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Considers the reception of McEwan as a macabre writer of 'literature of shock' on the evidence of his first collection of short stories. After noting the contemporary press response, the chapter discusses McEwan's own reflections in interview on the writing of the stories before examining the perspectives of Kiernan Ryan, David Malcolm and Jack Slay, all of whom concentrate on the focus, themes and scope of the stories, followed by Lynda Broughton, who adopts a feminist perspective.	
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Discusses the reviews of the British and American press of this second collection of stories, and in particular the analysis of V. S. Pritchett in the <i>New York Review of Books</i> . After considering McEwan's discussion of the collection with John Haffenden, the chapter surveys the responses, in terms of the stories' presentation of male sexuality, sadism and masochism, of Angela Roger and Christina Byrnes, before considering the readings of Kiernan Ryan, who compares McEwan with his contemporary Martin Amis, and Richard Brown, who looks at McEwan's first representation of America in 'Psychopolis'.	

CHAPTER THREE

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A Lovely Sleep: *The Cement Garden* (1978)

Looks at the different initial responses to McEwan's first novel, from those that found it unsympathetic in its portrayal of isolated children to those who thought it announced McEwan as one of the finest British novelists of his generation. In terms of longer readings of the novel, Christopher Williams looks at the lineage of representations of the adolescent in fiction, Randall Stevenson ponders the claustrophobic feel of the narrative, and Carmen Callil and Colm Tóibín examine the story in terms of its contemporary setting. The chapter also includes two extracts from interviews with McEwan in which he explains the genesis of the novel as well as its concern with Oedipal conflict and incest – a concern also explored by Jack Slay. Angela Roger concentrates on the gender relations in the novel, while David Sampson examines the book's implications for types of reading in the light of the theories of Roland Barthes.

CHAPTER FOUR

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The Desire to be a Victim: *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981)

Delineates the spectrum of reactions, frequently characterised by outrage, to McEwan's second novel. By contrast, Malcolm Bradbury views the narrative as a fable about sexual feelings and gender roles, aspects of the novel explained by McEwan in a discussion with John Haffenden of the novel's origins and the reactions it received from some feminists. Both Kiernan Ryan and Judith Seaboyer examine the book's take on desire and gender roles in their analyses. Finally, Angela Roger indicates how the novel is occupied throughout with victimhood and the principled passivity that 'allows' aggression, male violence and patriarchy to be perpetuated.

CHAPTER FIVE

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True Maturity: *The Child in Time* (1987)

Opens with a discussion by McEwan of how he came to conceive the novel and the significance of the other projects with which he was concerned in the years between this novel and his previous one. Malcolm Bradbury and D. J. Taylor are then both interested in McEwan's decision to place the narrative in the future: Bradbury sees this as an

indication of the direction of McEwan's fiction in the ensuing decade, while Taylor believes it in fact indicates McEwan's inability to deal with wider social settings than were prominent in his earlier writing. While Allan Massie sees the novel's success lying in its central depiction of the character of Stephen, Adam Mars-Jones attacks the book as an appropriation of feminism – by Stephen and by McEwan. Next, Ellen Pifer analyses the aspect of the novel that has probably received most comment, its depiction of adults' relationship with childhood, while Jack Slay discusses its other key element: time. Dominic Head then examines the book's interest in the new physics, but Ben Knights, by contrast, sees the book as a 'green parable'. Finally, Paul Edwards offers a reading of the third chapter of the novel in the context of British literary responses to modernity.

CHAPTER SIX

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No Different From You: *The Innocent* (1990)

Starts by noting that critics were again divided in their reception of McEwan's fiction. Merritt Moseley then reviews the triangle at the centre of this new novel, before Michel Deville notes how its oscillation between different ontological positions apparently leaves the novel without a consistent value system. Wendy Lesser offers a more refined analysis, concentrating on the narrator Jeremy, while Christina Byrnes scrutinises McEwan's symbolisation of evil, a central concern of the narrative. Developing on from Deville's concerns, Marc Delrez proffers a sustained critique of the values and contradictions that appear to underlie the story, while Jago Morrison is more interested in the ways in which Jeremy attempts to make sense of the past through his piecemeal narrative, a facet of the novel taken up by David Malcolm in his discussion of the relationship between public and personal histories.

