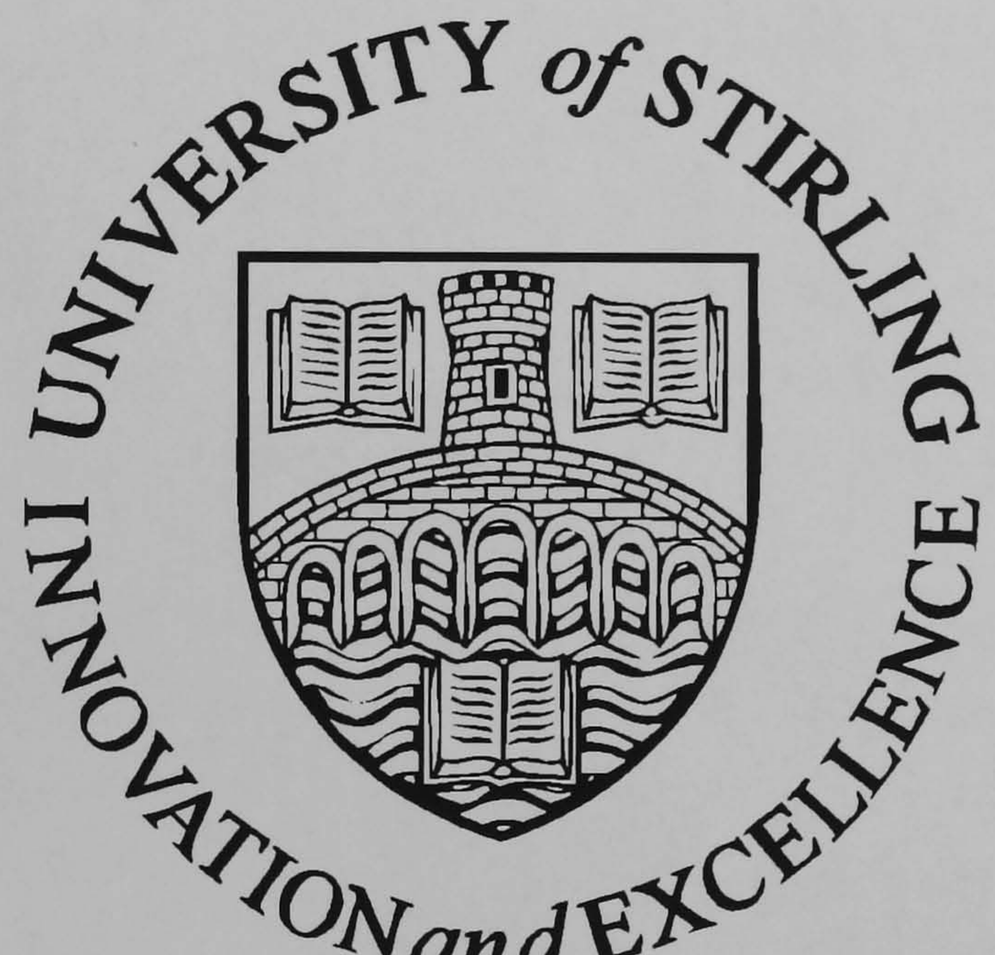
AN IRIS IN THE SUN
*PER*CEPTION-*RE*CEPTION-*PRE*CEPTION IN IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVELS OF THE GOOD

NUR NILGÜN ARITÜRK



THESIS SUBMITTED FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

SEPTEMBER 1997

ABSTRACT

Murdoch considers herself a 'Christian fellow-traveller', 'a kind of Platonist' and a 'sort of Buddhist', all of which summarise her spirit of writing very well. Iris Murdoch places a very serious obligation on the artist to present reality to his/her observers/readers. In almost all her philosophical articles, books, and interviews, she expresses with great emphasis the task of art, especially prose literature, as a form of education for moral development. In that sense, we can call her a moralist and a 'philosophical' novelist. With her 'Novels of the Good' Iris Murdoch is inviting the reader for a 'journey into the iris', saying:

'*I am the Iris; come into me and see.*'

The message of her novels is not of 'philosophy' but of everyday moral reality. In other words, reading Murdochian novels is reading morals. This is the main argument in this study. The moral education (preception) of the reader by Iris Murdoch is to 'realise' (receive) the 'perception' of the other--hence the title of the thesis--through her 'novels of character'. For Murdoch, appreciating a work of art is no different than knowing another person(s). The good artist and the good person have, in that respect, the same moral discipline. And this disciplined attention brings with it the true perception and clarity and morally right behaviour. The reader has to attend with *moral responsibility* to the work of art because it is through literature that s/he can enlarge his/her vision and inner space.

The thesis is divided into two main sections: the moral precepts and their exemplification as concrete everyday examples in her novels themselves. The Introduction provides the 'philosophical' and theoretical background for Murdoch's 'Novels of the Good'. Included here is a dictionary of some of the major 'concepts', or rather 'precepts' that Murdoch uses both in her novels and her philosophical articles and books, in order to train her reader to gain ethical vision. Also included in this chapter is a section on reading and readers through structuralist and reader-oriented theories in contrast to or comparison with Murdoch's conception/perception of the 'reader' in her novels. Chapter I switches on the 'machine', Murdoch's 'camera-eye' on the egoistic human 'psyche', which Murdoch likens to a machine. Chapter II discusses this 'machine' in close-up, that is through first-person narrative novels. Chapter III, which includes novels that have philosophers at the centre, throws a 'light' on philosophy and everyday reality. Chapter IV explores the importance of death in everyday life. However, although the chapters are divided under different titles, the novels discussed in each chapter can be related to the rest as Murdoch discusses the same precepts recurrently in different contexts which gives her novels the 'serial' characteristic. Each novel is part of the reader's pilgrimage to the Good to understand his/her limitations in the face of the contingent reality represented in her fiction through free individual characters. To enter the Murdochland is to enter the cycle of 'arriving at not arriving'.

To my Mother and Father

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Professor David Punter for the support he gave me as supervisor for my Ph.D., for his interest in my research and his helpful suggestions. Without his patience, this work could not have been completed. And for these alone, my thanks are inadequate. I am also grateful to Dicle University and Higher Education Council of Turkey (YÖK) for sponsoring me to do my Ph.D. at Stirling University. Without their scholarship, this study could not have been undertaken. I therefore formally acknowledge here my indebtedness to them. To Dr Nicholas Royle, I owe special thanks for giving us a course on deconstruction and Derrida. Of my friends I also wish to express my appreciation for their support, friendship and helpful assistance. I should like to acknowledge them individually: Emine and Yesim; all the regulars of our lovely Ph.D. room D21: Arnold, Rita, Seema and Susana; and finally Andrew and Kara for their comments on the drafts of the thesis. Thanks also go to the English Department at Stirling University for giving financial help for my conference papers and the English Department office for various kinds of assistance.

Final acknowledgment is reserved for my dear parents, my sister and my brother for their endless love and support. I will never forget that Summer day my mother and I had to walk all the way to Kensington Gardens--as there was an Underground strike--to see the Peter Pan monument, which was a unique feeling of experiencing Murdoch's fictional environment.

To all the above I express my deep appreciation.

AN IRIS IN THE SUN
*PER*CEPTION-*RE*CEPTION-*PRE*CEPTION
IN
IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVELS OF THE GOOD

NUR NILGÜN ARITÜRK

PREFACE

In his dream the narrator in Lowes Dickinson's book called *The Meaning of Good* enters into a strange land. He says:

> As I went , I presently became aware of what looked like high towers standing along the margin of the stream. I say they looked like towers, but I should rather have said they symbolized them; for they had no specific shape, round or square, nor any definite substance or dimensions. They suggested rather, if I may say so, the idea of verticality; and otherwise were as blank and void of form or colour as everything else in this strange land. I made my way towards them along the bank; and when I had come close under the first, I saw that there was a door in it, and written over the door, in a language I cannot now recall, but which then I knew that I had always known, an inscription whose sense was:
>
> '*I am the Eye; come into me and see.*'[1]

A similar invitation is given to the reader to enter the Murdochland, where s/he will gain anamnesis, that is 'memory of what we did not know we knew.'[2] With her 'Novels of the Good' Iris Murdoch is inviting the reader for a 'journey into the iris', saying:

> '*I am the Iris; come into me and see.*'

We all know Iris Murdoch's Anglo-Irish origin; her boarding-school education in Badminton School, Bristol; her university degree in Somerville College, Oxford; her two-year civil service in the treasury during the Second World War; another two-year humanitarian work in camps mainly in Belgium and Austria; her meeting with Jean Paul-Sartre in Belgium; her philosophy teaching for many years at St. Anne's College, Oxford; her love of stones--as indeed any other animate and/or inanimate thing--, her dislike of TV, which she likens to Plato's cave, and so on. Murdoch considers herself a 'Christian fellow-traveller', 'a kind of Platonist' and a 'sort of Buddhist', all of which summarise very well

---

[1] G. Lowes Dickinson, *The Meaning of Good: A Dialogue*, London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1921, p. 213.
[2] Bryan Magee, "Philosophy and Literature: Dialogue with Iris Murdoch," *Men of Ideas. Some Creators of Contemporary Philosophy*, London: BBC, 1978, p. 271. Hereafter cited as Magee.

her spirit of writing. Iris Murdoch places a very serious obligation on the artist to present reality to his/her observers/readers. In almost all her philosophical articles, books, and interviews, she expresses with great emphasis the task of art, especially prose literature, as a form of education for moral development. In that sense we can call her a moralist and a 'philosophical' novelist. We have to be careful, however, with the term 'philosophical' novelist. First of all, Murdoch is not a philosopher in the scientific sense of the word. In fact, Murdoch rejects such scientific approaches to philosophy because, for her, philosophy or metaphysics should be tied to morality and everyday life, that is, how to be moral and good and see the world, whether it be a world of people, or of things, nature, ideas, or even works of art. Secondly, Murdoch is against such categorisations as 'philosophical' or 'feminist', which narrows down the scope of criticism and interpretation as the reader/critic would attempt to look at her work in search of such related issues. The message of her novels is not 'philosophy' but everyday reality. She wants 'nothing in fiction to be reduced to or explained by anything else', says Brian Appleyard, 'Fiction needs to be as big and messy as the human soul.'[3]

Similarly, like Margaret Drabble[4] and A. S. Byatt, Murdoch does not want to be categorised as a *woman* writer since 'to separate women's writing from the rest of literature is to invite marginalisation.'[5] In that sense, the reason Murdoch writes 'like a man' is, then, because man's perception signifies the 'human condition', whereas the feminist perception is just the female perspective. As a novelist, she belongs to the late eighteen-and nineteenth century tradition, with no interest in the plotless stream of consciousness technique. This is quite unlike Rebecca West, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein and Jean Rhys, who tried to voice the female consciousness, female perspective and female experience. Murdoch's philosophical stance and her traditional approach to literature also separate her from her contemporary 'women' novelists, like Fay Weldon, who has a psychoanalytical feminist approach or Angela Carter, who use fantasy, myth, fairy-tale, magic and supernatural elements in her fiction. The main emphasis in their

---

[3] Brian Appleyard, "Paradox of All the Virtues," *The Times Saturday Review*, 3 October 1992, p. 4. Hereafter cited as Appleyard.

[4] Margaret Drabble says in an interview that the problem with being called a 'woman' or 'feminist' writer is that 'people tend not to notice anything else in one's work at all. They seize only on the feminist issues'. (Flora Alexander, *Contemporary Women Novelists*, London: Edward Arnold, 1989, p. 25. Hereafter cited as Alexander)

[5] Alexander, p. 34.

fiction is female sexuality. In Iris Murdoch, however, the focus is mainly moral/ethical rather than psychological, magical, supernatural, or feminist. In her most comprehensive book *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* Murdoch says, 'Teaching art is teaching morals.'[6] So is reading. In other words, reading literature, here Murdochian novels, is reading morals. This is the main argument in this study. The moral education (preception) of the reader by Iris Murdoch is to 'realise' (receive) the 'perception' of the other--hence the title of this thesis--through her 'novels of character'. For Murdoch, appreciating a work of art is no different than knowing another person/persons. The good artist and the good man have, in that respect, the same moral discipline. And this disciplined attention brings with it the true perception and clarity and morally right behaviour. The reader has to attend with *moral responsibility* to the work of art because it is through literature that s/he can enlarge his/her vision and inner space. At this point, I should point out that Murdoch is not a high-minded, grave or dogmatic moralist; on the contrary, she is a playful and quite funny novelist who likes to play games and jokes on her readers as well as characters. And it is this comic aspect in her novels--which Murdoch finds lacking in Sartre--that relates her philosophical concerns to everyday life. In her philosophical article, 'The Novelist as Metaphysician' she describes Sartre's literary works as having a '*strictly* didactic purpose,'[7] meaning that his sole concern is to present his philosophical ideas (Emphasis Added).

This thesis is divided into two main sections: the moral precepts[8] and their exemplification as concrete everyday examples in her novels themselves. The Introduction part provides the 'philosophical' and theoretical background for Murdoch's 'Novels of the Good'. Included here is a dictionary of some of the major 'concepts', or rather 'precepts' that Murdoch uses both in her novels and her philosophical articles and books, such as *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist* (1953), *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (1977) and *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), in order to train her reader to gain ethical vision. For reasons of clarity, I will discuss the precepts in the form of a dictionary which is prepared not in an alphabetical order but in

---

[6] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, London: Penguin, 1993. p. 322. Hereafter cited as *Metaphysics*.

[7] *The Listener*, Volume 43, No 1103, 16 March 1950, p. 473.

