

**REVELATION OF TRUTH AND REHABILITATION OF
REPUTATION IN JOE WRIGHT'S *ATONEMENT*:
A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE**



RESEARCH PAPER

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Atonement is an adaptation movie of Ian McEwan's novel in the same title. With the running time 123 minutes, it starred Keira Knightley, James McAvoy, Saoirse Ronan, Romola Garai, Vanessa Redgrave, Brenda Blethyn, etc. It is based on screenplay by Christopher Hampton, and directed by Joe Wright. This movie is produced by Working Title Films and filmed throughout the summer of 2006 in England and France. *Atonement* is distributed worldwide by Universal Studios and released in the United Kingdom and Ireland on 7 September 2007 and in North America on 7 December 2007 (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0783233/>).

This movie presents a story about a girl's remorse. Began with an unintended letter which is written by Robbie for Cecilia the story flows unpredictable. In the letter, he wrote "cunt", a word which makes Briony, who reads the letter, misinterprets to Robbie. A 1- year-old girl who trusts her own feeling to judge something is represented well by this character. At the dinner time, Tallis family was confused by the lost of the twins. All of them spread to look for them. Alone, Briony goes off alone into the darkness to find the twins; she stumbles upon a man in a dinner suit apparently raping Lola. It encourages her to accuse Robbie as the rapist, instead she knows well the truth, it was Paul Marshall.

The story moves on the next five years, when World War II happened. Briony, as a nurse at this time, follows Cecilia's choice. Her guilty feeling has broken her life. She always tries to find her sister, but their meeting is not as what she wants. Cecilia is too difficult to open her heart for Briony. Her faith to Robbie adds Briony's guilt. Briony has realized her mistakes, especially about her accusation to Robbie. Cecilia run out from their house when Robbie on the jail. She became a nurse and Robbie has to be a soldier if he wants to be free from the jail. This condition may become worse, because anytime, Robbie may be killed.

The scene ended with the interview of old Briony, in 1999, about her last novel, *Atonement*. This novel is her real responsibility for her wrongdoing in the past. She keeps trying to prove her regret by giving Cecilia and Robbie a chance to gather, something which they deserve to get, at least in her novel, *Atonement*. At the real, Robbie and Cecilia were died. Until they die, they cannot live together and it still makes Briony being guilty. Ironically, what is done is done; she has no capability to change the condition. *Atonement* is her novel which is dedicated for them.

Various responses come from different parties. The film has received positive reviews from the majority of film critics. As of 18 January 2008, the review site Rotten Tomatoes records that 83 per cent of 196 critics gave the film positive reviews, with a consensus that "*Atonement* features strong performances, brilliant cinematography, and a unique score. Featuring deft performances from James MacAvoy and Keira Knightley, it's a successful

adaptation of Ian McEwan's novel." On other review sites, Metacritic records an average score of 85%, based on 36 reviews (<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/atonement/>).

On the other hand, some people judge that this movie is significantly diverged from the book. Additionally, the movie includes several historical inaccuracies. Soldiers at Dunkirk are heard singing the Vera Lynn song The White Cliffs of Dover despite the fact that the song was not written until the following year. At Dunkirk, references are made to the loss of life caused by the sinking of The Lancastria, another event which had yet to occur. Additionally, the film indicates that Robbie is served with the 1st Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, in France; in fact, the 1st Battalion was not part of the BEF, although the regiment's 2nd Battalion did participate in the Battle of France ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atonement_(film))).

Movie industries welcome and give positive response to this movie; this is proved by the rating and the achievement which is got. The film has received numerous awards and nominations. The nominations come from 80th Academy Awards, 12th Art Directors Guild Awards, 22nd American Society of Cinematographers Awards, 61st British Academy Film Awards, Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards, 10th Costume Designers Guild Awards, 65th Golden Globe Awards International Film Music Critics Association Awards, Irish Film and Television Awards. This nomination is gotten for many elements of the movie (<http://www.filminfocus.com/focus/features/film/atonement/awards>)

Atonement won almost all the nominations, each includes Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures, Best Film, Best Production Design, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Romance, Best Motion Picture Drama, Best Original Score - Motion Picture, Actress in a Supporting Role Film, Best Film of the Year, and the Production Design award, Best Youth Performance, Best Set Decoration, Best Cinematography and Best Editing. The most prestige is that it won an Oscar for the Best Original Score at the 80th Academy Awards (<http://www.filminfocus.com/focus/features/film/atonement/awards>)

The market also shows the success of *Atonement* as the movie of the year. The film was released in the United Kingdom and Ireland on 7 September 2007, and has grossed £11,557,134. It was also given a limited release in North America on 7 December, and grossed \$784,145 during its opening weekend, posting a per-theatre average of \$24,504 in 32 theatres. The film has now grossed \$50,927,067 in the US and \$129,266,061 worldwide (<http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/atonement/numbersphp>)

Atonement has three appeals which make the researcher interested in this movie. The first is the story itself, the story is so touching, instead causes resentment especially to Briony's character. It is able to interfere in the researcher's sensibility. Not only love story, this movie also provides other side of life such as a struggle to stay alive in a battle, struggle to defend a belief, struggle to reach a dream. A sisterhood between Briony and Cecilia adds the complexity of *Atonement*. It also becomes more interesting with a self actualization of every character. This movie is complete in short.

