the stories under study here are considered as anti-worlds of appalling sexual inclinations against the ideal world of normal relationship; a subculture of failed partnership and female oppression.

Regarding body and acts of physical life in the study of the grotesque, Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘grotesque body’ has been the source for many later discussions. The grotesque body, as Bakhtin defines, is “unfinished and open” and “exceeds its own limits in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation” (1965, p. 26). Bakhtin views the grotesque body from a communal perspective and believes that our modern era has actually “transferred” and narrowed the concept of the grotesque body to a “private and psychological” zone devoid of regenerative gay laughter (1965, p. 321). Even so, his notion of the grotesque body has been frequently employed by later critics in the study of modern and postmodern literature.

The concept has particularly been popular among feminist studies, which identify the grotesque body with the female one. Accordingly, Margaret Miles identifies the grotesque body as the female body which has her “individual configuration and boundaries” taken away through “menstruation, sexual intercourse, and pregnancy” (1997, p. 93). To her, the “central object of the grotesque figuration” involves sexual organs and activities (1997, pp. 92-93). Of course, she puts the most emphasis on female body and her sexual organs as she asserts that the essence of the grotesque is missing from the most prominent scholarly studies due to their ignorance of the central role of female body.

The attribution of a central role to female body in grotesque representations does not necessarily stand as a dichotomy between

so-called male and female grotesque. In fact, grotesque is generally depicted through the co-presence of both genders, as well as other categories of animate and even inanimate beings. As a remarkable feature of the grotesque, the blending of human and non-human or “categorical transgression”, as Dieter Meindl terms it, “comingles the animate and inanimate and conflates such classifications as plant, animal, human” (1996, p. 15). Hence, due to the very essence of the grotesque, the rejection of grotesque images of male sexuality is already out of question.

In this relation, Mary Russo reminds that her study entitled, *The Female Grotesque*, has no intention of excluding “male bodies or male subjectivities” from the grotesque (1994, p. 12). What Russo and some other feminist scholars of the grotesque mean to emphasize is the centrality of the female body in the making of the grotesque. Accordingly, Russo elaborates that “female grotesque is crucial to the identity-formation of both men and women as a space of risk and abjection” (1994, p. 12). It is thus no exaggeration to indicate that female body has come to function as a primordial image in the shaping of the grotesque. Concerning the stories discussed in the present study, the female body is depicted either in its centrality (e.g. “Dead as they come”) or in juxtaposition with the male body (e.g. “Reflections of a Kept ape” and “Solid Geometry”). As it is later dealt with in a separate entry for each story, bodies bear significance in the odd relationships developed through both scatological and excessively sexual representations.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: GROTESQUE IN MCEWAN’S SHORT FICTION

Violent, transgressive, and bizarre depictions of sexuality are readily palpable in their potential linkage with the grotesque. Much in association with the grotesque, the eccentric atmosphere of McEwan’s early fiction is mainly depicted in the milieu of sex. As already quoted, Ryan refers to McEwan of the 70s as a ‘chronicler’ of “sexual abuse, sadistic torment and pure insanity” (Ryan, 1994, p. 2). From a thematic perspective, McEwan’s short stories keenly deal with issues such as sadism, masochism, sexual molestation, perversion and sexual dissatisfaction. The sexuality portrayed in this fiction is simply beyond pornographic eroticism.

Within such a revolting anti-world of sex in these stories, the grotesque pervades in its most characteristic elements of the mode. The contradictory nature of the grotesque, which has been dealt with in almost all relevant scholarly studies, is well discernible in these tales. Philip Thomson’s well-condensed definition of the grotesque as “the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response” (1972, p. 27) can be traced in the mixture of dualities not only portrayed in the narratives themselves but also demonstrated in the response that they evoke. As Ryan points, McEwan’s best stories “oblige us to reflect on the mixed motives governing our own response as readers” (1994, p. 13). Reflecting on the same point, Jeannette Baxter concurs with Ryan by saying that McEwan’s early stories evoke “uncertainty of response” as “initial waves of shock, disgust and nausea give

way somehow to feelings of confusion and fascination, and laughter” (2009, p. 14).

The feeling of repulsion is intensified through detailed descriptions of appalling sexual acts such as the rape of a lifeless dummy or the intercourse between a woman and an ape as well as scatological imagery of vomiting and urinating over the corpse of the model, simian saliva and the stench of urination, or an inherited pickled penis. Such a shocking use of imagery helps to convey instances of degradation that occur along the storylines, culminating in identity destruction and alienation as well. These intense feelings not only are experienced by the characters but also plague the readers.