[8] In 'Against Dryness' (*Encounter*, Volume 16, No 1, January 1961, p. 16), Murdoch says, 'We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the dogmas, images, and *precepts* of religion have lost much of their power' (Emphasis Added).

points of relatedness. Also included in this chapter is a section on reading and readers through structuralist and reader-oriented theories in contrast to or comparison with Murdoch's conception/perception of the 'reader' in her novels. As a reader, I will start my 'pilgrimage' from *Bruno's Dream* (1969) and finish it with *Jackson's Dilemma* (1995). The reason I begin from where I do is that first of all, the publication date of *Bruno's Dream*, 1969, coincides quite meaningfully for me with the year I was born and hence the start of my own pilgrimage. Secondly, the earlier novels are studied more thoroughly than the later ones. Most important of all is that, the later ones are more open and loose. Murdoch calls her earlier novels 'crystalline' novels, in which myth presides over the character. Her later novels are greater in length and also abound in many different characters. In an interview with Jeffrey Meyers, she says, ' I think my later books are better than my earlier books. Of course every writer wants to think this, nobody wants to think it's all been downhill! I think the later books are better, and I think they started getting better round about the stage of *The Nice and the Good* and *A Word Child*'.[9] Chapter I , *Bruno's Dream* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), switches on the 'machine', Murdoch's 'camera-eye' on the egoistic human 'psyche', which Murdoch likens to a machine. Chapter II discusses this 'machine' in close-up, that is through first-person narrative novels, *The Black Prince* (1973), *A Word Child* (1975) and *The Sea, The Sea* (1978). Chapter III, which includes novels that have philosophers at the centre--*The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), *The Good Apprentice* (1985) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989), throws a *light* on philosophy and everyday reality. Chapter IV explores the importance of death in everyday life with *The Green Knight* (1993) and sadly her latest novel *Jackson's Dilemma*[10] (1995). However, although the chapters are divided under different titles, the novels discussed in each chapter can be related to the rest as Murdoch discusses the same precepts recurrently in different contexts which gives her novels the 'serial' characteristic. Each novel is part of the reader's pilgrimage to the Good to understand his/her limitations in the face of the contingent reality represented in her fiction through free individual characters.

---

[9] Jeffrey Meyers, 'An Interview with Iris Murdoch', *Denver Quarterly*, Volume 26/1, Summer 1991, pp. 108-109. Hereafter cited as Meyers.

[10] For the last year Iris Murdoch has been suffering from Alzheimer disease, which has unfortunately caused her to stop writing.

John Bunyan's introductory comment in the Apology to *The Pilgrim's Progress* can also be applied to what is expected of the reader in Murdoch's novels. It is quite significant that each of the questions asked in the second passage refers to the chapters that will discuss her novels in the following pages. Bunyan says:

> This Book will make a Traveller of thee,
> If by its Counsel thou wilt rule be;
> It will direct thee to the Holy Land,
> If thou wilt its directions understand:
> ....
> This Book is writ in such a Dialect
> As may the minds of listless men affect:
> It seems a Novelty, and yet contains
> Nothing but sound and honest Gospel-strains.
> ....
> Would'st thou be in a Dream, and yet not sleep? [Bruno's Dream]
> Or would'st thou in a moment Laugh and Weep?
> Wouldest thou loose thy self, and catch no harm, [Death in Life]
> And find thy self again without a charm?
> Would'st read thy self, and read thou know'st not what; [His Majesty the Ego]
> And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
> By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
> And lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together.[11] [The Metaphysics of Life]
> (Emphasis Added)

[11] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984, pp. 6-7.

INTRODUCTION

A MURDOCHIAN DICTIONARY OF GOOD AS A GUIDE TO MORALS AND HER NOVELS

What Murdoch would like to see *done* both in philosophy and literature is what she calls a 'general loss of concepts, the loss of a moral and political vocabulary.' Murdoch feels it obligatory to reintroduce certain concepts which today are either regarded metaphysical or totally ignored, like 'love'. In 'Vision and Choice in Morality,' she says,

> It may be said, that a moral attitude which lays emphasis on ambiguity and paradox is not for everyday consumption. There are, however, moments when situations are unclear and what is needed is not a renewed attempt to specify the facts, but a fresh vision which may be derived from a 'story' or from some sustaining concept which is able to deal with what is obstinately obscure, and represents a 'mode of understanding' of an alternative type. Such concepts are, of course, not necessarily recondite or sophisticated; 'hope' and 'love' are the names of two of them.[1]

This is, in other words, a dictionary of art and ethics because contemplation of art and nature is a sort of spiritual training in morals. Murdoch in her article "On 'God' and 'Good'" says, 'it is from these two areas, art and ethics, that we must hope to generate concepts worthy, and also able to guide and check the increasing power of science'.[2] The explanation of the 'concepts' that we will come across frequently in Murdoch will be quite simple and repetitive because life is simple and repetitive. Murdoch feels that some simple and obvious facts/concepts--like love, good, freedom, morality, philosophy, metaphysics, and so on--, because they have been 'theorized away' by scientist philosophers, need new and simple moral vocabularies. In this dictionary we will see that sometimes she totally changes the meaning and creates a new vocabulary and sometimes she keeps some concepts like duty and will nearer to their original sense. These conceptual problems are necessary to clarify at the outset because they help the building of a picture, a character, everyday life and morality in the reader's eyes.

---

[1] *Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 30, 1956, p. 51.
[2] *The Sovereignty of Good*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 76.

Metaphysics

For Murdoch, metaphysics is a combination of '*ordinary observation* with an appeal to moral attitude'[3] (Emphasis Added). However, generally people consider metaphysics as an intellectual thought that deals with 'higher truths' and abstractions. The ideal traditional metaphysician is considered more like a scientist, who is anxious to show that things that we see are absolutely not what they seem. He is keen on raising dust in order to obscure and confuse the ordinary man. For him metaphysics can explain the main questions about the world by analysing the concepts in solitude, i.e. in their minds rather than with empirical evidence or everyday experiences. Murdoch rejects such scientific approaches to philosophy and, like Plato, tries to bring metaphysics down to earth from those high abstractions and apply it to the life around us. She is interested in '[h]ow do the generalisations of philosophers connect with what I am doing in my day-to-day and moment-to-moment pilgrimage, [in short] how can metaphysics be a guide to morals?'[4] or to life as such and make us see what is already there but which has remained unseen. In short, she believes that it is the concern of metaphysics to clarify rather than justify, as for instance, one cannot ask 'Ought we to sympathise?'[5] Sympathy, which is a virtue, comes with just perception and the feeling of love not with logical argument.

Philosophy

Etymologically, the word philosophy means 'the *love* of wisdom'. However, according to Murdoch, in contemporary philosophy and in everyday life the term ' love' is rarely mentioned now by philosophers. Philosophy, which is a love of learning and seeing truth[6] and virtue, brings goodness in the face of contingency, the beauty of formlessness and the individuality of things in life. In that sense, the term 'philosophy' is not something to be scared of by the common reader because by 'philosophy' Murdoch means simply the love of life itself, to be aware of the ordinary details of reality and to respect them as such. In short, what philosophy does is to open our eyes and see. Philosophy, for Murdoch,

---

[3] *Metaphysics*, p. 511.
[4] *Metaphysics*, p. 146.
[5] *Metaphysics*, p. 64.
[6] Socrates in Plato's *Republic* describes the term 'true philosophers' as 'Those who love to see the truth'. These three words, 'love', 'see', and 'truth' also form the germs of Murdoch's moral philosophy and fiction. (*The Republic*, A. D. Lindsay, trans., London: J. M. Dent, 1976, p. 169.)

is moral philosophy because it is a 'work for the human spirit', to awaken the ordinary person into an attentive, joyful and just observation of even the minutest details that have remained hidden behind all sorts of nets that we build over them in our everyday lives. Philosophy is not a search for grand and abstract wisdom in a 'metaphysically cut-off, never-never land'. The following story about Thales told by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus* explains this clearly:

> [Thales] was looking upwards in the course of his astronomical investigations, and fell into a pothole, and a Thracian serving-girl with a nice sense of humour teased him for being concerned with knowing about what was up in the sky and not noticing what was right in front of him at his feet....You see, it really is the case that he doesn't notice his next-door neighbour: it's not just that he doesn't notice what his neighbour up to; he almost isn't aware whether his neighbour is a human being or some other creature.[7]

For Murdoch also this is the problem with present-day philosophers, who are supposed to clarify and write about what is obvious in human life in non-theorised, non-jargonised and just ordinary language.

If we look at Ludwig Wittgenstein, who has also influenced Murdoch's ideas on philosophy, he believes that philosophical investigations have become deep, conceptual investigations and linguistic analysis rather than description of lucid and simple everyday reality. Wittgenstein does not relate philosophy to thinking 'with our heads or in our heads'[8]--which leads to solipsism and darkness--but to lucidity, perceptiveness, clear vision and contingency. Hence, rather than 'knowing his way about', the philosopher should first 'see and walk his way about', as the above story illustrates very well. Wittgenstein defines today's philosophy as a process of thinking 'chewed and digested'[9] inside the completely enclosed space of the head. This conceptualisation and theorising, which though they may seem quite necessary, in fact divide people from the real object of theoretical attention. In other words, the reality is concealed by such 'metaphysical ladders of the philosophers'[10] that climb up the misty mountains. This type of ladder is very unlike Wittgenstein's idea of a 'ladder', which is intended to be thrown away after the reader has 'climbed out through

---

[7] *Theaetetus*, Robin A. H. Waterfield, trans., Middlesex: Penguin, 1987, 174a-b.
[8] *Zettel*, G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967, 605.
[9] *Ibid.*, 606-607.
[10] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 69.

them, on them, over them'[11] to the Good because it is over there, above the net that he sees the world rightly. That explains also why for Wittgenstein, philosophy is an activity because to see the world rightly needs the 'activity' of the philosopher as well as the reader, as s/he himself should do the 'climbing' over the ladder and see. And since everything there upon the ladder lies open to view under the light of the sun, there is nothing to explain but to 'see'. In that sense, the scope of philosophy is everything in life: love, reality, vision, consciousness, perception, freedom, contingency and so forth. Philosophy is 'an opticised thought'[12], says Martin Buber, who is also influenced by Plato. Buber argues that 'European philosophy has tended to picture spirituality as a looking upward, rather than as a movement or making of contact here below.'[13]

As opposed to the Zen Buddhist who begins his journey of philosophy with rivers and mountains and then doubts rivers and mountains only to return back to rivers and mountains[14] again in the end, modern philosophers are still at the stage of doubting the rivers and mountains because of the dust in their eyes, metaphorically speaking. As Bishop Berkeley says, 'we have first raised a dust and then complain we cannot see'[15] what is right in front of our eyes. We have come to take 'simple' ordinary things in our lives so much for granted and are inclined to *think* of them as something which are just 'there', like the facts of nature which are given and there. In short, we have been habitualized, which has blinded and blunted our sights. Now we have to develop 'virtuous habits.'[16] For example, we have to try to *unlearn* the habit of not perceiving the ordinary things in the world and go back to the rivers and mountains--to that which is original and crystal clear.

Buddhism/Zen Buddhism

Murdoch has called herself a 'sort of Buddhist'[17], or rather a 'Christian Buddhist'. She combines Buddhism with Christianity because she believes that Buddhism can save the traditional dogmatic religion from its myths and dogmas and brings it more to the everyday life of the believer. In an interview with Jeffrey Meyers, she says, 'I thought of

---

[11] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922, 6.54.
[12] *Metaphysics*, p. 146.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 461.
[14] *Ibid.*, p.189.
[15] E. R. Emmet, *Learning to Philosophise*, London: Longmans, 1964. p. 38.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[17] Michael Bellamy, 'An Interview with Iris Murdoch', *Contemporary Literature*, Volume 18, 1977, p. 134. Hereafter cited as Bellamy.

becoming a Buddhist, but I'm really a Christian Buddhist. I see no reason to lose my Christianity ....'[18] Murdoch uses Buddhism, particularly Zen Buddhism, as another means to get at the Good in her works and in real life. The following Zen koan illustrates this similarity between Zen and Plato's emphasis on vision as knowledge:

> The servant asks me
> its deepest
> meaning:
> Smiling, I point outside
> the silk-curtained window
> ---the autumn moon.[19]

Here the silk curtain symbolizes the elaborate concepts and fantasies that hide the autumn moon, the reality--Plato's Sun. Zen is not a philosophy or a religion; it is simply 'a way of life', rather than a philosophy about life. The aim is to supply the person with 'a third eye'[20], to awaken us from our habitual, passive, illusory and concept-ridden everyday life. We need to change the way we look at things with our third eye, which is not, as Christmas Humphreys puts it, 'between or above the two eyes--the two eyes are the third eye.'[21] In that sense, with Zen we do not see something different, but that we see it differently, in a selfless awareness and consciousness. This is the enlightenment, the 'satori' to be gained in Zen. Satori means discovering the suchness, the 'thereness' of life and the natural world in *every tiny moment* of our personal experience. Zen thinkers believe that Zen is not an escape *from* but a joyful and voluntary escape *into* the ordinary life itself.

To gain this enlightenment some of the practical methods used in Zen are the koans and za-zen. A koan is a word or a phrase which is impossible to *solve* by the intellect or logic but by 'directly appealing to the facts of personal experience.'[22] It is to think with the lower part of the body rather than the upper part , that is the head. The purpose of koan, Murdoch describes, is 'to break the networks not only of causal thinking and feeling but also of *accustomed* intellectual thinking, to break the 'natural standpoint' and the

---

[18] Meyers, p. 110.
[19] Soiku Shigematsu, *A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters*, Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1981, p. 44. Hereafter cited as Shigematsu.
[20] D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, London: Rider, 1970, p. 269. Hereafter cited as Suzuki.
[21] Christmas Humphreys, *Zen Buddhism*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976, p. 100. Hereafter cited as Humphreys.
[22] Suzuki, p. 18.

natural ego-producing thereby a selfless (pure, good) consciousness'[23] (Emphasis Added). And to this end, the Zen masters ask unanswerable questions which make 'fun of logic and metaphysics ... [turning] orthodox philosophy upside down in order to make it look absurd.'[24] The answer lies in the daily practice of life, not in logic or philosophy or language. As a Zen koan says:

Ordinary mind
is the way.[25]

Zen also sees life as a spiritual pilgrimage from appearance to reality, from the 'mind-moon' to the autumn moon. And according to Zen, in one's spiritual pilgrimage everything is 'finger that points to the moon.'[26] Here the use of finger indicates *silent* awakening. One has to be very careful, however; because although a finger (words) is needed to point to the moon/sun, one should not take the finger for the moon like the fire for the sun. Otherwise, as the koan says:

A piece of dust
in the eye:
Illusory flowers
dance wildly[27]

The fingers pointing to the moon/sun can be compared to a ladder, in that sense. That is, they could be used as a ladder to be climbed with *naked* hands--by personal direct experience or at first-hand--from the abstract to the concrete, from oppression to freedom, from blindness to sight, from illusion to reality, or from habitualization to rediscovery. This ladder is also similar to Wittgenstein's ladder mentioned above that leads to the re-discovery of a 'new' world hitherto concealed and thus unperceived in the confusion of conceptual, egotistical, self-consoling fantasies.

