

# An Archetypal Analysis of the Scapegoat Motif in *Atonement*

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The scapegoat persecution consists of four elements: the widespread social crisis, the accusation of crime, the scapegoat selection criteria and the violence itself. The goat, Jesus, Oedipus, etc. in the Bible all acted as scapegoats. This is the persecution of all individuals, but in most cases, it is hidden in the culture in a more secretive way. In the boiling point of the initiation of scapegoat mechanism, crowd plays an important role. People usually don't blame themselves but blame others and the whole society. They can make up all kinds of accusations and make people feel that people who are scapegoats are particularly harmful. Scapegoats are often accused of special crimes. Although the charges can be varied, it is easy to find their unity to achieve social stability at the expense of one's interests. And the protagonist of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*—Robbie will be analyzed from 4 elements of the scapegoat theory in this paper comparing with the *New Testament* from the perspective of transmutation and displacement of archetypes.

*Keywords:* McEwan, scapegoat, archetype, displacement, Bible

## Literature Review

As the finest contemporary British writer of his generation, Ian McEwan is referred to as “England’s national author” by *The New Yorker* magazine. Also, his works are shortlisted in quite a few literature awards and enjoy wild readership. *Atonement*, published in 2001, is considered as his most appealing and successful novel during Ian McEwan’s literary career. There is no surprise that it has always been a spotlight on the stage of literary criticism both abroad and at home. So many literary critics have already studied Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* in different angles. The research perspectives are as follows: metanarrative, intertextuality, shifting, perspectives, narrative ethics, unreliable narration and rhetoric narratology. A CNKI survey reveals 2 Ph.D. dissertations, 97 MA theses, and 67 journal articles about *Atonement*. And a JSTOR search shows that there are 6 books and 124 journal articles about it.

Foreign researches on *Atonement* can be roughly categorized into two aspects: the technical study and thematic study. In reviewing this novel, John Updike comments that “Ian McEwan, whose novels have tended to be short, smart, and saturnine, has produced a beautiful and majestic fictional panorama” (Updike, 2002, pp. 80-83). John Mullan, in his article “Beyond Fiction”, holds that McEwan “has drawn the reader into a complex web of self-reflectivity: Metafiction is persistently self-referential” (Mullan, 2003, p. ). Some researchers have been done in intertextuality of *Atonement*. Juliette Wells studies the influence of Jane Austen on *Atonement*, whose epigraph is quoted from Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (Wells, 2008). Earl G Ingersoll explores

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*Atonement*'s allusion to L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*. According to him, *Atonement* "offers an even more interesting intertext with *The Go-Between*, for in 'rereading' McEwan's novel we discover yet another narrative, based on 'real people', told by an aging child, trapped in guilty 'innocence' after witnessing a passionate love scene" (Ingersoll, 2004, pp. 241-258). Brian Finney explores the narrative fiction of the novel and draws the conclusion that *Atonement* presents us with "the dangers of entering a fiction world and the compensations and limitations which that world can offer its readers and writers" (Finney, 2004, pp. 68-82).

In terms of the thematic study of the novel. The themes of confession and atonement have been frequently studied. Elke D'Hoker explores these two themes, claiming that *Atonement* is an unusual case of confessional fiction through its representation of Briony's effort of atonement. Even if the truth of the self simply cannot be reached in confession, what matters is the attempt, the performative process of confessing, which generates and reveals a true story (D'Hoker, 2006). As for the theme of war and trauma, Paul Crosthwaite's put that the horrors in man's encounter with the mechanized warfare "are most effectively evoked when the text relinquishes its aspirations to pure, contemporaneous presence and instead employs tactics of evasion, elision, and belatedness" (Crosthwaite, 2007, pp. 51-70). Ian Fraser studies Robbie's class experience, consciousness and struggle in the theme of class reflected in the novel. He declares that "such a Thompsonian reading of *Atonement* allows us to explore the different manifestations of class experience that are present is testament both to the power of his approach and to McEwan's capacity to write about class so cogently" (Fraser, 2013, pp. 465-477). Megan Halford comes to conclusion that "Army Amo bar whose color, historical context, and depiction during significant passages of the novel establish patterns of association that highlights inequalities of class and age as well as the relationship to war" (Halford, 2012, pp. 25-32). Martin Jacobi hold that the readers' misreading of the novel corresponds with Briony's misreading. He said that "*Atonement* stands as an example of such problems of readings, and it encourages us to consider these problems even as it rewards us with the opportunity to read, reread, and contemplate a remarkably well-structured narrative" (Jacobi, 2011, pp. 55-73).