Regarding McEwan's use of shock effects, it may be noted that it is actually an art to shock contemporary readers. As Jack Slay wittily describes, we are the people who “live in a virtually unshockable society” (1996, p. 11), where no shock seems to go very deep. Authors such as Ian McEwan or Martin Amis accomplish to shock by “representing the debauchery beneath the civility, the grotesquerie beneath the banality... [for] the people of a bewildered age” (Slay, 1996, p. 5). McEwan's world of ‘darkly comic’ early stories is actually the world around us, the real world made strange or rather grotesque. Notwithstanding the novelty of his style in creating extreme shock and disgust in a detached manner, these stories are crafted in such a way that one cannot avoid associating them with the realities of the world around us. The storylines and characters, though in an extreme and defamiliarized manner, reflect

sensual and emotional whirlpools in modern man's life. Regarding the selected stories, it is worth mentioning that the three male characters inflicted with sexual deviance are all unnamed.¹ Referring to the second collection, Slay also notes that “a literature of shock” is mixed with “ideological study of relationships and society” (1996, p. 51).

“Reflections of a Kept Ape”

As the bestseller novelist, Sally Klee is suffering an impasse in her career, her two and half year old ape lover is mourning his downfall from a lover to a pet after eight blissful days of sharing her bed. The thematically odd story is embellished with a first-person narrative account of the ape, though the reader can still sense McEwan's unique matter-of-fact style in the background. As such, the ape manages to establish himself as a humanly intellectual simian, commenting about coffee effect on Balzac's writing and humming Lillibulero² “in the manner of Sterne's Uncle Toby” (Ian McEwan, 1997, p. 21).³

McEwan contextualizes a hard-to-believe storyline in a real-life setting. As Jack Slay compares, McEwan's style resembles Latin American magic realism in that “absurdities and unrealities” are conveyed through “the ordinary, the commonplace” (1996, p. 53). Such a blurred boundary between the realms of reality and unreality is what the grotesque expresses in its most genuine form of the mode. In other words, as discussed by many critics, the grotesque is by essence capable of creating “intellectual uncertainty [i.e.] the paradoxical confusion

of the fantastic and the verisimilar” (Chao, 2010, pp. 9-10). In this regard, Shun-Liang Chao defines the grotesque as “a corporeal, or flesh-made, metaphor which produces within itself (and within the reader/viewer’s response) intellectual uncertainty, emotional disharmony, and hermeneutic indeterminacy (2010, p. 14).

Accordingly, all these three foundational phenomena are experienced in the reading of this story. As already discussed, the readers’ response to early McEwan fiction is essentially that of simultaneous disgust and attraction. This story thus builds on the disharmonious mixture of fascination and repulsion it evokes. It strikingly starts on the note that “eaters of asparagus know the scent it lends the urine” (1997, p. 19). The narration proceeds with more instances of scatological imagery such the ape standing and urinating in reflection (1997, p. 19), the “weak tea” taste of his saliva (1997, p. 21), his useless search for “nits in her copious hair,” her “playful observations on the length, colour [and] texture” of his penis, and their sex position (1997, p. 26).

All the disgust is in a way compensated and fused with the inevitable magnetism of the narrative tone. The ape lover confusingly sounds both human and ape; he is desperately lonesome, hypocritically possessive and eloquently intellectual. In terms of the above-mentioned definition, the ape itself functions as the flesh-made metaphor of the grotesque to represent human fallen state. His intellect and emotion disturbingly resemble those of a human being, but he is physically an ape and blatantly reminds

his simian nature throughout the narration. As he contemplates leaving Sally Klee, he feels so passionately in love that he wonders “what life could be more exalted than the old [and] what new function rival that of Sally Klee’s ex-lover” (1997, p. 34). While he is contemplating this, his “*hands and feet* are on the fourth stair” (1997, p. 34, my italics). Like any oppressively arrogant lover, he is pretentious and possessive enough to boast that they “were lovers once, living almost as a man and wife” (1997, p. 19). And, during the brief partnership, he ponders “further promotion, from lover to husband” (1997, p. 25). Even finally “blighted by [his] own inadequacy,” he again beguiles himself by saying “How could I have failed to understand that during our silent meal. She needs *me*” (1997, p. 34, italic original).