CHAPTER SEVEN

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Ça Suffit: *Black Dogs* (1992)

Begins, after an exegesis of the novel's content and concerns, with Michael Wood's review of the principal themes of deception, ignorance, aggression and the loss of innocence. Richard Brown then considers the novel in terms of the relationship between Britain and the USA, illustrating how McEwan has broadened his social and political concerns since his early novels, while Mark Ledbetter concentrates on the novel's set piece, the dismemberment of Otto as a metaphor for the division of Berlin, and Tamás Bényei discusses the significance of

the central image of 'the tunnel'. After an extract from an interview with Rosa González-Casademont in which McEwan explains the novel's setting and provenance, Jack Slay analyses the way in which the novel presents several different kinds of initiation for its innocent protagonist, Leonard. Finally, Kiernan Ryan explains how the spy genre lends itself to McEwan's particular kinds of exploration of human experience.

CHAPTER EIGHT

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Rationality Is Its Own Kind of Innocence: *Enduring Love* (1997)

Records the polarised reactions to the novel on its publication, with reviewers varying considerably in their pronouncements, from those who saw it as 'brilliant' to those who concluded it was 'half-baked'. After interventions by McEwan on the novel's opening chapter and the book's beginnings elsewhere, Adam Mars-Jones explains why he feels the novel is undermined by Joe Rose's development as an unreliable narrator, and James Wood berates the narrative for its over-reliance on a hackneyed plotline, a view counterposed with McEwan's own explanation of the story's development. David Malcolm explores the novel's interest in reason and rationality, while Roger Clark and Andy Gordon discuss the role of Jean Logan, whose central position in the novel's subplot shows how McEwan is concerned with perspective and juxtaposition. Finally, Christina Byrnes provides a useful review of the history of de Clérambault's syndrome, while Jago Morrison considers the degree to which Jed Parry is presented as the product of Joe's own obsessions.

CHAPTER NINE

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Their Reasonable Laws: *Amsterdam* (1998)

Notes the variety of responses to the novel, but also the problem reviewers had with placing the novel in McEwan's *oeuvre*, in terms of genre as much as merit. McEwan explains the novel as a farewell to nearly two decades of Conservative government, and, in some ways in keeping with this, David Malcolm concludes that *Amsterdam* is in part a psychological study and a morality tale. For John Brannigan, the novel is most concerned with mid-life crises and the spectre of mortality, but William Pritchard places it in the tradition of satirists such as Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis, and Nicholas Lezard also sees it as an exposure in comedy of a cynical heartlessness at the heart of the British ruling classes. Finally, Christina Byrnes examines the novel in terms of sadomasochistic dynamics, maturational crises and depression.

Storytelling as Self-justification: *Atonement* (2001)

Surveys the almost universally positive reviews of McEwan's first novel of the new century before McEwan himself explains both his purpose in the narrative and its relation to the tradition of the English novel. Frank Kermode then explores McEwan's use of point of view in the novel, while Claire Messud discusses in particular the presentation of Briony's perspective. For John Updike, the descriptive richness of the novel addresses in terms of form the content of Briony's attempt at atonement, while Martyn Bedford is exercised by McEwan's abiding concern with the theme of the storyteller's difficulty of imaginative empathy, and Geoff Dyer chooses to foreground stylistic elements which are still underdiscussed in McEwan criticism. Hermione Lee considers the novel's relationship to both its literary precursors and European history before James Wood argues that the novel works best as a detailed evocation of English life in the mid-twentieth century. John Mullan concludes the chapter by examining one typically English preoccupation of McEwan's in the novel's long opening section: the weather.

CONCLUSION

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And Now, What Days Are These?: *Saturday* (2005)

Summarises McEwan's contemporary reputation and analyses *Saturday* before providing a short consideration of McEwan's novel for children, *The Daydreamer* (1994).

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