According to the search results in CNKI, there have been over 100 academic papers studying the novel so far, most of which are MA theses, periodical papers and Ph.D. theses. Research angles can be segmented to four aspects.

First of all, considerable papers concentrated on the novel from the perspectives of themes, characters, the relationship between historical reality and the novel. Hu huiyong's Ph.D. thesis puts emphasis on the crises in history and present social life and these of human survival which are clearly shown in McEwan's several works (胡慧勇, 2013). Besides, there are some papers paying attention to McEwan's writing styles and narrative skills such as the techniques of defamiliarization, various types of points of view and point-of-view and the theory of narrative judgements. Zou Tao fully discloses the cognitive violence and atonement in narrative in the novel (邹涛, 2011). Moreover, some articles are applying literary critical theories to the interpretation of the novel, containing reader response theory, ethical literary criticism and postmodernism. Some papers talk about multi-layered misreading in *Atonement*, which are guided by the "implied author", misleading by Briony, and identifies with the reader, the metafictional ending and the explanation of ethics in and out of *Atonement* under the guidance of ethical literary criticism. Finally, a few essays take the movie version of *Atonement* into consideration. Xiang Guanhua makes a comparison of the novel *Atonement* with its movie adaptation (向冠桦, 2010).

Seven academic papers rely upon the theory of mythological and archetypal criticism, among which three theses discover the theme of initiation. Yang Lili believes that the process of growing up of characters is comprised of three phases, namely the pain of growth, the refusal to grow up and fly soul (杨丽丽, 2009). Chang Shanshan stresses the growing process of the heroine Briony (袁姗姗, 2012). Chu Fuxiao recognizes the profound effects of biblical prototypes on the novel *Atonement* (褚福晓, 2012). Li Shuhong concludes her thesis with a call to rethink of the extensive applications of biblical archetypes in *Atonement* (李树红, 2012). There are still two papers detecting archetypal characters and images. Li Qiaoxia emphatically investigates the heroine Briony on the basis of mythological and archetypal approaches (李巧霞, 2014). Li Wei argues that archetypal characters, motifs and imagery are widely used in *Atonement* (李炜, 2012). All the previous research paves the way for the deep interpretation of the novel, yet the studies are far from comprehensive. This thesis finds fruitful the attempt to explore the “scapegoat” theme in the novel *Atonement*.

Through the comparison and analysis, it is not difficult to find that the research on Ian McEwan and *Atonement*, whether at home or abroad, has become increasingly mature and that the research has something in common. In other words, all the studies can be divided into the following respects: analyses of “content”, including themes, characters; discussions about “form”, incorporating writing styles and narrative techniques; the combination with literary critical theories such as postmodernism and ethical literary criticism.

### Introduction

In *New Testament*, Jesus Christ was chosen to act as a scapegoat crucified on the cross. Jesus was born in Israel as a carpenter who lived a Jewish traditional life. Meanwhile the connotation of the scapegoat is broadened as it may mean an innocent person that suffers from unmerited punishment because of others' faults, sins or crimes. And Jesus Christ is universally considered as a symbol of scapegoat.

And it is absolutely clear to those readers who are very familiar with the plots and theme of *Atonement* that there is an amazing resemblance between Bobbie in *Atonement* and Jesus in *The New Testament* as far as the image of the “scapegoat”.