The story is thus an extreme tale of repressed love and sexuality in which human is literally transfigured and degraded to the kinship of ape. He is an alien and is further alienated when the anti-world of ape-human partnership with Sally Klee collapses through her weariness of his “ways” and his “exacerbating her displeasure” (1997, p. 19). The comically narrated pretensions and possessiveness of the ape, as well as Sally Klee’s absolute barrenness of creative power after her bestseller novel, are incongruously mixed with gloom and loneliness of intellect and passion in grotesquely portrayed characterization. Kiernan Ryan’s following quotation well pinpoints the grotesque aspects which so delicately shape a short tale of great depth:

.. humour leaks from the vivid physical details of sexual congress, which lends the fusion of human and animal a sensuous realism surpassing the requirements of mere travesty. Such touches collapse the distance on which the preservation of comic detachment depends, and the humour of incongruity gives way to an embarrassed glimpse of repressed kinship (1994, p. 16).

"Solid Geometry"

A man obsessed with an inherited great-grandfather's forty-five volume diary gradually distances himself from his wife, Maisie, who in turn seeks refuge in Tarot pack, mysticism, and astrology "to get [her] head straight" (2006, p. 8).⁴ The gradual estrangement culminates in the husband's resentment of his wife and her desperate anger of his indifference. In a sudden rage for her unrequited passion, Maisie ruins the husband's other heirloom, which is a glass jar containing the pickled penis of a nineteenth-century criminal Captain Nicholls. He later makes Maisie disappear through "the plane without a surface" (Ian McEwan, 2006), a fictitious scientific rule which the diary discloses to him as a certain positioning of any object causing its absolute disappearance.

As Jack Slay asserts, the couple are stuck "in different intellectual worlds" (1996, p. 27). The man and his wife respectively epitomize senseless rationality and unfulfilled emotion in a growing conflict which leads to his selfish *removal* of her by

'the plane without a surface.' As basic to the blend of fantastic-grotesque, the so-called plane is intrinsically described in a make-believe manner. Accordingly, the details are provided "to make the whole thing sound probable" basically through an "account of the mathematical convention at which the revolution in geometry is announced, the pages of proofs that are alluded to, and the technical vocabulary that the narrator employs" (Malcolm, 2002, p. 31). While the injection of fantasy into the real creates the self-contradictory tension essential to the grotesque, it reinforces the grotesque to border on the realm of the fantastic.

As already noted, Thomson describes the grotesque as basically constituted by "the *unresolved* clash of incompatibles" (1972, p. 27, my italic). The previously discussed 'Reflections of a Kept Ape' is a genuine example of the mode in that the co-presentation of the real and unreal/ surreal is totally unresolved; it cannot be fully acknowledged whether the incidents are real or not. However, once the grotesque borders on either the fantastic or the caricature; the clash of incompatibles more relies on simultaneous representation of attraction and repulsion as well as horror and laughter. That is to say that the co-presentation of real and unreal is more loosened towards either the real or unreal/ surreal respectively in the grotesque-caricature and the fantastic-grotesque.

In "Solid Geometry," the fabricated mathematical-geometric rule is the main element which points the storyline into the realm of the fantastic. With the

blend of real and unreal bordering on the fantastic, simultaneous representation of incompatibles is best recognized in the tension between horror and laughter. As a matter of fact, John Ruskin's notion of "play with terror" (1875, p. 140) is well portrayed in this story through the man's cold blooded hostility in playing the game-like 'plane' in order to get rid of his wife. In general, their struggle which is at time ridiculously physical is mingled with the horrible fact that he gradually plans and finally accomplishes his bizarre removal of Maisie both from his life and the material world.

Ironic as it is, the husband ignores his wife as a real being who is capable of giving him love and emotion and instead honours the pickled penis of a dead man by treasuring it as "an object of great value" (2006, p. 13). Once Maisie smashes the glass jar containing the pickled penis, she metaphorically disturbs and destroys his image of an independent masculinity that is represented in the bizarre long lasting treasure "linking [his] life with *his*" (2006, p. 13 italic mine). This can be distinctly traced in his personified references to the pickled penis as Captain Nicholls himself. Here is the extract of his clearing the mess after the jar is broken:

Holding him by just one end, I tried to ease Capt. Nicholls on to a sheet of newspaper. ... Finally, with my eyes closed, I succeeded, and wrapping him carefully in the newspaper, I carried him into the garden and buried him under the

geraniums (2006, p. 14).