One other 'silent' technique to gain enlightenment is Za-zen or 'sitting zen', which is simply meditation. Murdoch explains this as 'A discipline of meditation wherein the

---

[23] *Metaphysics*, p. 244.
[24] Humphreys, p. 15.
[25] Shigematsu, p. 109.
[26] Ibid., p. 3.
[27] Ibid., p. 36.

mind is alert but emptied of self enables this form of awareness.'[28] It is, in other words, attention without *thinking* about seeing it. It is not, as mistakenly believed, meditation with one's eyes *closed*, metaphorically speaking, to the world but with eyes open and attentive. The fact that both Plato and the Zen thinkers chose to enlighten the way by either the sun or the moon emphasizes the predominance of sight in attaining moral goodness because both find a kind of relation between goodness and a desire for just and true understanding.

Another major form of instruction in Zen is through art. Zen art is simple and often deliberately incomplete. It is not grand because it tries to portray the 'small contingent details of ordinary life and the natural world,'[29] such as leaves, pieces of paper, tiny gestures, tiny stones, pebbles and so on. This requires, naturally, not only tremendous patience and discipline but also love and care as well both on the part of the Zen painter and of the spectator/student. Zen art is seemingly unfinished because it tries to catch the moment still in progress. In short, Zen is a 'new vision' with the old eyes devoid of their habitual consciousness; it is to sit quietly in everyday life just for a while and hence to orient ourselves once again to the present moment, here and now, rather than there and then.

Morality

Murdoch, being a Platonist, considers morality central and fundamental in human life because it confers the everyday daily relationship between people. As with all the other concepts that Murdoch relates to the Good, morality is also 'perception'. This is quite unlike some of the moral philosophers like Kant and Hegel, who define morality as action. For them, morality is related to the will of the doer who becomes the centre that imposes order and his own 'sincere' values upon the other people around him. According to Kant's moral philosophy, a moral person is 'free' and rational in the sense that he has the power and the will to act and to choose . Not very different from Kant, Hegel also sees virtue as freedom, by which he means 'self-knowledge'. For Murdoch, virtue/morality is knowledge but not self-knowledge. It is the knowledge of the other that expands the space and air and light in the consciousness of the person. She says in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited':

---

[28] *Metaphysics*, p. 245.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

> Virtue is not essentially or immediately concerned with choosing between actions or rules or reasons, nor with stripping the personality for a leap. It is concerned with really apprehending that other people exist. This too is what freedom really is....Virtue is in this sense to be construed as knowledge, and connects us so with reality. The Kantians were wrong to exclude knowledge from virtue and the Hegelians were wrong to make virtue into a self-knowledge which exclude others.[30]

Hence what a moral person needs to have is not a narrow and dark 'logical space' that suffocates the others but an 'inner space' that is large and varied enough to make the others feel calm and free by his/her presence.

The desire to see truly and justly the others with patience and tolerance is an exercise of virtue because clear vision brings with it insight, lucidity, clarity, enlightenment, truth, knowledge, love and moral goodness. In short, Murdoch, influenced by Simone Weil, sees morality as a matter of 'attention' and not of will. However, it is important not to confuse the attention to celestial, metaphysically cut-off things with real attention to the minute everyday ordinary simple details in life. Morality is a matter of attention to the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the contingency of persons as separate and odd individuals. In that sense, morality teaches us how to live with <u>others</u> now in our immediate present.

Murdoch places attention rather than action primarily at the initial stage because true vision will automatically bring with it right action without the obligation of making a choice. She says:

> Of course morality is action, not just looking (admiring), but the light of truth and knowledge should be falling upon the path of the agent. For better or worse we look, we see something, before we act.[31]

In that sense, morality cannot be a matter of ethics because it does not involve a set of duties to be performed not by heart, but by mind. Morality originates first in love, as does everything in the Murdochian Dictionary. Because of the loss of religion in the scientifically-minded age, Murdoch thinks that the loss of morality would be unthinkable for humanity. In other words, she maintains that metaphysics and not religion can be a

---

[30] Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', *Yale Review*, Volume 49, December 1960, p. 269-270.

[31] *Metaphysics*, p. 461.

guide to a good moral life, as it is, first of all, love, a loving gaze, respect, tolerance, knowledge, reality, freedom that comes with them all, detachment but not in the sense of indifference but a detachment from the self, a desire for just and true understanding, consciousness of the multiplicity and individuality and contingency of the whole creation including the human beings, plants, animals, trees, stones, and so forth.

Reality

For Murdoch, reality is incomplete, accidental, messy, formless, and mysterious. It is to be outside the self so as to realize the inexhaustibility and incomprehensibility of every little thing in life. She says in "On 'God' and 'Good'", 'Reality is the great surprising variety of the world.'[32] But the common mistake of people, including the philosophers, the ordinary people and the artists, is to have a tendency to dig down or to look above the surface to see some deeper or higher truth. Reality is here and now in the present, not in 'some metaphysically cut-off never never land.'[33] What people need to perceive reality is 'freedom'. This is not freedom as 'self-independence' or the power to will. It is freedom as detachment from the self and the domination of science, and attend to the mysterious, incomprehensible present with love, delight and surprise. Human beings have a desire, a temptation to escape from the vast, formless, varied, accidental and hence threatening world into their self-consoling, self-deifying caves, into the order of form, isolation and mediocre art. Murdoch tries to show in her works the beauty, the love, freedom, and the experience of morality in touch with this vast richness, this multiplicity, this chaos and the contingency of reality. Even a very good man, for Murdoch, may be 'infinitely eccentric, but he must know certain things about his surroundings, most obviously the existence of other people and their claims.'[34] Seeking and finding this reality is a moral virtue.

Contingency/Accident

Contingency is to see and accept what is here and there as separate beings. It is acceptance and showing tolerance to the messy, endless, complex, vast, free, formless, separate, ambiguous, varied and incomprehensible reality as such. Murdoch argues that

---

[32] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 66.
[33] Magee, p. 284.
[34] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 59.

there is a tendency in man to fear the contingency of other people and things in life, which brings with it a desire to wear a veil of fantasies in order to protect the self from that other. But as Murdoch says: 'What is feared is history, real beings, and real change, whatever is contingent, messy, boundless, infinitely particular, and endlessly still to be explained.'[35] Instead of fear, one ought to feel pleasure, admiration and respect in seeing all this formlessness, particularity and incomprehensibility towards things other than oneself. The recognition of the differences of the other is a sign of moral virtue and goodness. Contingency is destructive of myth and fantasy and opens the way to the Good. Life is accidental, chancy. Life has its own way of confusing us. This is where its beauty and mystery lies. According to Murdoch, the literary work, especially the novel, is the best place to show the contingency and accidentalness[36] of people and life to the reader. In that sense, she believes that Shakespeare is one of the few artists who manage to present his characters as free and eccentric individuals. In a good novel the reader can see many individual characters and situations depicted as opaque, messy, eccentric, different, incomprehensible, contingent, formless and separate from him/her. And contingency is the acceptance of such degrees of freedom.

Love

Love, for Murdoch, is a central concept/precept in morals. All the other concepts in her dictionary depend on love. However, she argues that love in today's philosophy as well as in real life is either forgotten or considered too banal to talk about. Now freedom, mainly the free will is the concern of philosophy. For Murdoch, 'love' should be once again brought back to the concern of moral philosophy, as she herself does in her philosophical writings and novels. One can see love in all the details of creation. True love is in a way the base over which all the other concepts in the dictionary pile up one after another, like Love = Real = Good. The reader shouldn't, however, confuse true love with romantic love because generally human love is very selfish and possessive and violent. True love, however, is attention, which is the key word in Murdoch's philosophy.

---

[35] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', p. 260.

[36] In fact, we can say that accident is one of the major characters in her novels. A good example is *An Accidental Man*. A lot of accidents befall around Austin Gibson Grey; his first wife accidentally dies falling off a rock; he accidentally runs over a little girl and kills her; he then quite accidentally damages the head of the girl's step-father by hitting him with the metal side of a file and his second wife accidentally gets electrocuted while having a bath.

Love is the respect, pleasure and desire to attend to the other. It is to set free, to love in the open air with light and a lot of sunshine and beauty. To be able to love is a virtue because it brings good spiritual change and consciousness. It is also freedom and thus the highest morality because it liberates us from our selfish, egotistic personal fantasies. With the help of true love which is justice, tolerance, and really looking, one can find the right answer to his/her moral dilemmas, such as:

> Should a retarded child be kept at home or sent to an institution? Should an elderly-relation who is a trouble-maker be cared for or asked to go away? Should an unhappy marriage be continued for the sake of children?[37]

In fact, these are more or less some of the moral questions that Murdoch tries to address in her fiction.

Love is also the essence of art because the writer is required to create all his/her characters of love equally with freedom, justice, contingency and detail. In this way, s/he can make the reader also look at his/her characters with love and respect for their different personalities. Love in art brings moral improvement in the reader. What Henry James says of Balzac and his characters explains Murdoch's own argument clearly: 'Balzac did not love these people because he knew them, he knew them because he loved them.'[38] Imagination is the word that comes with true love because love, for Murdoch, is the 'imaginative recognition of, that is respect for, the otherness.'[39] Love, in other words, is an exercise of the imagination to understand the other.

Imagination

Imagination is very important in Murdoch because it is 'gap-filling'. In that sense, 'truth-seeking creative imagination' as opposed to the egoistic fantasy imagination is a virtue to be attained. The former is a spontaneous and free movement of the human soul to 'visualise' the beauty, truth, strangeness, formlessness and eternity of things and people. Murdoch says in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*:

---

[37] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 91.
[38] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', p. 270.
[39] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 52.

> The imagination is an exercise of freedom. We look at clouds and stoves, we construct pictures in our minds. In our experience of beauty in art or nature imagination is free to discern conceptless forms, it plays or frolics with the understanding without being governed by empirical concepts.[40]

Murdoch here moves from the free play of imagination in nature to the free play of imagination in art both on the part of the artist and the spectator/reader. Imagination is truthful vision. Fancy or fantasy, on the other hand, is a danger to reality, freedom and love; it is delusion, self-consolation, a veil wrapped around the soul and the eye to shut off any understanding. George Eliot, for instance, defines fantasies in *Daniel Deronda* as 'dark rays doing their work invisibly in the broad light.'[41] In short, the moral effort involved when using one's imagination to understand the other is nothing but love itself.

Knowledge

Murdoch argues that the fundamental 'moral teaching concerns knowledge and truth.'[42] Knowledge is pure consciousness of the present moment of the individual rather than the knowledge of grand or abstract concepts defined in books that leads to solitary thinking rather than a face-to-face interaction with life itself, an experience. Experience is consciousness. For Murdoch, we have enough definitions and theories already; the practice or the exercise itself is missing. By knowledge, she does not mean a quasi-scientific, book[43] knowledge of the ordinary world. It is, rather, a knowledge of life, ordinary life, as it is. Knowledge is not direct explanation. Plato in *Theaetetus* defines knowledge as 'perception'[44] but not just perception. It involves just and truthful seeing.

---

[40] *Metaphysics*, pp. 310-311.
[41] Laurence Lerner, *The Truth-Tellers: Jane Austen, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967, p. 75.
[42] *Metaphysics*, p. 462.
[43] In *The Book and the Brotherhood* Murdoch expresses explicitly this idea of animate or inanimate things from nature representing in reality the 'book of knowledge'. There Gerard Hernshaw decides to write a review of David Crimmond's philosophical book. However, in his dream towards the end of the novel, he sees an angel in the form of a 'great grey parrot with loving clever eyes and the parrot perched upon the book and spread out its grey and scarlet wings and the parrot was the book' (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987, p. 585). This image symbolizes first of all the 'parrot knowledge' that people obtain from other philosophical or scientific books. Secondly, it once again proves that instead of intellectual, high-minded and scientific knowledge, Murdoch advocates concrete everyday reality or scenes from nature. In other words, the word itself is not just the book, but the parrot, the snail, the fly, the spider, the mouse, the dog, everything and anything around us that demand our loving attention is the book.
[44] *Theaetetus*, 151e.

Knowledge then becomes a moral concept because knowledge, clear perception, truth, justice, love and moral development/moral goodness are internally bound together. Knowledge is attention not to one's inner feelings and desires. For self-knowledge is a false virtue; it is delusive because it is egoism. Knowledge is a desire to learn the daily living, the minute details, the contingency of others. Knowledge, in short, is both vision and action together because a good desire to learn and see truly brings with it the right action.

Freedom/Will

Freedom, contrary to what some modern philosophers, such as Kant and Hegel, think is 'not strictly the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions right action.'[45] Freedom is thus very much related to love because it involves seeing, understanding and respecting things other than ourselves. Like Simone Weil, Murdoch also believes that freedom is humility and 'obedience to reality'[46] rather than resolution to choose and act. Human beings want to enforce their will and self-consolatory forms upon other individuals, animals and the world and then mistakenly believe that 'what resists our *apprehension*...[is] what resists our *will*.'[47] For Murdoch, freedom comes with responsibility rather than imposing power, which is what her mediocre characters are trying to do in her novels. Freedom is detachment from the self and the will; that means, it is freedom from fantasy. Freedom is attention to what is other than the self. It is not just to be 'independent-minded.'[48] Freedom is not choice because together with love, freedom as detachment, obedience and attention to truth with moral discipline, when the moment of choice and action comes, Murdoch argues, 'the quality of attention has probably determined the nature of the act.'[49] Freedom as obedience is, in short, a virtue , a moral improvement towards the good.

Good

All the concepts in the Murdochian Dictionary are interrelated and they lead to the Good. In other words, Good as the sovereign concept, as the ultimate light that illuminates

---

[45] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 67.
[46] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 41.
[47] *Metaphysics*, p. 59.
[48] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', p. 262.
[49] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 67.

the world gathers all the other concepts under its light. To be good is then to have all these virtues. And as Murdoch says in *The Fire and the Sun,* 'The light of the Good makes knowledge possible and also life.'[50] Like art, morality, freedom, love, and so on, Good is also insight mainly because it symbolizes Plato's Sun that illuminates and throws light upon the dark. However, there are false easy-to-look-at suns that people create , such as the fire. Fire is an enemy to the sun because it distorts reality and mesmerizes people by its intense heat and the total darkness, just illuminating the small circle of the sitter-by and hence leading to the deification of the ego. For Murdoch, the self illuminated by the fire is a cosy place of illusion. The sun is a form of Good as it illuminates everything around and makes the person see and respond to the unself, to the real world in the light of the Good. It is very difficult to look at the sun, especially the center of the sun. This can mean that it is difficult to reach the good and to be totally good because human nature is naturally selfish. However, for Murdoch this should not put us off or scare us. Our efforts are moral endeavour. It may look difficult but it is not impossible. It may even take a life long. But we should not forget that good is also in these endeavours. The effort shown is a virtue.