*Atonement* is McEwan's representative work which narrates a story concerning love, class, war and atonement. The story took place in 1935 when Briony the little 13-year-old girl, blamed Robbie, her sister Cecilia's lover, as the rapist who had raped her cousin—Lola. Robbie was betrayed by Briony whom he grows up with together. Because of her wrong accusation, Robbie was thrown into prison and afterwards joined the army, which ultimately led to Cecilia and Robbie's separation from each other. Cecilia cut down relationship with the Tallis after Robbie was arrested and was killed at the bombing of the Balham tube situation. At the same year, Robbie died in the Dunkirk retreat. Briony spent her lifetime creating the novel *Atonement*, in the which she made Jack has his Jill, to atone for her past mistake. Different from Jesus, Robbie failed to be sacred the same as Jesus in the real world, even in no way to clean his accusation until he died in the war field. However, in the metafictional ending of Briony's *Atonement*, Robbie not only becomes a hero who saves the whole country and lives without guilt, but also gets married with Cecilia.

In the novel, Robbie is a scapegoat. He is the son of the cleaning lady in the Tallis family. He graduates with the first rank at Cambridge and plans to study to be a doctor. He is supposed to have a bright future in front of him. But his dreams and ambitions are shattered when Briony accuses of him harming Lola. He does not hurt Lola, but

he carries the consequence of the sin which is actually done by Marshall. Marshall is a chocolate millionaire; he makes chocolate bars for soldiers during the Second World War. It is Marshall who rapes Lola that night. But no one doubts this rich man. Instead, Robbie, the son of the cleaning lady is put into prison because of Briony's false testimony. Briony's parents choose to believe Briony rather than Robbie. Jack Tallis is generous to Robbie, but when it comes to real crisis, he doesn't hesitate to turn down Robbie. Robbie's working-class status makes him more easily to sacrifice. Robbie's mother and Cecilia are the only people who believe his innocence. Robbie is actually the victim of Briony's lie and the snobbery of the Tallis.

Comparing the characters of the two, the parallelism between Robbie in *Atonement* and Jesus in *The New Testament* became apparent. They both took on the crime in which they should not be blamed, to prevent the imminent panic from the people and become the scapegoat.

In Frye's view, literary form can't come from life, but only from literary tradition, so in the final analysis, it comes from myth; myth is the main incentive force, which gives ritual archetypal meaning and Oracle narrative archetypal meaning, so myth is archetypal. Moreover, the "displacement" and representation of each prototype by artists vary with the specific historical conditions, cultural background and the endowment and characteristics of the artists who reproduce the prototype.

Therefore, in order to reflect the reality of society at that time and make some sense in the aesthetic way, the author sometimes displaces the myth as archetype. When we mention the scapegoat in biblical story, there are also similarities and distinctions in *Atonement*.

### **The Scapegoat Motif**

Girard believes that it is the law of human society that only by adjusting the mutual violence can human society last forever. The principle of religious sacrifice ceremony is to establish a kind of "original violence" which can replace other violence. One's death brings us survival, which is the scapegoat mechanism of myth.

If we put Robbie and Jesus forward the same position as the scapegoat, both of them have an experience of the outburst of a social crisis and it gives rise to wide social panic. In the Bible, in order to prevent his beholder from being suffered, and save the people who were believed born with original sin, Jesus was crucified on a cross. And in *Atonement*, Robbie was punished for the crime he has never committed, for the upper-class fame and benefit can be protected. Moreover, special attention should be paid to the relationship between the number of 13 and the dinner. When Jesus had the last dinner with his disciples, all together there were 13 people. After the very dinner, Jesus was betrayed by Judas who was one of his students and bribed by the chief priests. With kissing as a secret signal, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Therefore, the number 13 becomes a bad omen. In *Atonement*, before an occurrence of the rape, the family had a dinner party, which was set to welcome Leon and his friend Marshall, Briony found her twin cousins running away from the house. There were also 13 people in the house, that is, Jack, Emily, Leon, Cecilia, Robbie, Briony, Paul, Lola, Grace, Jackson, Pierrot, old and young Hardman. People were broken into several groups to find the twins while Robbie and Briony were the only left ones who searched alone. In the darkness, Briony discovered Lola being raped by someone she didn't see clearly, and the attacker disappeared quickly. However, when Robbie came back to the house with the rescued twins, he was arrested by Briony's perjury on strongly believing that she had seen the attacker. Similar with Jesus was betrayed after dinner, Robbie was betrayed as well. Thus, 13 means the similarity of fate between Robbie and