Subconsciously, the pickled penis and his grandfather eccentricity in having sex "about half-a-dozen times in his entire life" and only in his first year of marriage (2006, p. 4) come to signify for him the female marginality for a physically and emotionally independent man. He apparently draws such symbolization and takes it into his own life, intensifying his gradual indifference to Maisie. Although he is aware why she behaves hysterically at times, he willingly lets her suffer his lack of interest in their relationship. Early in the story he admits that "part of her problem was jealousy", which concerned his "great-grand-father's forty-five volume diary" (2006, p. 3). Detachedly scornful, he later reduces her motive for breaking the glass jar to a need for penis. Implicitly, he draws a contrast between their opposing attitudes to sex, which he uses to downgrade Maisie "because she wanted a penis" (2006, p. 19). Through the humiliation, he develops for her and his rejection of normal physical life, the husband further alienates both Maisie and himself into their extremities of emotion and rationality. This ends in a satiric tragedy for Maisie, who disappears in a way ironically foreshadowed in the nightmare of "flying this plane over a kind of desert" (2006, p. 3), and the feeling of "being screwed up like a piece of paper" (2006, p. 9).

"Dead as They Come"

A wealthy businessman in his mid-forties falls in love with an inanimate model whose

“perfect body played tender counterpoint with the shifting arabesques of sartorial artifice” (1997, p. 60). He eccentrically assumes ‘Helen’ to be the perfect partner until his driver seduces her into an affair in his absence. In his neurotic and self-deceiving narrative tone, the businessman relates the incidents from the purchase of the lifeless model and their first night together to the final rape and smothering of her for apparent estrangement and infidelity.

Similar to the narrator of “Solid Geometry,” the first person narrative account of the businessman takes a make-believe attitude, which helps to create the suspense between reality and unreality. Meanwhile, the story parallels the other two in its portrayal of absurdity. Just like ape-woman relationship, man-dummy partnership is obviously an absurdist parody of love⁵ which signifies failures of human relationship, pictured in “Solid Geometry.” According to Slay, “absurdist extremes” in “Dead as they come” and “Reflections of a Kept Ape” exceed “the unreal boundaries established in ‘Solid Geometry’” (1996, p. 53).

As viewed by the present study, absurdity prevails in all the three stories; whereas the levels of reality/unreality differ. While “Reflections of a Kept Ape” creates the essentially grotesque tension between reality and unreality, the other two tales take the grotesque to the edge of the fantastic and the caricature. “Solid Geometry” has already been discussed for its central event of fantastic dimensions. Regarding “Dead as they come,” although the whole matter

is a hard to believe one, there is practically nothing totally unreal and impossible about the story. The parodic love the businessman imaginatively conceives between himself and his ‘Helen’ is actually a caricature-like picture of ideal love, which takes the story to the border of the grotesque-caricature.

Nonetheless, the narrator makes an illusion out of reality basically by treating the dummy as a real woman. Unlike a typical story with an automaton motif, the man does not content himself by simply owning the dummy. According to Kenneth Gross, “animation fantasy” is potentially linked with “transgressive crossing of the living and the lifeless” (2006, p. 128). In this story, the crossing of such boundaries does take place as he literally contextualizes her presence into the real world, treating her as a real woman. Based on his account of the incidents, he takes her into a dynamic level of life and deceives himself to the extent that he imagines her betrayal of his love.

As a parodic love story, “Dead as they come” mingles the humour of the caricature-like imitation of a perfect partnership with the horrible reality of man’s loneliness as well as his sensual, emotional and intellectual depression. In his play with the absurd, the businessman denies real relationship and indulges in the substitution of real life with the lifeless, with the inanimate. It is not only the romantic context which lends the story a parodic touch of humour, but the murderer-like attitude of the businessman also creates an humorous atmosphere of parodic criminal confession. Ryan believes that the story is “decked out

with as much sex and violence as that title, with its strident double-entendre, might lead one to expect” (1994, p. 15). Hence, the satiric humour in the story is also intensified by his assumed horror of a murder.

By bringing life and lifelessness or animate and inanimate together, categorical transgression is observed not only at a metaphoric but also at a literal level. Metaphorically speaking, the dummy is in a verbal sense taken as a real human being, a woman. At a literal level, just as it happens in “Reflections of a kept Ape,” a human and a non-human are brought into one being through an excessive sexual relation. Along with such excesses of body life, his final agony for her murder displayed in a series of scatological images all signify his humiliating and isolating experience in taking pleasure in the body and love of a lifeless female model.