Murdoch explains the Good using the Ontological Argument. According to this argument , God exists necessarily. And we can see God's existence in all the details in the world and in ourselves. And for Murdoch Good can also be explained in a similar way: Good exists necessarily and as such. And we are to love and do Good for nothing in return because the thing is to be good for nothing. That is what purifies, clarifies and liberates the self. Good in that sense is not duty in the ordinary sense of the word, which is a 'formal obligation' like trying to smile because one feels that s/he ought to smile out of politeness or because s/he promised to help someone rather than doing this 'by heart'. About this difference between duty and good Murdoch says, 'I would rather keep the concept of duty nearer to its ordinary sense as something fairly strict, recognisable, intermittent, so that we can say that there may be time off from the call of duty, but no time off from the demand of good.'[51] In a good man, Murdoch says, duties are more like virtuous habits.

Although, good is non-representable and undefinable, people can sense where the good lies because good has a purifying magnetic force. For Murdoch, we do not need any theories to explain to us what good is because all those theories that we have created so far

---

[50] *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, p. 3.
[51] *Metaphysics*, p. 482.

are enough for the practice now. Now is the time of perception, awareness, consciousness and experience. Now is the time to be good and to do good rather than to read about good--which is what her philosopher characters are doing in her novels. And to be good is to be liberated from the selfish fantasies, imagine the need and suffering of other people, love unselfishly, and have a lucid and just vision.

Beauty

According to Murdoch, the contemplation and appreciation of beauty both in nature and in art is a virtue because it causes awareness, detachment and unselfish attention. Beauty, for her, is then another form of goodness that evokes unsentimental contemplation, unselfish attention towards all the details in life, whether a water drop, a dried leaf, a human being, a bunch of clouds, a piece of rock or stone, a kettle, a glow-worm, a snail and so on. Murdoch argues that though pure beauty has no moral message, 'The appreciation of beauty in art or nature is ... a completely adequate entry into the good life, since it *is* the checking of selfishness in the interest of seeing the real'[52] with joy and delight. The spectator just needs to attend to the things which are seen. Murdoch most of the time tries to clarify her arguments with examples from everyday life. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, for instance, she gives an example state of the self-forgetful pleasure taken in the contemplation of beauty as a sheer pointless independent existence of the whole creation--animals, birds, stones, flowers, trees, stars, and so on. She says that if she is in an anxious and resentful state of mind, unaware of the things in her surroundings, thinking, for instance, of an insult done to her prestige, then she looks out of the window and suddenly observes a hovering kestrel. And suddenly her resentful mood disappears and now only the kestrel[53] matters. People can also give this self-therapeutic attention to nature deliberately in order to clean their minds full of selfish worries.

Beauty as a moral virtue, according to Murdoch, symbolizes morality because it is apprehended by the most clearest of our senses, which is sight. And, as we know, sight, since Plato, is the good itself. The feeling of sublimity, on the other hand, is a thrilling and frightening apprehension of the vastness, the boundlessness and the contingency of nature.

---

[52] *The Sovereignty of Good*, pp. 64-65.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 84. Her novels abound with such scenes from nature that have therapeutic effect upon the human spirit. For instance, the animosity between the step-brothers, Luca and David, in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, abates when Luca calls his brother to have a look at a glow-worm together.

For Kant, the experience of the sublime has got nothing to do with art; it is a spiritual experience, an experience of will and freedom. Kant finds the sublime upsetting because it reminds man of his/her insignificance and his/her powerlessness confronted with some vast formless and endless prospects of nature, such as waterfalls, mountains, volcanoes, oceans, starry heavens, and so on. As a result, he separates the sublime from all forms of beauty which are for him, self-contained and manageable. However, for Murdoch, the good is to take pleasure in the contingency and formlessness of things in nature, and to accept their existence as such separate from each other and separate from human beings. In *Acastos: Two Platonic Dialogues* she says:

> ... you see beautiful things and just want them to exist outside, in themselves, so that you can love them and understand them. Beauty is a clue, it's the nearest thing, it's the only spiritual thing we love by instinct.[54]

People do not recognize the beauties in nature so Murdoch by giving detailed descriptions of nature in her novels aims to move the attention of her readers from the experience of beauty in art to experience of beauty in nature, which is, for her, a virtue in itself.

Attention

The key concept that combines all of Murdoch's concepts of good together--knowledge, freedom, love, reality, morality, justice and respect--is attention, pure vision and perception, seeing clearly the other beyond the egocentric self, which for Murdoch is a place for self-consoling illusions. In that respect, Murdoch connects morality with 'attention' not just for humans but for all the details of the creation. For her 'attention' is a good word as opposed to 'looking'[55] which is a neutral word. Murdoch takes this word from Simone Weil and then uses it in her philosophy to express the idea of 'a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality.'[56] Loving attention, as opposed to ideation[57], is required of the moral person because it helps him/her to see the reality and when the moment comes, to act well and to make the right choices. As a result, we can say

---

[54] *Acastos: Two Platonic Dialogues*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1986, p. 103.
[55] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 37.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[57] Wolfgang Iser in *The Act of Reading* distinguishes between 'perception' and 'ideation' as two different means of access to the world: perception requires the actual presence of the object, whereas ideas depends upon its absence and non-existence. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 137)

that the opposite of attention is habitual knowledge, magic, fantasy and enchantment. Attention is like za-zen, concentrating and attending without thinking about seeing it. This ability, or rather the moral discipline to direct one's attention away from the self towards what is good, and to the nice surprising variety of the world is nothing but love. Attention is to be spontaneous, to live in the present or 'to come home'[58], as Murdoch calls it; that is to start seeing the real reality of the moment. It is 'moment-to-moment, minute-to-minute and hour-to-hour consciousness.'[59] Murdoch maintains that attention is liberation from the self, the selfish fantasies, anxiety, neurosis, prejudice, envy, obsession all of which obscure true lucid vision. It is love and respect for things other than oneself, a loving gaze upon a spider, a branch of a tree, a scrap of paper, a kestrel, a human being, a work of art, even a character or a dog in a novel. According to Murdoch, attention with love and reverence for life and other beings can and should be conveyed very early in childhood, like saying, 'Don't kill the poor spider, put him out in the garden.'[60] This is moral training. Similarly, attention to good art is also a moral, spiritual training on the part of the spectator/reader because the good artist presents the reality in justice, truthfulness, detail, tolerance, love, respect for their differences and variety, and freedom. Murdoch believes,

> The analogy between art and morality is a particularly consistent one....The good artist attends scrupulously and self-denyingly to the way things are in the external world, no differently in essence from the good person attending to the needs of others.[61]

Thus, in return, by the help of his/her imagination, the reader is required to read carefully and seriously in order to see the reality the good writer is trying to present. In short, attention invigorates our imagination, which for Murdoch, is a virtue, as opposed to the television, for instance, which blunts the sight and our ability to 'think and imagine for ourselves.'[62]

---

[58] *Metaphysics*, p. 305.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 330.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 337.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 158.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 330.

Habit

As real life is messy, accidental, formless and incomprehensible, according to Murdoch, people want to form habits to save time and to make things in life seem orderly . So a great deal of art and also philosophy is out of touch with what they consider as 'banal' details of ordinary life. Habits blind and dull us, they dull our consciousness, our perception, sense of vision, the joyful desire and the feeling of surprise when we see and experience different things every day. It creates indifference and coolness in the face of the contingent life. The opposite of habit is pure consciousness. The Japanese Zen thinker Katsuki Sekida, in his book *Zen Training*, says on this point: 'Pure consciousness. Such a state of looking simultaneously both into one's own nature and into individual nature can be attained only when consciousness is deprived of its habitual way of thinking.'[63] It is, in other words, to be present both to one's self and to the other.

Bad habits are an enemy to being morally good because it is another kind of veil that separates the spectator and the messy reality of the whole creation. They can dispense us from making efforts. However, this does not mean that we should not have any habits. We ought to develop, according to Murdoch, useful , 'moral habits' that make us enjoy and see the other. She says, 'A good habit of life, reliable decent behaviour, is to be welcomed.'[64]

Suffering

Suffering is one of the concepts that comes up almost in all Murdoch's novels. Suffering is a part of morality if it is a 'purified suffering'. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, she argues that 'Morality, as virtue, involves a particular acceptance of the human condition and the *suffering* therein, combined with a concomitant checking of selfish desires'[65] (Emphasis Added). As suffering, both for the sufferer and the spectator, can be a form of escape into the fantasy world, it is another form of *eikasia*, like a person sitting by the cosy fire and watching the suffering scene played by the shadows. Watching a person suffer is generally another form of sado-masochism, a self-consolation, a relief, a purification of the self and even pleasure, Murdoch argues, seeing that someone else is

---

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 494.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

suffering and not us. It can masquerade as purification. The sufferer can in time exaggerate the events and for Murdoch, s/he can, like an artist or a writer, begin dramatising the situation. What Murdoch advocates is pure suffering without any hatred, resentment and false consolation, all of which lead to the enemy of the Good: the self. Because it is remote from us, as a spectator, we tend to forget it fairly easily and soon. Again the key word comes up here. For Murdoch, we need to *attend* to suffering in real life no matter how terrible it is without anger, the feeling of revenge and obsession but with justice, quiet contemplation, love and a desire to help. The sufferer can go through a transformation in his/her character in a bad way by fantasising and dramatizing his/her suffering too much through the passing years--which is what almost all her characters are suffering from. As Murdoch says, 'To suffer like an animal. That would be god-like.'[66] This may look impossible or unjust but of course the word 'animal' is in a way symbolic. It symbolises the naturalness and the purity of the suffering with no other harmful feelings, like revenge and hatred.

Pilgrimage

In the light of all these virtues, the whole of human life--according to Plato and, being a Platonic 'Buddhist Christian' fellow traveller, for Murdoch--is a 'pilgrimage' from the fire to the sun, from appearance to reality. This pilgrimage is symbolic because it actually symbolizes a moral quest: an alteration towards good. It is in other words a spiritual pilgrimage and this is, for Murdoch, the essence of morality. It represents the perception of knowledge as a kind of transformation of the soul from darkness to light. In this pilgrimage of life, the way to the Good illuminated by the sun is 'the ordinary way.'[67] That is mainly because , while trying to find deeper, hidden meanings, people have dug so deeply that what was once so obvious is now lost ironically out of sight under many 'sublime' concepts. This pilgrimage is the gaining of the 'third eye' , a Zen eye, which is a combined attention of the two eyes, because for Plato 'of all the organs of the senses [eye] is most like the sun.'[68]

---

[66] Peter Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist*, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989, p. 295.
[67] *Metaphysics*, p. 509.
[68] *Republic*, p. 202.

In that sense Plato's famous myth of the cave illustrates this pilgrimage very well. Plato considers people tied facing the back wall of the cave with a fire burning in the back casting shadows on the wall. People in this cave, which of course symbolizes the mind's cave, can just see the shadows projected onto the back wall of the cave by the cosy fire around which they sit. In other words, they are just seeing what their egos dims light upon. They do not seek for Good or God outside their own souls, which for Murdoch is idolatry, a withdrawal into the self. And during this pilgrimage, some people manage to turn round and see at first the fire and the objects that have been casting the shadows. After that if they show enough moral effort, they manage to escape from this illusory cave out into the daylight, space and air, to the sun, the source of life for all the creation. The time past in the cave is, for Plato, a state of 'eikasia'[69], which is, in short, a shadow-bound self-consciousness. Some may, however, attempt to go further and out of the cave to the sunlight and see the real things themselves in the bright sun and then later the sun itself, if they have been enlightened enough. This is gaining consciousness; in Simone Weil's explanation, it is, to use a Platonic term, 'anamnesis'[70], that is rediscovery of something that one does not know that s/he in reality knows but has forgotten because of the will or the self. This pilgrimage inspired by love is, for Murdoch, a sort of 'transcendence' because it is 'going beyond the egoistic self to the consciousness of the other.'[71] Socrates in *The Republic* summarises this alteration and the time of the exit into the sun as follows:

> I fancy he would need time before he could see things in the world above. At first he would most easily see shadows, then the reflections in water of men and everything else, and finally, the things themselves. After that he could look at the heavenly bodies and the sky itself by night, turning his eyes to the light of the stars and the moon more easily than to the sun or to the sun's light by day?
> Then, last of all, I fancy he would be able to look at the sun and observe its nature, not its appearance in water or on alien material, but the very sun itself in its own place? [72]

So we should turn round not just with our heads, which may cause an accident similar to Thales[73], but with the whole body turned towards the sun, the reality; we should do the

---

[69] In that sense, it is similar to the Zen idea of *bardo*. For a detailed discussion, see the analysis of *The Sea, The Sea* and *The Green Knight*.
[70] In an interview with Bryan Magee, Murdoch defines this as recollection, a come back to the present, a 'memory of what we did not know we knew'. (Magee, p. 271.)
[71] *Metaphysics*, p. 498.
[72] *Republic*, pp. 298-209.
[73] See the section on the meaning of 'philosophy' discussed above.

climbing ourselves out of the cave over the ladder and then raise our heads and have some fresh air and see the light itself and the real things. The vision of the sun is very difficult and demands a tremendous moral effort; it is the ultimate perfection to reach. Even so Murdoch believes that one should not give up. The aim is moral improvement, a better vision of life with love . For instance, she accepts that it would be more realistic to ask 'Be ye therefore slightly improved' rather than 'Be ye therefore perfect.'[74]

To sum up, the pilgrimage becomes a success and the moral change occurs if 'attention' is directed to the outside world whose natural result is a decrease in egoism and an increase in the realisation of the contingency, the reality of other people as well as other objects and animals. This is not a pilgrimage to the future or an escape but a pilgrimage to the present, a return of the whole body to a stop at the present.