Jesus. After three and a half years, the Second World War broke out. In order to wash off the humiliation of being put into jail and make contribution to his country, Robbie is committed to join the army...

As we can see, in the sacrificial-scapegoat motif, the welfare of the state, both human and natural, is bound up with the personal fate of the one; only after Jesus has offered himself up as a scapegoat is the people redeemed. However, in *Atonement* this motif has little changed, and the displacement has made sense with the vicissitude of the time and space. Robbie as a dual scapegoat, one is the victim of the rape case and the other is epitome of the soldiers in the World War Two. He was condemned by those who regarded himself as outsider and rescue the people who dislike him and those suffering from the war.

### **Social Crisis**

According to the Bible, Jewish religious leaders (and political leaders - because their society is “unification of the state and the church”) conspired many times to kill Jesus. Of course, there are many historical and political reasons. But in terms of faith, they believe that the gospel preached by Jesus is a tempting heresy, and directly threatens their authority and interests, so they need to put their lives behind them. The obvious difference between Jesus and Robbie is the reason why they are condemned. For Jesus that is the politics and religion and for Robbie that is the hierarchy system. Jewish people once followed Jesus, even cheered and swarmed him into Jerusalem. Later, they saw that he was arrested, beaten, insulted and ridiculed. They bought false witnesses to frame him and decided that he had committed blasphemy and blasphemy because Jesus admitted that he was “the son of God”. The Jewish leader should have ordered the release of Jesus, but because he was afraid of the Jewish mob, he promised to put him to death and wash his hands in public to show that his sin was not on him. Then all the Jews answered, “his blood is on us and our children”. Jesus died on the cross, and three days later, he resurrected and ascended to Heaven. Jesus Christ has a great sense of responsibility to redeem his people and he suffers so much torture during his life until his death. Jesus is both the scapegoat of power and people.

Briony’s cousin Lola was raped by a male in the darkness outside the big house. The Tallises’ suspicion only lies on two people, one is Hardman, son of the servant, and the other is Robbie, son of the house cleaner. While the real sinner is the family’s guest—Marshall, the chocolate millionaire. Without thinking other possibilities, everyone chooses to trust Briony’s lie and turns their back on Robbie and sends him to the prison. Thus, in Britain where the ethical air of admiring the nobility and gentleness prevails, the upper-class holds the belief the person from the lower-class is the danger to disrupt their moral rule.

On one hand, apparently, Robbie is the scapegoat of the Marshall. On the other hand, Robbie is the scapegoat of the corrupted ethical value of the upper-class. Robbie’s social status determines his position in the rape case. In the other word, he is forced to become the sacrificial scapegoat. Robbie has been the suffer of the Tallis family’s prejudice for a long time. For the sake of protecting the family fame, Robbie must be treated as the scapegoat to protect the upper class’s reputation away from the scandal.

Same as the sacrifice of Jesus who is betrayed by his own student Judas, Robbie is condemned by the crime which is from the upper class despised him always. And this arrangement has been regarded as the transmutation and displacement of archetypes. Jung has outlined “archetypes of transformation”, which are situations, places, ways, and means that symbolize the transformation in question. These archetypes exist primarily as energy and are useful in organizational development, personal and organizational change management, and extensively used

in place branding. Frye points out that the regular pattern of literary development lies in the “displacement” of the prototype. He says: “By displacement I mean the techniques a writer uses to make his story credible, logically motivated or morally acceptable—lifelike, in short” (Fray, 1971, p. 26).

