



Ian McEwan's Short Story "First Love, Last Rites" as a Story of Initiation and Adolescence

By Nina Jungmann

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Essay from the year 2010 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Trier (Anglistik), course: British Short Stories, language: English, abstract: "A young boy, determined to cleanse himself of the embarrassing stigma of his virginity, seduces and beds his 10-year-old sister. A husband, who treasures a nineteenth-century criminal's penis in a jar, "disappears" his wife into a surfaceless plane. A man revenges himself by pouring a pan of boiling oil into the lap of an antagonizing co-worker. An Aunt forces her nephew to don dress and blonde wig before coming down to dinner. Welcome to the world of Ian McEwan" (Slay 9).

Ian Russell McEwan was born on the 21st of June in 1948 in Aldershot, England, as the only son of David and Rose McEwan. He spent most his childhood in military outposts such as Singapore and Libya because his father was a soldier of the British army. After having attended a boarding school in Suffolk, he enters the University of Sussex in 1966 where he began writing fiction and also achieved his BA degree in English literature in 1970. One year later he obtained his MA degree at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. In 1975 he published his first short story collection, *First Love, Last Rites*, which was his Master thesis in the subject 'creative writing'. The shocking stories that are arranged in *First Love, Last Rites* brought him immediate critical compliments and he won the Somerset Maugham Award for their intelligent skills and originality. Most of these stories deal with abnormal sexuality, disorganized family life or claustrophobic tales.

In his Short Stories, McEwan wrote at the beginning of his career, the protagonists are mostly children or young persons who tell the stories as first person narrators. Wolfgang G. Müller says in his interpretation of the Short story *First Love, Last Rites* that "the attention is drawn to the developmental stage of adolescence with its psychological problems that are especially linked to the first sexual experiences and to the search of gender identity" (translated from Müller 266). Ian McEwan became well known for his "new way of dealing with the topic of initiation where he places special emphasis on transgress and perverse sexual behaviour and also on criminal aspects" (translated from Müller 266). In this term paper the title story *First Love, Last Rites* will be analysed in the

context of initiation and adolescence. Hereby, I will firstly introduce some important terms so that I can go on with explaining what an initiation story is. The last part then will be about the short story itself where I will summarize and analyse FLLR

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