As a lonely man, he is ultimately alienated both within and without through his self-deceptive replacement of ‘Helen’ for a real woman. In fact, he cannot finally content himself with such a substitution and “remains isolated in a world of unlovable objects” (Slay, 1996, p. 57). By reducing and objectifying a female partner to a dummy, he also degrades both female and male sexuality. The story actually represents male sexuality in a way “to defamiliarize traditional ways of behaving and thinking” (Malcolm, 2002, p. 43).

CONCLUSION

Defamiliarization helps to see the world around us from a fresh perspective and is

aply inclined to the grotesque. Wolfgang Kayser, one of the leading theoretician of the grotesque, includes “the existing world made strange” among the aspects of the mode (1963, p. 161). As it is the case with most of McEwan’s short stories, particularly the ones discussed in this paper, he also “aims to make the familiar strange” (Malcolm, 2002, p. 41). Accordingly, McEwan pictures an excessive, exaggerated and violated anti-world of sexual partnership to highlight the reality of human failure in forming both emotional and physical relationship. Arrogance, if not male chauvinism, is at the core of the masculine gaze portrayed through these stories. Unfulfilled deviant sexuality, which leads to identity loss, degradation and alienation, is basically associated with a rejection of normal female body and physical body life.

As dealt with in the present study, the portrayal of the grotesque is remarkably affluent and vast-ranging in McEwan’s short stories. Basically depicted through images and incidents of a sexually chaotic world, the grotesque can be considered as a mode of representation in his short fiction. In some stories, the grotesque is merely exploited for the sake of a general impression of shock and disgust. However, in some others including those under study in this article, it is fundamentally employed through the representation of recurrent elements of the mode mingling the grotesque both with the fantastic and the caricature for a more impressive portrayal of excessive sexuality.

ENDNOTES

¹The male character of “Solid Geometry” is called ‘Albert’ in the screen adaptation, but no name is given to him in the short story.

²The signature tune (tune played to identify a radio station) of the BBC World Service. The music is by Henry Purcell and was written for a satirical 17th century song attacking Roman Catholics (taken from Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 2006 edition).

³All references made to “Reflections of a Kept Ape” and “Dead as they come” are taken from Random House’s edition of *In between the Sheets* (1997).

⁴All references made to “Solid Geometry” are taken from Vintage’s edition of *First Love, Last Rites* (2006).

⁵Jack Slay refers to this story as “a satirical look at the relations between men and women” (1996, p. 56), and David Malcolm calls it “a comic yet disturbing parody of romantic fiction” (2002, pp. 23,39).

REFERENCES

- Bakhtin, M. (1965). *Rabelais and His World* (Helen Iswolsky, Trans.). Bloomington Indiana University Press.
- Baxter, J. (2009). Surrealist Encounters in Ian McEwan’s Early Works. In Sebastian Groes (Ed.), *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (pp. 13-25). London & New York: Continuum.
- Chao, S-L. (2010). *Rethinking the Concept of the Grotesque: Crashaw, Baudelaire, Magritte* London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing.
- Gross, Kenneth. (2006). *The Dream of the Moving Statue* (second ed.). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Cook, J., Groes, S., & Sage, V. (2009). Journey without Maps: An Interview with Ian McEwan. In Sebastian Groes (Ed.), *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (pp. 123-134). London & New York: Continuum.
- Kayser, W. (1963). *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (Ulrich Weisstein, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kuryluk, E. (1987). *Salome and Judas in the Cave of Sex*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Malcolm, D. (2002). *Understanding Ian McEwan*. Columbia University of South Carolina Press.
- McEwan, I. (1997). *In between the Sheets* (tenth ed.). London: Random House.
- McEwan, I. (2006). *Frist Love, Last Rites* (Reprinted ed.). London: Vintage.
- Meindl, D. (1996). *Amercian Fiction and the Metaphysics of the Grotesque*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Miles, M. (1997). Carnal Abominations: The Female Body as grotesque. In J.L. Adams and W. Yates (Eds.), *The Grotesque in Art and Literature: Theological Reflections* (pp. 83-112). Michigan & Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Ruskin, J. (1875). Grotesque Renaissance *The Stones of Venice* (Vol. III, pp. 112-165). New York: Thomas and Cromell & Co.
- Russo, M. (1994). *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* New York & London: Routledge.
- Ryan, K. (1994). *Ian McEwan* Devon: Northcote House.
- Slay, J. (1996). *Ian McEwan*. New York: Twayne Publishers.

Thomson, P. (1972). *The Grottesque*. London:
Routledge.