By this kind of displacement of the scapegoat, first and foremost, the tragic destiny of Robbie will rise about the sympathy of readers. Moreover, the usage of the displacement is one of the most important techniques to improve the wasteland in the society and put highlight on the absurdity of the hierarchy and the war.

### **The Scapegoat Selection Criteria**

Extreme characteristics ultimately attract collective destruction at some time or other, extremes not just of wealth or poverty, but also success and failure, beauty and ugliness, vice and virtue, the ability to pleasure and to displease. The weakness of women, children, and the old people, as well as the strength of the most powerful, becomes weakness in the face of the crowd. Crowds commonly turn on those who originally held exceptional power over them. (Scapegoat, 1989, p. 25)

As Girard points out that when people choose a victim, the excessiveness or extremeness in a person will always cause the attention of the persecutors, because the unique singularity deviates the victim from the “the average” and “norms” of the society (Girard, 1989). Therefore, disability, ugliness or perfection, extreme vice or virtue, and all kinds of aspects in social life are easily to become the target of criticism.

Jesus and Robbie both have the obvious mark which make them become the chosen person.

Jesus was born of a virgin, performed miracles, son and reincarnation of the God, founded the Church, make him a hodgepodge of concentrated suffering marks. The more suffering markers a person has, the more likely he is to be in danger. And for Robbie include the obvious ones like his social status and his talent.

For one thing, in *Atonement*, comparing with Jesus, they both have a humble family. Like Jesus, he is born up by a kind woman, while the identity and his whereabouts of his real father are unknown. Robbie was born with an abandoned life: His father “walked away from his job, away from the bungalow, without luggage, without even a farewell note on the kitchen table, leaving his wife and their 6-year-old son to wonder about him for the rest of their lives” (McEwan, 2001, p. 58). Although he lacked father’s love, Robbie grew into an excellent young man. Jack Tallis favors him and is generous to Robbie, and he “took the first step in an enduring patronage by paying for the uniform and the textbooks” (McEwan, 2001, p. 62). Robbie grew up with the Leon, Cecilia and Briony and knew them very well since they were little. Robbie seems to be a member of the Tallis family but Robbie “had his politics to protect himself, and his scientifically based theories of class, and his own rather forced self-certainty” (McEwan, 2001, p. 55). For the other thing, Robbie is a promising young man with confidence and lofty ambition, and Jesus teach people and perform miracles. They are both more excellent than the normal. He has graduated from Cambridge as the best student. During his university, he is surprised to find that “he was cleverer than many of the people he met.” He can speak French well and he knows how to read a map, so he can make a decisive decision at very vitally important moment. Robbie is downtrodden servant in the Tallis family as well as the downcast convict in prison. His identity turns him into the scapegoat of the war and his chief mission is to fight for the country on the battlefields.

Furthermore, they still have something in common in terms of personality. Jesus never order arrogantly by the right of his identity. Rather, he kindly treats others and benevolently helps the needy. Alike Jesus, Robbie

does not try to impersonate the officer. He simply wants to help them survive and treats them equally. In addition, although Corporal Nettle teases him by some sexual explicitly jokes from time to time, Robbie never minds it. He just silently leads them towards their destination.

He was lower in rank, but they followed and did everything he suggested...They were townies who dislike the countryside and were lost in it. The compass meant nothing to them...they had decided that to reach the coast, they needed him. It was difficult for them, he acted like an officer, but he didn't even have a single stripe. (McEwan, 2001, p. 48)

Besides, he is sympathetic to the poor victims and ready to help, Jesus sacrifice for the atonement of human beings, like Jesus, Robbie has love and humanity as well. While he is trudging through the vast ruins of the northern France, his life is endangered because the German dive-bombers could kill him at any time. In spite of this, his good nature obliges him to aid other victims. He accepts voluntarily the burden of helping others, including two corporals and some refugees. In particular, he tries his best to rescue a Flemish woman and her child when the German Stuka is bombing around. Unfortunately, he gets injured in the blast, which adds his pain in the trudge. But he does not care about it and manages to lead the corporals to the Dunkirk beach.