Art

Murdoch's idea of art is a place where 'the Good' can be seen clearly and practised both by the author and the reader. By this Murdoch of course means good art because bad or mediocre art can invite the reader to seek consolation in fantasy, which is mainly why Plato was against art. For Murdoch art is something that is morally good to the consumer, as opposed to fantasy art which leads people away from everyday formless reality into self-consoling myths. Murdoch argues that in the scientific age that we are living in, unpossessive contemplation of art and also nature fill the space emptied by the loss of religion. If done and responded with 'patience, courage, truthfulness and justice,'[75] this is a good virtue because good art provides a 'work for the spirit.'[76] Murdoch, in that sense, combines art not with religion but with morality. And the reader, if s/he attends properly to good art, will be 'liberated' from--to use a Platonic image--the inner cave of his/her mind, thickened with probable predispositions, envy, fear, resentment, the result of which leads to self-consolatory fantasy.

Art cleanses, purifies and clarifies our fantasy-ridden consciousness. In that sense, for Murdoch, good art is a place of pilgrimage from appearance to reality, which is generally a life-long journey because she finds it not impossible but very difficult to reach

---

[74] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 62.
[75] *Metaphysics*, p. 86.
[76] *The Fire and the Sun*, p. 77.

the Good, the reality as it requires great patience and a moral discipline. That explains why she has been writing her novels, which can be called in this context 'Good series' filled with questors of reality since 1953 starting from *Under the Net*. This is quite unlike what mediocre or bad art tries to do. Mediocre or bad art makes us feel that we have finished our pilgrimage and arrived at the reality and understood it all. As Murdoch says, 'We feel that we are already wise and good.'[77] This is also another way of self-consolation in order not to make any further efforts to see reality as much as we can.

The reality Murdoch is talking about does not cover complex and abstract concepts but the simple everyday reality that is actually happening around us unnoticed at present. Art, in that sense, invites us to make a movement of 'return' to the present, to what is ordinary. In other words, while bad art is just 'mimesis', good art is 'anamnesis', a recollection of our awareness of the ordinary world together with other people and things around us, 'the minute and absolutely random detail of the world'[78] which we are usually too selfish, too self-absorbed to recognize; it is to take pleasure and delight in the 'concern for the contingent individual, as social unit, as human person, as idea, as work of art, as plant, as animal, as planet'[79] as somebody or something other than ourselves. So good art is not self-awareness but other-awareness. Great art teaches us, Murdoch argues, 'ordinary living and loving.'[80] These are the things that we take for granted and hence consider too simple to occupy our minds with while there are so many grand and deep concepts to worry about. But as she says, good art 'accepts and celebrates and mediates upon the *defeat* [hence the title of one of her novels--*A Fairly Honourable Defeat*] of the discursive intellect by the world'[81] (Emphasis Added). The simplicity of art lies in its ability 'to be able to show what is nearest, what is deeply and obviously true but usually invisible'[82] because of our distorted vision.

Because of this movement of return to what is simple, original, present and real which good art does in quite a lucid way, Murdoch sees art as better than philosophy in showing the truths of life. Art shows, or rather should show, how important little people and petty behaviour are. Good art is not scared of admitting everyday triviality into itself.

---

[77] *Metaphysics*, p. 13.
[78] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 85.
[79] *Metaphysics*, p. 377.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

In fact, for her, art can help more than philosophy because of its revelation in the consciousness rather than in reason/Kant's reason. In short, art is first the perception of what is different, individual and other than the self as well as 'aperception'. Art is a great hall of 'serious' reflection for the reader that opens up to the Sun, a pointing finger and a ladder towards it. Art is the vision and contemplation of love and the apprehension of beauty.

Novel

Murdoch places a great emphasis on the novel as a form of moral development. She argues that literature--the novel--is the most suitable place for free and quiet contemplation of the other. However, this is mainly true if the novel is realistic in the nineteenth-century sense of the term. For her, the nineteenth century writers present a slice of life full of many and various characters against a background of ordinary social values. And this slice of life is presented in so much detail of everyday life that the reader can envisage the whole life style of that society. On this point, Murdoch says:

> The novel, in the great nineteenth-century sense, attempts to envisage if not the whole of life, at any rate a piece of it large and varied enough to seem to illuminate the whole, and has most obviously an open texture, the porous or cracked quality....through which it communicates with life, and life flows in and out of it....The thing is open in the sense that it looks toward life and life looks back.[83]

And because a realistic novel communicates with life, it takes its feedback from life. Reading these novels is a reciprocal process/ a reflection on the part of the reader. In other words, we read good novels using all our 'knowledge' of life. By reading or studying good literature, or any good art, we *enlarge*, rather than *deepen* our understanding of truth, everyday morality and the contingency of the other. In good art, the hinges of the window open outward rather than inward. In that sense, rather than an escape into a fantasy life the realist novel serves as an awakening into our everyday present. The novel does this through its rich characterization. For Murdoch characterization is very important in the novel. The reader shows the degree of his/her attention through his/her evaluation of not only the

---

[83] *Metaphysics*, p. 96.

characters but also the tiny minute details. And good lies in the appreciation of these details of life.

For Murdoch, the reader should approach the novel morally rather than linguistically. 'What is' is not so important in fiction as in life. According to Murdoch, contemporary literature is generally too linguistically-conscious. In her much-quoted idea of the 20th century novel, Murdoch argues thus:

> The nineteenth-century novel was not concerned with 'the human condition', it was concerned with real various individuals struggling in society. The twentieth-century novel is usually either crystalline or journalistic, that is, it is either a small quasi-allegorical object portraying the human condition and not containing 'characters' in the nineteenth-century sense, or else it is a large shapeless quasi-documentary object, the degenerate descendent of the nineteenth-century novel, telling, with pale conventional characters, some straightforward story enlivened with empirical facts.[84]

Murdoch explains such crystalline or journalistic novels as 'dry', by which she means a tightly closed, small, clear and self-contained presentation of life and characters. Some of the main realist writers, for her, are Jane Austen, George Eliot and Tolstoy because of the large social scene that they created full of various independent centers of significance, that is degrees of freedom. Their characters are not puppets or stereotypes or mainly one central character around which all the story and the other characters turn with no freedom and identity of their own. For her there are very few characters from the contemporary novel that we can remember as 'personalities' because usually a single character as she calls it 'swallows up the entire book,'[85] such as J. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. The most important thing that a novel does to the reader is to show him/her that the other people exist so the novels that Murdoch is talking about are 'novels of characters' because they are inhabited by various and free characters of love. And it is where the reader is tested on his/her just and clear attention to every single one of these individual characters. And from loving attention to the characters in fiction, Murdoch asks the reader to move his/her attention to real people in everyday life. That is when literature is related to everyday reality, to the way we live. In that sense Murdoch calls the novelist and the artist an

---

[84] 'Against Dryness', p. 18.
[85] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', p. 260.

analogon of the good man because of their true guidance in the moral pilgrimage of the reader, the true subject of literature: 'the struggle between good and evil.'[86]

[86] Magee, p. 282.

THE DEATH OF THE READER

The 'death' of the reader in the following argument has two meanings. In the structuralist argument it concerns the discarding of the reader, as indeed the author as well, from the activity of reading and interpretation. In Murdoch's fiction, the death of the reader, on the other hand, signifies 'death to one's self,'[87] as says Birkin in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. It is to 'read' and to experience the novel as the other with *detachment* from the selfish fantasies and predispositions. To express this in Barthian terms, we can say that the birth of the *character* should only be at the cost of the death of the reader.

The Structuralist Argument

Structuralism, as a movement , can be said to have started in the 1960s in France. Its basic tenets are based on Saussure's ideas about language and linguistics. Among its major ardent supporters are Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Iris Murdoch uses the word 'structuralism' as an umbrella term to cover modernism, post-modernism, semiology, deconstruction--which she calls 'Derrida's structuralism,'[88] and so on. She describes such modern philosophies as an abyssal place wherein 'the subject, as "language", swallows the contingent object or objects, and becomes an object itself.' This is because structuralism, as we know, sees 'language' as the *structure* of reality. In other words, there is no transcendent, extra-linguistic real world 'out there' since language refers to itself rather than the world. The fundamental difference between these modern philosophies and the traditional metaphysics is the primacy of writing rather than speech. According to Plato, speech was primary because it is momentary. However, Derrida, announcing Martin Heidegger as the last metaphysician in the traditional sense of the word, reverses this. For him, what is primary is writing, the vast system of language--hence his idea of *archi-écriture*. According to Iris Murdoch, Derrida's idea of *archi-écriture* or 'primal writing' transcends the 'localised talk of the individualised

---

[87] *Women in Love*, London: Penguin, 1988, p. 47.
[88] *Metaphysics*, p. 372.

speakers,'[89] which means the disappearance of the ordinary, personal, local and everyday experience and language. Rather than being *an* 'indicative of reality, [it] *is* reality'[90] itself. Derrida particularly attacks what he calls the 'metaphysics of presence', meaning that there is no momentary present extra-linguistic experience because knowledge is the property of the infinite play of concepts. M. H. Abrams in 'The deconstructive angel', likens Derrida's chamber of texts to 'a sealed echo-chamber in which meanings are reduced to a ceaseless echolalia, a vertical and lateral reverberation from sign to sign of ghostly non-presences emanating from no voice, intended by no one, referring to nothing, bombinating in a void.'[91] Because of this infinite self-destruction of meaning, that is Derrida's notion of *différance*, which means to differ and to defer, we are left in a void.[92] Derrida calls *différance* 'the economical concept', economical because it refers to differing and deferring 'by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving.'[93] In other words, it defers presence. In an interview with Henri Ronse, Derrida says that writing, especially 'literary writing ... keeps itself at the point of exhaustion of meaning. To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, and first to enter into the play of *différance* which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarise.'[94] In short, for Murdoch, with *différance* we are not in control of our meaning and we do not know what we are uttering. This is what Murdoch finds disturbing and dangerous in Derrida's prose, his 'dangerous supplement': "the jargon, the poeticisation of philosophy, the hubris, the 'transcendental field', the concepts of *archi-écriture* and *différance*"[95] because theorising as an end in itself is another way of losing the original.

With the 'structuralist' approach, it is not the moral quest that the individual reader is going through but, as she argues, the '*quest* for the hidden deep (primal-language) meaning of the *text* (to use the jargon) is now said to be the main task'[96] of the structuralist reader/critic. The main objective is to '*use*, play with, the language in a tiring, suggestive, puzzling, exciting manner.'[97] Morality, virtue and everyday experience are put in brackets.

---

[89] *Metaphysics*, p. 188.
[90] *Metaphysics*, p. 88.
[91] *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*, David Lodge, ed., London: Longman, 1988, p. 270.
[92] For a detailed discussion of the types and dangers of the 'void', see section 18 in *Metaphysics,* where it is also defined as 'despair' or the 'dark night'.
[93] *Positions-Jacques Derrida*, Alan Bass, trans., London: Athlone Press, 1981, p. 8.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[95] *Metaphysics,* p. 291.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

In a way, as Murdoch herself also accepts, language is ambiguous and transcends its user but there are some 'naive' truth values or statements made in our everyday life, like 'the cat is on the mat', that can be said to be either true or false without any confusion, 'if the cat is on the mat.'[98] Sartre also makes a similar argument in *What is Literature?* by calling the function of a writer 'to call a spade a spade.'[99] In *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist*, Murdoch talks about the everydayness of language; for her language is also 'the *world* in which people play cricket, cook cakes, make simple decisions, remember their childhood, etc.'[100] (Emphasis Added). Although we always try to turn what we encounter into language, we should know that the other always remains free, ambiguous, endlessly contingent, and *there*. It all depends on the context. She says, 'words surely have definite meanings when we apply them in *particular contexts*. If this were not so we couldn't distinguish true from false.'[101] If we cannot distinguish meaning, we cannot have ordinary everyday truth and with the idea of truth the idea of value also vanishes. In that sense the structuralist idea of language is 'a conceptual cage'[102] and 'an adventure playground.'[103]

According to Murdoch, the preservation of everyday language is, then, a virtue because it is used for clarification, portrayal and apprehension of reality. She maintains that the language of philosophy should be simplified and brought back to the moment-to-moment present experience of the ordinary moral man. We do not have ordinary everyday philosophy that can be, as Wittgenstein wishes to write, 'learnt by heart,'[104] or for Plato 'learnt by vision/sight' but something abstract which has got to be deciphered by 'mind'. Wittgenstein, as we know, is also against muddled, high-minded generalising/theorising as against the plain truth and forthright action. He believes that philosophy ought really to be written 'only as a poetic composition', by which he means 'something beautifully concise, purely clarified and condensed'[105] that will make it to be 'learnt by heart' as opposed to the structuralist notion, expressed by Heidegger, of 'poeticised philosophy' which uses metaphoric, abstract and playful language. The main reason for the gap between the traditional and empirical Platonic philosophy, on the one hand, and the theoretical and

---

[98] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[99] Jonathan Culler, *Barthes*, London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983, p. 26.
[100] *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist*, London: Penguin, 1953, p. 35.
[101] *Metaphysics*, p. 201.
[102] *The Book and the Brotherhood*, p. 300.
[103] *Metaphysics*, p. 216.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 280.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

scientific 'structuralist' modern philosophy, on the other, is this jargon, the poeticisation of philosophy and différance which do not help the ordinary person much in the accidental reality. Indeed, it can be said that the gap between word--technical terms, abstract categories, concepts, jargon and mathematical symbols--and simple everyday action is ironically *formed* by this 'minding' of the gap.