The plot is the second appeal of *Atonement*. The story can move so interesting because flash back plot is chosen. This movie comprised into four parts, corresponding to the four parts of the novel. Some scenes are shown several times from different perspectives. It has made the plot goes live. The audiences seem like have a chance to stand in different characters and situations, so they can comprehend the story fully based on the pole they were.

The cinematography contributes the plus score to this movie and it is the third appeal of *Atonement*. Wright perfectly creates every scene appropriate to the situation of the real period. Supported by high technology in lighting, sound, properties, dressing, and make up, these help Wright makes this movie successfully. The lighting and sound shows the perfect imitation of every scene. It was added by the dressing and makes up which support the performances of the actors and actresses become more maximum.

Revelation of truth and rehabilitation of reputation become the issue chosen by the researcher in this movie. Briony as one of major characters implies its phenomena. Refusal from her sister, Cecilia and Robbie brings out a deeper remorse to her. The positive feedback is shown by her firmness to prove that she is not the same girl a few years ago. She is mature enough to know and understand everything around. In spite of the fact that what she has done could not change anything, at least she tried the best she can.

Based on the illustration above, the writer interested in exploring Briony's personality, her maturation process until she realizes her mistakes using psychoanalytic perspective entitled **REVELATION OF TRUTH AND**

REHABILITATION OF REPUTATION IN JOE WRIGHT'S *ATONEMENT*: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE.

B. Literary Review

There is a research to *Atonement* which has been done before this one. The researcher found two sources correlated to this study, an essay and an article. The first is an essay entitled *Atonement – The Essay*, written by Betty Sue Flower and posted by Jane Jessell. In this essay, Flower argues that *Atonement* raises a number of themes related to love, forgiveness, and the stories which are told will make sense of these lives. She also adds that on one level, atonement is a kind of payment for a wrong committed. Someone make amends by trying to repair the damage she have done. But sometimes, like the broken vase in *Atonement*, lives are too shattered to be put back together again. In the novel, as in life, when amends cannot be made, another route to forgiveness must be found (<http://lfwclp.wordpress.com/2009/02/27/atonement-the-essay/loveforgiveness>).

The second source is an article entitled *The Background Hum* by Daniel Zalewski, This article has much to say about McEwan's works, including *Atonement*, *Saturday*, and *Black Dogs*. Additionally, there's much here about McEwan's private life, which added to Zalewski's understanding of McEwan's writing. After trying unsuccessfully to distribute a variety of free novels to men in a London park (the women in the park *eagerly* took the books), McEwan declared, "When women stop reading, the novel will be

dead.” (<http://lfwclp.wordpress.com/2009/02/27/atonement-the-essay/love-forgiveness>).

This research has its own position compared to the previous study. The previous studies concern on the novel version of *Atonement* while the researcher uses the movie version.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of this study can be composed as follow, “How is the revelation of truth and rehabilitation of reputation reflected in this movie?”

D. Limitation of the Study

The writer limits the study on one of major characters, Briony, in case of Briony’s decision in revelation of truth and rehabilitation of reputation using psychoanalytic perspective, especially Sigmund Freud’s theory. The using of this theory refers to the provided theory for the researcher’s need in exploring Briony’s personality.

E. Objective of the study

The objective of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. To analyze *Atonement* the movie based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze *Atonement* the movie viewed from psychoanalytic perspective, especially Freud’s theory.

F. Benefits of the Study

The benefits of this study can be drawn as follows

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to give contribution to the literary study especially psychoanalytic criticism of *Atonement* the movie.

2. Practical Benefit

This study is expected to help the writer to get deeper understanding about the movie in analyzing a literary work.

G. Research Method

1. Type of the Study

The writer uses descriptive qualitative research because there is no need a statistic calculation.

2. Object of the Study

The object of this study is divided into two; these are formal object and material object. The formal object is revelation of truth and rehabilitation of reputation which appear in this movie while the material object is *Atonement* movie itself.

3. Type of Data and Data Source

The writer uses scenes and dialogues as the type of the data and added by the script to get more understanding. The script itself consists of sentences, phrases and words. The data source is divided into two kinds, namely primary data source and secondary data source.

a. Primary Source

The primary data are taken from *Atonement* the movie by Joe Wright.

b. Secondary Source

The secondary data are taken from other sources related to this movie such as biography of the author and other relevant information.

4. Technique of Data Collection

In conducting this study, the writer uses the techniques as follows:

a. Note taking

b. Scene capturing

The steps which are used by the writer are as follows:

a. Watching the movie

b. Reading the script

c. Classifying the data

d. Browsing in the internet to look for related information such as movie script, movie's identity, public response, etc

e. Reading relevant books

5. Technique of Data Analysis

The steps used in analyzing the data of this study are classifying the data by selecting the necessary ones. The next is analyzing the data based on psychoanalytic theory proposed by Sigmund Freud.

H. Research Paper Organization

This research paper will be divided into five chapters. Chapter I is introduction which consists of background of the study, literary review, problem statement, objective of the study, research method, and research paper organization. Chapter II will be underlying theory dealing with notion of psychoanalytic theory, major systems of personality, anxiety theory, and structural elements of movie. Chapter III will be structural analysis, in this chapter the writer explains the structural elements of the movie. Chapter IV will be psychoanalytic analysis, and chapter V will be conclusion and suggestion.