In other hand, contrary to the Jesus who has an honorable identity, Robbie is not the true royal man. It is an obvious displacement that Robbie doesn't belong to the same class with the Tallis even though he was very close to them. He is still an outsider. The relationship between Robbie and the Tallises is based on the ethic of hierarchical system. Robbie is born in a humble family but growing up to be surprisingly bright and prominent. Graduating with the first from Cambridge, Robbie is planning to further study of medicine. However, everyone reminds the world of the truth that Robbie's education is subsidized by Jack Tallis (the host of the Tallises).

### **The Collective Persecution**

According to Girard's scapegoat theory, the last stereotype of persecution is the violence itself, the violence on the victim. The collective persecution is the fulfillment of the violence, which paved the way for the final execution of the scapegoat sacrifice.

In *Book of Leviticus* (the third book of *The Holy Bible*), the persecutors also closed their eyes to a large number of vague accusations against Jesus. In their view, Jesus became the possible reason for this collective intervention to crucify Jesus one by one. All the fans of witchcraft thought began to search for a little sign of chaos in their small world. Although Pilate was the real power master, there were crowds above him. Once the crowd is mobilized, it is absolutely superior to everything. It takes away political organizations and forces them to disband. Therefore, this is the power of myth, the consistency of collective persecution. The crowd is a united group, but it is completely loose. Only by sacrificing its victims, its scapegoats, can the group be reunited.

In *Atonement*, Robbie experiences two kinds of inhuman torture as the chosen scapegoat: to end up in prison due to a feigned crime and to lose his life on the battlefield overwhelmed by the continuous war. And these two kinds of violence are collective persecution.

Torture of body and mine in jail is first collective persecution for Robbie. It remains people the scene which Jesus Christ was taken away at the Garden of Gethsemane when Robbie was escorted by policemen. No one was back up him, and he was betrayed by the illusions of 13-year-old girl. "Briony saw how his arms were forced in front of him, and from her vantage point she saw the silver glint of steel below his shirt cuff. The disgrace of it

horrified her. It was...the beginning of his punishment. It had the look of eternal damnation” (McEwan, 2001, p. 67). Just as their false witnesses against Jesus, Briony plays the role of a false witness against Robbie. And her lie effortlessly sends Robbie to prison and leads to the conviction.

Brutal trial is imposed on Robbie. With unmerited shame, Robbie falls a victim to the evil conspiracy of Briony, Lola and Marshall. He is forced to bear the criminal record. They wanted to keep their fame and wealth through sacrificing Robbie who come from the different class and possible to subvert their right. Therefore, in order to put Robbie into the prison, they reunited. Firstly, Robbie lost freedom by confined in the sealed and narrow cell. He is compelled to bid farewell to his mother and his lover, the two most important women in his life. And he has to overcome the decline in the quality of life and struggle for “survival” in the creep jail. Secondly, Robbie’s heart is filled with loneliness, despair and numbness. He failed to communicate with others and to express his thoughts freely. His all glorious visions of the future vanish. That is the result of collective persecution.

Death of Robbie in the War is another collective persecution. To some extent, soldiers are now exemplification of sacrifice, burdened with the mission of defending their country. In order to get rid of the prison life, Robbie joined the army, He treated the fight at the front line in France as a kind of atonement: on the one hand, atone for his sin which did not belong to him. He suffers both psychologically and physically during the war. The memories of “unexpected detail of a leg in a tree” (McEwan, 2001, p. 117) and the “scraps of cloth from a child’s pajamas” (p. 119) haunted him. Besides, his wound tortures him. On the other hand, he was atoning for the entire human beings: it was a crime that human invented war and caused countless pain and suffering for everyone involved. At the end of the novel, Robbie never returned to London, to Cecilia and died at Dunkirk, in which other “300,000 soldiers and 60,000 citizens” sacrificed too.