Because of this gap, which is nearly an abyss, between abstract theory and jargon, on the one hand, and practice, value and ordinary lucid language, on the other, the future of literature and everyday reality is at stake here. Murdoch believes that the novel is in danger of falling into this abyss between everyday language and the technical discourses. Structuralist or deconstructionist reading/interpretation of a literary text 'spins a further web of lines.... that will trace still another inky net over the ever-receding abyss.'[106] Traditionally, as we know, a work of art, inspired by the magnetism of truth, portrays the spiritual pilgrimage from appearance to reality. Structuralism, however, sees knowledge as the search for concepts and linguistic networks. And because the structuralist philosopher works as a 'neutral technician,'[107] this emphasis on the technicality and structure of language also affects the most important feature of the novel, that is characterization. Because of the loss of the contingent individual and love, as John Ashbery exclaims in one of his poems, 'Just being a person doesn't work any more.'[108] To be considered worthy of structuralist or deconstructionist 'analysis', the character or the person should now be 'gifted with unintelligible tongues.'[109] Indeed, to attract the excited attention of this elite group, we have linguistically self-conscious, self-referring, technical and intellectual literary texts. In her novels Murdoch deals with this gap between theory and action and tries to show this inability of the theory-ridden philosophers, blinded by deep and conceptual speculations/reflections within their mind's 'cave' to act in the face of a simple accidental everyday reality. Her novels are full of mediocre artists and philosophers who are very good at philosophical analysis but are helpless in everyday moral problems that demand their urgent attention. In a way, this abstract conceptual *analysis* has led them into *paralysis*, metaphorically speaking. To give an example, Benet Barnell in Murdoch's latest novel, *Jackson's Dilemma*, is writing a critical work on Heidegger, which the ironic

---

[106] M. H. Abrams, 'The Deconstructive Angel' in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, pp. 273-274.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[109] Richard Webster, 'The Structuralist Theology and the Emperor's Clothes', *Literary Review*, No 24, 5 September-18 September 1980, p. 8.

narrator describes as 'a huge ambiguous project.'[110] Indeed, it is a very *ambiguous* project because although he is attempting to translate Heidegger's ideas into ordinary language, his own version of Heidegger sounds obscure and ambiguous even to him. Each time Benet goes over his notes on Heidegger, he wonders how he understands what he writes down: 'What on earth does he mean, thought Benet, or what do I mean?'[111] While sitting right in front of a wide-open window trying to look 'deep deep in Heidegger's soul', Benet does not see the alive things happening right in front of his eyes--such as a hovering hawk.

To clear the air, when Roland Barthes announced 'the death of the Author,'[112] that is Author-God as the sole originator of meaning in a literary text, rather than the birth of the reader, he announced the birth of the Word-God. With the Word-God, structuralism has announced not only the death of the author, but also the character as well as the reader--indeed, any notion of the subject in whatever form.

Reader Reception/Response Theory

Reader-response theory is said to have started as early as the end of World War I, 1920s, with I. A. Richards' discussions of emotional response but as a criticism it emerged during the 1970s, especially with Stanley Fish's influential article 'Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics'. It appeared as a reaction against formalist and structuralist readings of literary texts. Its major followers are Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, George Poulet,[113] Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss and Jonathan Culler.[114] Reader-reception or reader-response theory is, as the name also suggests, mainly concerned with what texts 'do' in the mind of the reader as to his/her perception of the other. Norman Holland, for instance, explains it as criticism or theory that 'focuses on the reader or audience and their

---

[110] *Jackson's Dilemma*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 13.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[112] Roland Barthes claims that *writing* begins only when 'the author enters into his own death' ('The Death of the Author' in *Modern Criticism and Theory,* p. 168). Foucault also similarly defines the work to be 'its author's murderer' ('What is an Author?' in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, p. 198).
[113] Although Poulet studies the experience of the reader in the reading process, he generally gives a passive role to the reader. For him, the reader gains his/her experience by 'forgetting, forgoing himself; dying so to speak, in order that the text may live' (Jane Tompkins, intro., *Reader-Response Criticism from Formalism to Post-structuralism,* Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980, p. xi. Hereafter cited as Tompkins). This is quite the opposite for Wolfgang Iser, for instance, who argues that the reader is active in the production of meaning in the literary text.
[114] We can say that Jonathan Culler as well as Robert Scholes draw a middle position between structuralism or semiotics and reader-response theories. For a detailed discussion see Scholes' *Semiotics and Interpretation* and Culler's *Structuralist Poetics*.

experiencing of a text.'[115] This is quite unlike structuralist criticism, which has turned literature and philosophy into 'science'. For the reader-response critics, the concern is not the meaning of the grammatical structures of the text. On the contrary, the concern is similar to the order in Browning's poem 'A Death in the Desert.'[116] It is 'What Does, What Knows, What Is'. For the structuralists, however, this order is the reverse, that is what is comes first, which is the linguistic meaning. For them comprehension is the analysis of the deep structures which ignores the surface structure. They consider the surface structure, Wolfgang Iser argues, as a 'veil' that covers the real 'kernel'[117]--this image is similar to Iris Murdoch's idea of the language as a net used to cover the reality. According to Umberto Eco, 'every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes a fresh perspective for itself.'[118] It is a performance because, meaning, as Iser argues, is an 'event' that happens and not something that can be reduced to a 'thing.'[119] As it is an event, it is a dynamic process of creating and then destroying the predictions, prejudgments, illusions and false expectations of the reader evoked by the gaps, ambiguities, discrepancies, uncertainties or negations that abound in the text. (All of these, in Murdoch, form the contingency of life.) Considering this point, Hans Robert Jauss, who is said to have given the reader-oriented theory a historical dimension, argues that the reader approaches the text with a 'horizon of expectations' and interpretive conventions formed throughout his/her literary background and based on his/her--to use Jonathan's Culler's term-- 'literary competence'.

Indeed, it is ironically these gaps and ambiguities that spur the reader into 'realization'--as in apprehension and also realization of the other and then the self--or awakening to life. 'Reading,' says Helene Cixous, 'is a flowing process of exchange between the reader and the text'; it is, in other words, 'letting oneself be read by the text.'[120] That means that the reader 'reads' himself, his own limitations and illusions as well as the characters. In that sense, Norman Holland, who has brought a psychological aspect

---

[115] *Holland's Guide to Psychoanalytical Psychology and Literature-and-Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990, p. 54.
[116] *The Poems of Robert Browning*, London: Oxford UP, 1928, p. 641.
[117] *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 32.
[118] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Anna Cancogni, trans., London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989, p. 4.
[119] *The Act of Reading*, p. 7.
[120] *Writing Differances-Readings from the Seminar of Helene Cixous*, Susan Sellers, ed., Milton Keynes: Open UP, 1988, p. 146.

to the reading process, considers reading/interpretation as 'a function of identity,'[121] which means every reader approaches a literary work with his/her own 'identity theme', i. e. 'the network of his adaptive and defensive strategies for coping with the world,'[122] such as his/her fears and desires. S/He has then a double role to play: an active participant in the events as well as a critic of his/her own conduct. This is when the reader's, or to use Wayne C. Booth's term, the implied reader's response becomes a part of the 'meaning'--i. e. the effect--of a literary work. Similarly, quoting Marcel Proust in *Figures III* Gerard Genette maintains that '[i]n reality, each reader is, when he reads, his own reader.'[123] In other words, the 'I' of the reader becomes 'he' or 'she.'[124] Such arguments have caused the emergence of many types of readers apart from the actual reader (who is holding the book in his/her hand): the fictive reader, the 'virtual reader' or Wayne C. Booth's 'implied reader'--which is preferred by many critics, including Wolfgang Iser-- or Erwin Woolf's 'intended reader' (the reader whom the author has in mind), the ideal reader, Michael Riffaterre's 'superreader', Stanley Fish's 'informed reader', and so forth.

In short, we can say that the main focus of reader-response approach is awakening, discovery and the *responsibility*--as in both to be able to respond and to be responsible for-and-to the other, whether it be the absent writer, or the character--of the reader in his/her reading activity. It is, as John Bunyan says in his introduction to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 'to read thy self' is to 'loose thy self, and catch no harm' and then 'find thy self again.'[125]

The Murdochian Reader

The above motto also applies to the Murdochian idea of the reader. Murdoch's idea of reader is very much related to her idea of novel. She has repeatedly described art, or rather prose literature, 'the great clue to morals.'[126] For her, appreciating a work of art is no different than knowing another person/persons. In an interview, she argues that 'Morality

---

[121] 'Unity Identity Text Self', *PMLA*, Volume 90, New York, 1975, p. 816.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 818.
[123] *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crossman, eds., New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1980, p. 284.
[124] George Poulet, for instance, says in 'Criticism and the Experience of Interiority' that '[w]henever I read, I mentally pronounce an *I*, and yet the *I* which I pronounce is not myself' (Tompkins, pp. 44-45).
[125] *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 7.
[126] 'The Darkness of Practical Reason' *Encounter*, Volume 27, No 1, July 1966, p. 50.

arises in the judgement of the reader'[127] on the literary work. The good artist and the good man have, in that respect, the same moral discipline. And this disciplined attention brings with it the true perception and clarity and morally right behaviour. The reader has to attend with *moral responsibility* to the work of art because it is through literature that we can enlarge our vision and inner space. The reader gains more awareness of the world beyond the scope of the novel/literature. Good art, she argues, is transcendent and porous. It can recover us from our self-consoling fantasies, egoism and obsessions, which are enemies of freedom, love, imagination, contingency and reality. Literature--as is also discussed in the Dictionary--in that sense performs the task of philosophy, i.e. moral philosophy. In an interview with Brian Appleyard, Murdoch says:

> We read great novels with all our knowledge of life engaged....These huge objects mock the attempts of dogmatic critics who wish to reduce them to non-evaluate codes....Characters in novels partake of the funniness and absurdity and contingent incompleteness and lack of dignity of people in ordinary life....We are, as real people, unfinished and full of blankness and jumble; only in our own illusioning fantasy are we complete. Good novels concern the fight between good and evil and the pilgrimage from appearance to reality. They expose vanity and inculcate humility. They are amazingly moral.[128]

Her 'novels of characters' serve very well for the blend of literature and reality. Murdoch is interested in the creation of different types of characters because it is related closely to the consciousness of the readers; the reader's response to the characters of love determine their morality. In that sense, there is no central character in Murdoch and neither in any good art because that will lead to solipsism both in the character and in the reader. Murdoch hence tries to avoid dryness in her fiction by creating many various characters of different significance rather than one main protagonist surrounded by flat characters. In Murdoch, the 'peripheral' characters are as interesting as the central ones. A kind of novel which she says she wants to write 'is much more scattered, where the people aren't really connected with each other. As if one could have a novel entirely composed of peripheral characters, with no main characters.'[129] Professor John Bayley, around the same years that Iris Murdoch was expressing this wish to write a novel as a 'house fit for free characters to

---

[127] Christopher Bigsby, *The Radical Imagination and the Liberal Tradition: Interviews with English and American Novelists*, London: Junction Books, 1982, p. 225. Hereafter cited as Bigsby.
[128] Appleyard, p. 4.
[129] Ronald Bryden, 'Talking to Iris Murdoch', *The Listener*, 4 April 1968, p. 434. Hereafter cited as Bryden.

live in,'[130] expressed a similar approach to character in fiction. In his book *The Characters of Love*, Professor Bayley argues that an author's success with his/her theme is closely related to his/her attitude towards his/her own characters. In other words, an author should *love* his/her characters and approach them with

> a delight in their independent existence as *other people*, an attitude towards them which is analogous to our feelings towards those we love in life; and an intense interest in their personalities combined with a sort of detached solitude, a respect for their freedom.[131]

Loving attention and respect for the other are also inseparable from the *responsibilities* and *response-abilities* of the Murdochian reader. With peripheral characters, Murdoch aims to keep the imagination and attention of the reader as busy as her own. The reader's desire for identification with a sympathetic central character is always undermined in Murdoch. It is, as G. E. H. Hughes argues, like 'pulling the rug'[132] from under the reader's feet to disorient him/her from the grips of the past or illusions or false expectations and make him/her touch the present ground with bare feet, as a Zen Buddhist thinker would say. The Murdochian reader is expected to consider these characters as individuals, as in real life, full of mystery, eccentricity and freedom without any predispositions because both aesthetically and morally the reader is not given access into the characters' selves. Through his/her attention to the characters as the other the reader has his/her moral test, just like the characters themselves who are tested by their limited perception of each other as the other rather than as a reflection of their fantasies and patterns. The reader has to be willing and careful in this journey because the assessment of characters in a novel is a sort of forming human relationship and for Murdoch, response to characters is 'the first training and testing-ground of morality.'[133] That is why for Murdoch reading good novels is not different from reading philosophy and being trained in morality. The deficiencies of characters represent general failures of morality. Being a realist writer, self-deception is one of the major themes in Murdoch. Discussing the works of Jane Austen, George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence as 'truth-tellers', Laurence Lerner says:

---

[130] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', p. 271.
[131] John Bayley, *The Characters of Love*, London: Constable, 1960, p. 7-8.
[132] 'Narrative Secrets and Reader Coercion: Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil*', *Hiroshima Studies in English Language and Literature*, Volume 32, 1987, p. 1.
[133] *Metaphysics*, p. 17.

> The truths we resist are those we have trained ourselves to ignore or disbelieve; and the novelist, describing these, is describing the way we deceive ourselves. That is why self-deception is of such tremendous interest to the novelist. Because our wishes are so strong, we easily persuade ourselves that what we wish to be so, is so--or soon will be....but the novelist, of course, does not know us; the only self-deception he can show are those of his characters. He does not even need to murmur 'if the cap fits'-- that can be left to the reader.[134]

In other words, reading is not to enter a world of self-reflection, which Stanley Fish calls just a name for 'persuasion'[135] or self-knowledge. Truthful reading with detachment, Murdoch argues, is a moral task as it diminishes our egoism and enlarges our conception of truth. As discussed above, for Derrida, writing and hence reading and speaking is to enter into a world of différance; however, in Murdoch, to use the jargon, the other, whether animate or inanimate, is différance, but not in a negative sense, i.e. an impasse. Reading, in Murdoch, is understanding the incomprehensibility of the other with respect. If we apply Helene Cixous's words on writing which is 'I do not write to arrive, but to remove myself. I write to go further than myself'[136] to Murdoch's idea of reading, it will go as follows, 'I do not read to arrive, but to remove myself. I read to go further than myself'. In other words, the death of the reader. It is because of these illusory expectations of the reader that Murdoch does not want to 'hand over the interpretation to the reader,'[137] as she says in an interview with Christopher Bigsby. For her, art should be 'authoritarian' and have 'some kind of strong form' because '[i]f the reader or the observer can do anything he likes with the thing then one result, of course, is that he becomes bored, he does not want to have it there.'[138] For a moment, this may sound as a contradiction to what she has been arguing about the idea of the novel as a place where freedom can be exercised. However, what she really means is that a good artist should build 'indeterminism into his determinism'. She continues:

> A work of art has got to have a form, it has got to have notation, it has got to have something which is fixed and authoritative, it must have authority over its victim,

---

[134] *The Truth-Tellers: Jane Austen, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1967, pp. 87-88.
[135] John Michael, 'Fish Shticks: Rhetorical Questions in Stanley Fish's Doing What Comes Naturally', *Diacritics*, Summer 1990, Volume 20, , No 2, p. 59.
[136] *Writing Differances-Readings from the Seminar of Helene Cixous*, p. 117.
[137] Bigsby, p. 217.
[138] Ibid., p. 228.