The collective persecution can also be sorted into many categories. The first is whipping on the scapegoat. It hurts but is not lethal. The heavier persecution is the exile when the scapegoat will be banished to another place, always a wasteland. Leaving the homeland, and suffering from the poor condition leave the scapegoat poor and weak. With the mental and physical harm, he can hardly maintain good health. The last kind, the cruelest one, is killing the scapegoat directly. Obviously, Robbie has underwent the most persecutions which have mentioned above. When come to whipping on the scapegoat, people condemned Robbie of rape which he never had done before, and then put Robbie into the prison. In terms of the exile, Robbie was pushed to the World War Two which vividly show the absurdity of human society, making him far away from the homeland London and his lover Cecilia. After tortured in the war field, death is his only outcome.

### **The Outcome of the Scapegoat Sacrifice**

Apparently, in *Atonement*, Robbie, the son of the Tallis family’s housekeeper, is reduced unfortunately to be the scapegoat of both the rape case and the war. He suffers the severe spiritual oppression. What’s more, he has been in prison for three and a half years, ending up losing his life on the battlefield. He undergoes the terrible physical torture. After the punishment of the scapegoat, the tranquility reappears. The war ends; Lora marries Marshall and Briony confessed to her crime in her novel.

For Robbie, a tragic death is the only alternative to fulfill the mission as a scapegoat; it proves that blood must be shed to cleanse sins. For all the soldiers who have witness death on the battlefield, the military retreat not



only put an end to the soldiers' empty and arid life, but also awaken their lost conscience resulting from the frequent contact with death. And the other is the redemptive marriage.

Perhaps it is because of the repentance of the past sin, or probably by reason of the fear for the disclosure of the scandal, Marshall, the perpetrator of the rape case, marries the victim Lala. The redemptive between Marshall and Lala recreates to a large degree a harmonious and serene situation at the expense of the scapegoat Robbie.

For Jesus and Robbie, a tragic death is the only alternative. In other words, they have to fulfill the mission as a scapegoat. Before Jesus' death, he felt painful and despairing and he cried out desperately. Identically, the novel features Robbie and presents him as a single man who feels forlorn and obsessed. Clearly, Robbie has done nothing wrong. But just like a scapegoat to be killed. "It occurred to Turner that he might be walking into a slaughter...and he could think of no alternative" (McEwan, 2001, p. 119). Just like Jesus, Robbie is troubled by his inner turmoil before his death and he can't help crying out. After his shouting, Robbie meets his tragic death before he could retreat to London.

However, there is another result of Robbie—Briony's confession and the reunion of lovers. She is willing to be a nurse in hospital regardless of her social status; she spends her whole life in creating and revising repeatedly a novel with the theme of self-atonement. In the confessional novel, Briony not only admits the terrible mistake she has made in the past, but also tries to change her opinion about the romantic love when she was 13 years old. In her novel *Atonement*, Briony writes, "the lovers survive and flourish. As long as there is a single copy, a solitary typescript of my final draft, then my spontaneous, fortuitous sister and her medical prince survive to love" (McEwan, 2001, p. 676). She vaguely realizes that they probably do have a consciousness as she does, nevertheless she won't admit it, as writing endows her with a God-like power. With the power of imagination, she conducts a series of misunderstandings, which directly bring about the imprisonment of Robbie. By using her own imagination, Briony creates a story about Cecilia and Robbie, but she confuses the fiction and the reality, sacrificing the couple to her artistic creation.

From this perspective, Robbie's ending in Briony's *Atonement* is traditional happy ending that the truth is revealed to all and Jack shall have Jill. And this ending makes people who know the story feel satisfied and justice is about to be served, therefore they succeed to find a spiritual sustenance and continue to have their faith, just like the Jesus's ending in the *Holy Bible*. However, in the McEwan's *Atonement*, Robbie died in the field of World War Two, and Cecilia lose her life in the bombing. The truth hasn't been known until Marshalls kick the bucket because of the power of them. That is the point that McEwan use the displacement of scapegoat myth. There are two results—one is real and the other is fake. Robbie had finished his scapegoat job and live without guilt. He was a hero to clear people's heart like Jesus. Unfortunately, that is fiction. What reality is that Robbie passed away, and the absurd world gives him no chance to clean his name. Briony's fiction far enough away from atonement. The relationship between art and fiction is complex, as the theory of writing is developing with the time. On one hand, the gap between imagination and fiction is hard to overstep. On the other hand, "reality" is to some extent "fictional" or "imagined" and can be understood through an appropriate "reading" process, so there is concord between them. Thus, metafiction does not give up the "real world" for the mere pleasure of the imagination. By showing us how imagination creates a new world, the metafiction is indicating that composing a novel is no different from composing "one's reality".

### Conclusion

In *Atonement*, Robbie is not only the scapegoat of the rape case, but also the sufferer of the war. He is a marginalized man with dual identity. Robbie is being the innocent victim of the Lola case mainly attribute to the Tallis family's prejudice against him. He is the "chosen people" for the war owing to his distinguished capacity and personality. What he wants is only to purify himself by fighting for his country in the Second World War. It is both a physical and spiritual journey for him. He has to overcome lots of obstacles, such as "wound, thirst, tiredness, the heat, the "aching" to achieve his aims. And he is in quest of a life without shame. However, he dies before he makes his way back to England, back to his beloved one. The scapegoat personalities in Robbie, the accusations of crimes on him and the persecution he suffers, on one hand, shows the tragic fact that he is a scapegoat. On the other hand, Robbie's tragic story also represents the tragic fate of people who suffer from prejudice and cruel war, at the same time it arouses readers' reflection and sympathy on the state of minorities all over the world. Thus, the love tragedy between Robbie and Cecilia is more dramatic and the artistic charm of the novel is enriched.

*Atonement* is a rough change of mythology, and there is always a mythological structure. After reading this rewriting, readers can know that Robbie has not committed any bad things that are condemned. The crime of Jesus accused in the myth is actually an unnecessary crime. But the mark on his body became the real target of the attack, and also became the target of the restlessness and anger of the Tallis family. It is not difficult for readers to understand the relationship between truth and untruth in this novel. No one will believe that this is a groundless fictional work, and readers will appreciate the truth-seeking interpretation method used by McEwan. In mythology, groups often accuse the victims of unnecessary charges, the purpose of which is to kill the victims. The skills of transmutation and displacement of archetype as well as parallel correspondence make Ian McEwan worthwhile to be studied further. These kinds of unique skills can be seen clearly in his novel *Atonement*.

*Atonement*, being most complex and the interesting novel to readers, makes McEwan a typical writer in the case of archetype. The Biblical images have enhanced the tragic atmosphere and the absurdity of the novel, especially its metafictional ending. The outcome of Robbie reveals the absurdity of social hierarchy; no matter how outstanding he is, he is a victim. The decay of morals and all kinds of things against the human nature at that time in the battlefields revealed by McEwan is not the fault of Robbie under the corrupted society, but is the fault of preconception of people; and is not the fault of innocent people, but the degenerated war. It includes the values, social system, especially the equality of the social class. Therefore, in the novel *Atonement*, McEwan has created a series of deformation to the archetypes; and this kind of deformation is the result or the product of the social environment which the protagonists lived in. The prototype is no longer a single prototype anymore; but a mixed reflection of the typical historical background and the author's intension of revealing the theme. What McEwan wants to reveal in *Atonement* is absurdity of the social class and war. Since the archetype in the Bible has enlightened the writers in his creation, the transmutation and displacement of the archetypes have met the requirement in revealing the theme "the equality and love" in the novel.

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