> or client or whatever you can call the person who is meeting. This of course is a principle which is now very much disputed and even attacked but in this sense I am an authoritarian. I want the work of art to stand and have authority and to be able to endure.... I think the work of art should have a very strong internal structure. ... On the other hand, the novel, particularly, is such that within this closed structure you can picture free beings.[139]

Murdoch has always expressed her desire to combine myth or a pattern with her idea of free characters in her fiction, though this may sometimes work as a limitation on the work of art itself depending on the truthfulness of its rendering, because, she says, 'fantastic things happen all the time in ordinary life and people are very, very odd.'[140] In that sense, to use them in fiction is to present reality with all its odd contingent ways. The *small* myths she uses in her fiction do not serve to dominate the whole plot but only as a symbol to show this tendency of human beings to use myths in their lives as opposed to reality itself. In an interview with John Haffenden, she says that the 'idea of the myth and the form have got to be present, but one has brutally to stop the form determining the emotion of the book by working in the opposite direction.'[141] Shakespeare, for her, has an extraordinary ability to combine the two; his characters are independent yet they are also kept in by the marvellous pattern of his plays, so much so that the reader cannot help wondering how such 'enormous people have come out of these few pages.'[142]

This traditionalist stance in Murdoch is what connects her to the realist writers of the late eighteenth-and nineteenth century writers, like Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Tolstoy. As a realist, her main emphasis is on concrete details, vivid images and scenes. According to George Eliot, 'word-painting and dramatic presentation are the two main branches of the novelist's art.'[143] The aim is to allow the reader to see directly, truly and justly. Realism in art, for Murdoch, does not necessarily mean being 'strictly objective or photographic;'[144] it is essentially respect, pity and justice towards what is incomplete, accidental and other, whether it be an animal, or a person or a thing. For instance, she writes about simple natural objects, like spiders, flies, snails, stones, rocks, birds, and so on

---

[139] Ibid., p. 214.
[140] Diana Philips, 'The Challenge of the Past: Iris Murdoch and the Legacy of the Great Nineteenth-Century Novelists', *Caliban*, Volume 27, 1990, p. 73.
[141] 'John Haffenden talks to Iris Murdoch', *Literary Review*, Volume 48, April 1983, p. 34. Hereafter cited as Haffenden.
[142] Bryden, p. 434.
[143] Hugh Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1979, p. 2.
[144] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 87.

with so much detail and compassion that she renews our perception of them in a more lucid and loving gaze. These animate and inanimate things mentioned in her novels symbolize, first of all, her own delight in the pure existence of these creatures and secondly, they serve to evoke the reader's moral perception, awareness, and response, which symbolise the human virtues in their utmost simplicity. Although she believes that the artist has an obligation to portray truth in art, this does not necessarily mean that the work must be sombre and serious. She argues that even with the sad and awful happenings, life is comic and so the novel should portray this spirit. In an interview with Michael Bellamy, she says:

> Well, almost everything is comic. I think tragedy is a very small form which belongs to poetry and the theatre. Of course, some of the greatest works of literature are tragedies but are not, as such, models for the novel. However sad and awful the things it narrates, the novel belongs to an open world, a world of absurdity and loose ends and ignorance. In real life, that which is horrible lacks the significance of art. The novel is intensely aware of this fact....I think that the nature of the novel is somehow that a sort of wind blows through it and there are holes in it and the meaning of it partly seeps away into life.[145]

It is her sense of humour, which is almost always prevalent in her fiction, that makes Murdoch an optimistic and moral writer. She has once referred to her novels as 'shining with happiness.'[146] The use of the word 'shining' here is a Platonic description of her novels, through which Plato's sun shines. She never loses her hope and energy, her curiosity and delight for the attainment of the Good even though it is difficult, but never impossible to achieve. In fact, she warns her readers that 'We should always beware of the doctrines of necessity which shows us the eminently desirable, the good, as being, alas, the impossible.'[147] Starting with *Under the Net* in 1954, she has written 26 novels, 'where nothing but thy own *attention* is required'[148] to catch a glimpse of the sun (Emphasis Added).

---

[145] Bellamy, p. 131.
[146] Haffenden, p. 34.
[147] 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', *Yale Review*, Volume 49, December 1960, p. 258.
[148] Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1992, Book XI, Chapter IX, p. 93.

CHAPTER I

ON WITH THE 'MACHINE'

In Murdoch, the word 'machine' is used mainly in two contexts. First, it refers to the 'mechanical' use of language with no reference to the everyday reality. For instance, Hugo Belfounder in *Under the Net* describes language as 'a machine for making falsehoods.'[1] In the book Murdoch discusses the use of language as a net to cover the reality. The second meaning of the 'machine', which is what concerns us here, is the human 'psyche'. According to Murdoch, the human mind is a 'sort of spiral' with a machine-like power that tries to draw the other within. In 'The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts', she describes this solipsistic psyche as follows:

> I assume that human beings are naturally selfish and that human life has no external point.... That human beings are naturally selfish seems true on the evidence, whenever and wherever we look at them, in spite of a very small number of apparent exceptions. ... The psyche is a historically determined individual relentlessly looking after itself. In some ways it resembles a machine; in order to operate it needs sources of energy, and it is predisposed to certain patterns of activity.[2]

In a way, the psyche working as a 'machine' lives in a state of 'bardo' in which 'the brain may continue to operate in some twilit way, ticking on like a machine, after the body is technically dead'.[3] In that state, in the novels that will be discussed in this chapter, *Bruno's Dream* (1969) and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), dangerous feelings like suffering, pain, hatred, and fantasy are all shown to act as part of this 'machine' generating destructive energy.

---

[1] *Under The Net*, London: Penguin, 1960, p. 60.
[2] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 78.
[3] *The Green Knight*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 254.

BRUNO'S DREAM

The book is about the relationship between love and death, both in the literal and metaphorical senses. It is a novel that shows the everyday moral relationship between people the center of which is Bruno. Almost all the characters--Bruno, Miles, Danby, Will, Adelaide, Diana-- are living in resentment, anger, hatred, jealousy, pride and with past losses and regrets. They live with 'if only's'. They live within their selves. The book, as the title suggests, is about Bruno, who is around ninety years old and on the verge of dying[4], which leads him to reconsider the life he has spent in a dream. In that sense, the story centers around death, both physical death and symbolic death.

Bruno has lived all his life in resentment starting from his childhood. He has felt resentment, hatred and anger towards his father, who made him study classics and go into printing works although he very much wanted to study zoology. His father, thus has remained in his life *even now* at the age of 90 'as a source of negative energy, a spring of irritation and resentment, a hole through which things drained away. He could flush with *anger* even now when thinking of his father, and even now the *old hatred* came to him fresh and dark, *without images*'[5] (Emphasis Added). In other words, he has been blinded with this resentment, anger and hatred that has darkened all the images replacing them with selective guilts and self-consolatory sufferings. And the book tells his *realization* that he has lived his life in a sort of dream trying to keep alive these selective past resentments and regrets in order to comfort his hurt pride and ego. He wonders:

> What had happened to him and what was it all about and did it matter now that it was practically all over, he wondered. It's all a dream, he thought, one goes through life in a dream, it's all too *hard*. Death refutes induction. There is no 'it' for it to be all about. There is just the dream, its texture, its essence, and in our last things we subsist only in the dream of another, a shade within a shade, fading, fading, fading. It was odd to think that Janie and Gwen and his mother and for all he knew Maureen now existed more intensely, more really, here in his mind than they existed anywhere else in the world. They are a part of my *lifedream*, he thought, they are immersed in my consciousness like specimens in formalin. (12) (Emphasis Added)

---

[4] Indeed, Bruno reminds us of D. H. Lawrence picture of a man 'fulfilled in a kind of *bitter* ripeness, there remained only to fall from the tree into death'. (*Women in Love*, p. 214)

[5] *Bruno's Dream*, London: World Books, 1970, p. 12. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

His other main resentment is that when his wife Janie was still alive he had a mistress called Maureen. And his wife accidentally discovers this while Bruno and Maureen are shopping in Harrods.[6] On the surface it seems that this is what has been making Bruno feel guilty and uncomfortable for years since his wife's death--the fact that he deceived his wife. However, as he later expresses to Lisa, 'something which ought to be quite unimportant turns out to be the most important thing of all' (165) because he has for years been concerned about his pride and ego that was hurt when Janie went to Maureen's flat and locked the door against him, leaving him on the landing knocking on the door to be let in while all the other lodgers in the house came down and mocked him. He feels utterly humiliated. In that sense, the room he lives in is quite significant because it is always dark. The curtains are pulled tightly concealing the sun, Plato's sun and Zen's moon; it is dusty and smelly with no air for others to breathe in. His enemy is 'the lucid spring sun', which is a 'torture to the mind', for him, compared to a 'coal fire' (8), his false sun. His dark self and will metaphorically has enclosed the whole room leaving no space for the free existence of others. His physical appearance also reveals this. His body is so thin and dry yet his head is symbolically so big like an animal's head, full of dry, blind selfish 'million-times thought thoughts' (19) and dreams woven around him like a spider's web. In that sense, the spider in the book has a negative connotation. With its web it represents the net that people also knit to kill other people. Bruno's feelings about his life and spiders explain this very well. Bruno likens himself to a spider having waited all his life at the centre of the spider's web without having any other knowledge of what is outside that web. The web is like the net made of will and consciousness and dream he has knitted around him. He is described as 'the monster-headed moribund old man imprisoned in the smelly twilit box' (116-117).

Bruno has also for years tried to find a consolation for his other past regret concerning his son Miles's marriage with an Indian girl. When Miles wanted to marry Parvati, Bruno, without ever 'seeing' the girl, immediately objects to the marriage saying that he does not want any coffee-coloured grandchildren. This situation is a living example to Murdoch's story of the relationship between a mother and a daughter-in-law narrated in *The Sovereignty of Good.* It is an everyday example to a moral question. In this story, M,

---

[6] As a realist writer, Murdoch uses real settings in her novels. Harrods, for instance, is a favorite shopping store for most of her characters.

the mother, 'imprisoned by a cliché'[7] in her mind, thinks that her son married a girl beneath him. She thinks D, the daughter-in-law, is very vulgar, rude, illiterate and tasteless. Yet she tries not to show her feelings to the girl or her son. She is, however, basically a well-intentioned person capable of self-criticism and capable of giving careful and just attention to the other. However, when the girl dies and time passes, she starts reconsidering her idea of D and her previous idea changes in her mind. She now sees her not 'vulgar but simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on.'[8] Similarly, this is what happens to Bruno. He objects to Miles's marriage with Parvati on the ground that she is an Indian girl. After Parvati's death at the plane crash, he sees an old picture of her taken with Gwen, his daughter, in Hyde Park, their arms round each other's waists, laughing, and he changes his idea of her. She is not any Indian girl any more. He feels regret again:

> If only certain things had not been said. One says things hastily, without meaning them, without having thought, without understanding them even. One ought to be forgiven for those hasty things. It was so unfair to have been made to carry the moral burden of his careless talk, to carry it for years until it became a monstrous unwilled part of himself. He had not wanted Miles to marry an Indian girl. But how soon he would have forgotten his theories when confronted with a real girl. If only they had all ignored his remarks, if only they had made him meet Parvati, let him meet Parvati, instead of flying off and building up his offence into a permanent barrier. If they had only been gentle with him and reasoned with him instead of getting so highminded and angry. It all happened so quickly, and then he had been given his role and condemned for it. (14-15)

Bruno in his death bed wants to speak with somebody who would listen to him attentively and understand his sufferings and console his ego.

Indeed, the book does not just tell about Bruno's dream because it is a dream shared by the other characters that are tied to him. Miles, his son, is also living in the memory of the past by his 'cosy fire' (143). [Murdoch's novels are full of such references to Plato's myth of the cave.] He feels anger at the unexpected death of Parvati, whom he loves very much even after her death. He tries to live those days inside his mind and in his dreams and in his poetry. He idolises her. He does not want to talk about her or want anybody to talk about her in case her image in his mind would be defiled, especially with Bruno because Bruno did not approve of her when he married Parvati. When, for example, he goes to see

---

[7] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 17.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Bruno as a matter of duty, he feels 'utterly utterly defiled' (112), when his father starts talking about his relationship with Maureen and his regret for rejecting Parvati. He feels his beautiful innocent image of the past being muddled and made impure by the reality. He is scared that this would wreck his work as a poet by haunting and defiling his romantic dreams concerning Parvati as a goddess. He had, for instance, written an idolising poem after Parvati's death because he feels that:

> He had had to write that poem, to change into art and into significance and into beauty the horror of that death. It was a *survival poem*, born of his own outrageous *will to survive.* It had sometimes seemed to him like a crime to write that poem, as if it had prevented him from seeing what he ought to have seen and what he had never allowed himself afterwards to see, the real face of death....He had called it *Parvati and Shiva.* (56) (Emphasis Added)

Miles, as seen, tries to use his art as an attempt to possess the beauty of the past, to preserve it in his dreams. He thinks, 'The past was terrible, sacred, *his*' (145). In that sense, Miles is, according to Murdochian standards, a dry artist because although he is trying to write on particulars and details around him, which he wants to collect in his book *Notebook of Particulars*, he has been unable to realize this. In a way, this is mainly because of his living inside his mind, the mind's cave, with the sacred image of Parvati, whom he compares to the Indian god Shiva. As he discloses later, 'I sometimes feel, Lisa, as if I never really *experienced* her death at all. I poeticised it, I made it into something unreal, something beautiful' (162) which, he feels, he has had to in order to escape from the contingency, accidentalness and messiness of reality that took her away in an accident. In other words, what makes his art dry is his lack of morality because morality, for Murdoch, is perception, knowledge, pure vision and understanding of what is other. Danby, on the other hand, tries to see the little details around him linguistically first. For Murdoch, 'The appreciation of beauty in art or nature is ... a completely adequate entry into the good life, since it is the checking of selfishness in the interest of seeing the real.'[9] The spectator should, in addition, *enjoy* the beauty. S/he should feel spontaneous joy and love in the face of pure beauty. Contemplation of the beauty in nature is a self-forgetful pleasure just as the observation of a hovering kestrel, which she gives as an example in *The Sovereignty of Good,* can change the resentful state one is in. It is a sort of self-therapeutic attention given to nature in order to clean one's mind of selfish worries. Miles, for example, tries to describe a dried leaf

---

[9] *The Sovereignty of Good*, pp. 64-65.

glued to the window pane by the rain, or anemones. But his will interferes with his vision. Instead of catching them in his attention with his loving gaze, he wants to 'catch in words the peculiar watery pallor of reflections in polished wood' (144). So it is significant that while he can manage to describe them in the evening, during the day in daylight he cannot see them as beautiful because he lets his personal feelings affect his vision. This is symbolic of his blindness. The Implied Author[10] says:

> The anemones, the *strength* of whose rather thick thrusting stems had struck him yesterday, now seemed to him just a bunch of rather vulgar flowers, pert faces with frilly collars. Diana had put them in a little cheap Chinese vase which increased if anything the vulgarity of their appearance. He could not see them any more. They were not worth looking at anyway. He felt distressed, hurt. (144)

He feels hurt in his pride because after the scene at the cemetery involving Danby (his brother-in-law) revealing his love to Lisa (his sister-in-law), he suddenly sees Lisa as a separate, free individual. First he does not want to accept this because he has seen Lisa as part of *his* household, as 'a bird with a broken wing' (146). But Lisa is now somebody, somebody loseable. By reliving the past with Lisa, whom he thinks is 'the only one I could connect with Parvati' (162) he plans to overcome the moral barrier that prevents him from being a good poet:

> He knew, and he knew it in fear and trembling, that good art comes out of courage, humility, virtue: and in the more discouraged moments of his long vigil he had felt his continued failure to be simply the relentlessly necessary result of his general mediocrity, his quiet well-bred worldliness and love of ease. There was a barrier to be surmounted which he could not surmount, and the barrier was a *moral barrier.* Was it still possible somehow to cleave his heart in twain and throw away the worser part of it? Miles knew that such a thing could never be simple, could scarcely be conceivable. (177) (Emphasis Added)

He is a mediocre artist because he has also lost his sense of imagination. Prejudice, habitual knowledge and fantasy have replaced it. That is why he misperceives his father in his mind. For years he has 'quite deliberately tried not to foresee what it would be like, tried not to use his imagination' (144). The image that has been long settled in the

---

[10] In this study Wayne C. Booth's term 'implied author' will be used to refer to the author's *undramatised* 'second self' in the novel (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1961). In that sense, to avoid confusion, the term 'narrator' will be used to refer to the speaker who is *dramatised* in the novel itself, as is the case with the narrator 'N' or Nemo in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, who is also a 'character' in the story.

background of his life is a venerable old man with 'the silver hair thinned, the back bent a little, the face more hollow' (108) and 'housed in a niche, looking rather like a sage represented by Blake' (144). As seen, he has also poeticised his father. And confronted with the animal-like face of Bruno, he feels shock, sickened and frightened. His vision of his father, seen without love, is destroyed utterly:

> It was a huge bulbous animal head attached to a body shrunken into a dry stick. Bruno's head seemed enlarged, the completely hairless dome swollen, bulging out over big sprouting ears. The face below, so far from being gaunt, seemed to have gained flesh. The nose was immense, a shapeless heap of fleshy protuberances. Hair unlike human hair sprouted upon it and upon his cheeks, together with fungus-like stains and excrescences. (108)

Similar to Miles, Danby, Bruno's son-in-law, has also been living in his dreams of the past lived with his wife Gwen. Almost every night before going to sleep, '[t]here was another image which sometimes came with sleep and which was terrible. Gwen had been drowned in the Thames' (27). Despite his moral limitations, Danby is basically a good person. For example, he does not want to send Bruno to an institution to be looked after. Bruno thinks that 'Danby was a kind son-in-law to Bruno. He would never send the old man to a home. Bruno knew that. It was years now since Danby had absolutely insisted that Bruno should come and stay with him and be looked after' (8-9). Or he is described by Miles as 'fundamentally a very absurd person, a contingent person' (59) who finds everything in life comic. Indeed, for Murdoch, there is something accidental, unexpected, messy and spontaneous that gives this comic element to life. For example, his wife's death. Gwen meaninglessly jumped off Battersea Bridge to save a child who had fallen into the Thames but the child turned out to know how to swim. The child swam to the shore but Gwen had a heart attack and got drowned herself. And Danby, since her death, has been seeing her image and this scene inside his mental vision. Like Bruno and Miles, he has been looking for consolations to his suffering of Gwen's death. When he goes to see Miles to ask him to come and visit his father, the Implied Author says, 'He wanted to be asked to stay, given a drink, somehow comforted by Miles. He would like to have talked about the past' (73). Like Miles, he also likens Lisa to Gwen with her attentive eyes and he wants to go back to the past to relive the reality that he once found with Gwen. For him as well, Lisa

is the only person who can awaken him from his present lifedream to the reality he found once with Gwen. Danby reflects:

> After Gwen's death, as he very slowly recovered himself, he felt a sense of reversion, of a return to a very much easier and more natural and Danby-like mode of existence...It was not that Gwen had come to seem like a dream. Danby held it for gospel that Gwen had been reality and his subsequent life had been a dream. But, and especially with Linda's help, he had decided that, like most other people, he was not made for reality. In any case he had no alternative.
>
> [After Linda, however, he starts living in the dream. As the years went by]...he began, without in any way thinking it to be sacrilege, to doubt whether he had ever truly been awakened even by Gwen. Gwen had been a sort of miracle in his life the nature of which he would never entirely understand. (133-134)

Diana, Miles's second wife, on the other hand, has a tendency to see people as little pets dependent on her rather than strange, free individuals. She likes generalising about people, as she has done with her sister and Bruno. She has a misperception of her sister Lisa as a weak sister 'who has somehow missed the bus of life', someone 'who breaks his bones if he falls over', who 'has lost the instinct for happiness' and 'a bird with a broken wing' (64-65). But Lisa turns out to be a very strong, independent, clever and caring person who knows how to love the other. Her desire to try to live in the real world, teaching in a school of dirt and poverty and muddle with 'haggard mamas, [and] the children brawling in the street' (146), or giving love and attention to Bruno, whom the others find 'disgusting, smelly, monstrous and animal-like'. Diana's image of Bruno is also a cliché. The first time she goes to visit Bruno, she expects to see 'silvery haired old gentleman, with an evident and affecting resemblance to Miles, whom she would coax along and charm into paying her compliments' (117). However, she feels disappointed and shocked and sickened by the 'dreary little room and its awful occupant' (126). Like all the other characters, she also feels resentment and hurt in her pride when she discovers that Lisa is somebody who can love and who can be loved by her husband Miles, Danby and Bruno. She and Lisa have suddenly and so unexpectedly changed places completely. Lisa is now somebody who is very strong now in Diana's eyes. She feels utterly humiliated. Diana thinks, 'The situation [i.e. the fact that Lisa and Miles have sacrificed their love for her] somehow demanded her gratitude in a way which humiliated her utterly' (217). She is now the weak one, the sufferer. And she tries to make a drama out of this betrayal, to see herself as the mistreated

wife and sister who will look aloof and proud and receive consolation from the people. She thinks:

> If only they [Lisa and Miles] had gone away, thought Diana, I could have survived. Of course it would have been terrible...But if they had gone, she thought, then all the energy, all the *pride*, all the sense of *self* would have been on the side of *survival*. I would have wanted to show them and to show the world how well I could survive. I would have felt less bitter. I could have sought for help and found it in other places. As the wife, retained, triumphant, I can appeal to nobody, least of all to myself. (217) (Emphasis Added)

But by acting rightly and killing their love for her, she feels herself 'utterly brought low'. And she starts living in resentment and the self-consoling cave of her mind. She says, 'My pain and bitterness are sealed up inside me for ever' (218). The moral task that Nigel, the agent of good in the book, shows her to achieve is to forget her self, to kill her self. He tells her, 'You must not be resentful. You must not be angry with them. There must not be a speck of resentment, not a speck of anger. That is a task, that is *the* task...' (221). And even though one does not know how to do this, as Murdoch always states, one should not give up because at least we all know 'how to *try* to do it' (222) (Emphasis Added).

Will and Adelaide, the step cousins, also rely upon each other as images from their good old past to be regained. Will sees Adelaide as an innocent little girl of his childhood. Will and Nigel look back in nostalgie:

> Will: "She belonged to the beginning of our life when everything was good."
> Nigel: "Before we ran away."
> Will: "Before the theatre."
> Nigel: "Before all those awful things--you know."
> Will: "I know. She was separate from all that. I felt she'd kept the early part somehow, kept our childhood, kept it for me." (199)

For Adelaide as well, Will and Nigel represent the search for the good past. She sees Will as her last connection with a real Adelaide who 'had once existed, a pretty girl with two clever sixth-former cousins who lent her books and flattered her, while she wondered happily in her private heart which one of them she was destined to marry' (125).

What awakes these people to reality is Nigel and Lisa, who showed them how to love and see; to live love and death together. The moral theme of the book is that love is death, metaphorically speaking. That is the death of the self because as Lisa says to Diana

about the death of their father, 'Death contradicts ownership and self' (130). Death is not suffering as Diana mistakenly believes. She says to Miles in the beginning of the book, 'Lisa wants death...[and] to suffer,' (89). But the two are not the same thing. Suffering is a dream, masochism and thus it can only mean to be dead to the reality. Death, for Murdoch, however, is the annihilation of the self, will and ego; in short whatever causes fantasy and blindness in the person. Nigel, in a Murdochian way, argues that, 'When we suffer we think everything is a big machine. But the machine is just a fantasm of our pain' (222). Suffering is consolatorily selective because, as Bruno later realises, 'It is the sins that link significantly with our life which we remember and regret. People whom we just knocked down in passing are soon lost to memory. Yet their wounds may be as great' (17). Love and Death are two irises of an eye. And as '[a]n eye regards an eye and there is light' (30), love regards death and there is light. In that sense, death is a virtue. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, Murdoch connects goodness 'with the acceptance of real death...and only against the background of this acceptance, which is psychologically so difficult, can we understand the full extent of what virtue is like' because she continues, 'The acceptance of death is the acceptance of our own nothingness which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves.'[11]

Miles has also been on the right path to find the key to his creativity with love and death. But he does not know how to do it. He considers love in Platonic terms as a spiritual condition, that opens the way to reality from dulled life. Love is like 'a huge vault open out overhead' (286). But he also knows that there is also romantic love that helps magnify the greedy passionate self, which is what Bruno, Danby and himself have been doing. This kind of love loves suffering: 'Such love will envisage suffering, absence, separation, pain, it will even exult in these' (176). Hence it veils death itself. But the image of true love is 'the love that accepts death, the love that lives with death' (177). The image that the Implied Author narrates through Nigel's focus defines this very well. It describes love and death as two angels, 'two indistinct and terrible angels [Eros and Thanatos] encircle the earth, embracing, enlacing, tumbling through circular space, both oned and oneing in magnetic joy. Love and Death, pursuing and pursued' (30). In short, death is love. This freeing of ourselves from ourselves requires great moral effort and discipline and commitment and obedience to truth, respect and love for the other. It

---

[11] *The Sovereignty of Good,* p. 103.

sounds paradoxical but one has to experience death in life in order to love. Death is freedom, detachment from the self and attend to the mysterious, incomprehensible odd present with love, respect and surprise. It brings anamnesis. Instead of killing the person or thing that one 'loves', one has to die oneself in order to be *nothing*. All the characters want to live in their mind where they can eternally seal their feelings of resentment or remorse or anger and find self-consolation. But as Lisa tells Bruno one needs to 'try to draw a sort of quiet line round it' and prevent it from covering the whole space and air and leave oneself and live outside that line, which represents the self and will. In the end, it is death that awakens the characters to life. Death not as a loss of memory but a gain of anamnesis is necessary in order to be moral and good. Bruno, symbolically, loses his memory. He cannot remember any more what happened with Maureen and Janie and all. The past is not important any more. He realizes that he has lived like a spider who has been busy all its life trying to spin its web. Similarly, he has spun out his consciousness with him 'at the centre of the great orb of my life' (280). He has not realised this before because he sees that he has been all inside the dream: 'I have lived my life in a dream and now it is too late to wake up' (Ibid.). He has wasted his life in pointless regrets and now at the verge of death he feels that he cannot redeem his life. In the presence of physical death, Bruno sees love. He sees in his mind that it is only 'in the presence of death that one could see so clearly what love ought to be like? If only the knowledge which he had now, this absolute nothing-else-matters, could somehow go backwards and purify the little selfish loves and straighten out the muddles' (281); but it cannot. He may have awakened too late but his final vision, in a way, enlightens the sight of the people around him. Indirectly, the reader's as well.

Diana and Miles learn to kill their hurt egos and see the beauty and love outside themselves. Diana with Nigel's words about abandoning her pride and forgiving Miles and Lisa goes through the initial change. She learns to love life through loving death which has given her her sight and attention back. While sitting with him day after day holding Bruno's 'gaunt blotched hand' (285) in her hand in his last days, she learns to understand and love Bruno, whom she once felt sickened of. Because she has loved Bruno, who symbolises death, in becoming so attached to an old man who dies, she learns to love death. And by loving death, she gains clear insight into love and the beauty of the details of her present life:

> And she saw the ivy leaves and the puckered door knob, and the tear in the pocket of Bruno's old dressing gown with a clarity and a closeness which she had never experienced before. The familiar roads between Kempsford Gardens and Stadium Street seemed like those of an unknown city, so many were the new things which she now began to notice in them: potted plants in windows, irregular stains upon walls, moist green moss between paving stones. Even little piles of dust and screwed up paper drifted into corners seemed to claim and deserve her attention. And the faces of passersby glowed with an uncanny clarity, as if her specious present had been lengthened out to allow of contemplation within the space of a second. (285)

Miles learns to 'appreciate' the other with his vision first and accepts its freedom, accidentalness and the element of surprise in life. He also loses his memory of the past, which is now what he calls 'the distant past'. For the first time, Miles does not feel bad to talk about Parvati with Diana. Bruno and Miles also start talking about the ordinary everyday things. It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past. The present settles the quietness and peace of the past and reserves the right of surprise of the future. In other words, how we live in the present changes the way we look at the past and the future. If we care about the details around us in the present, if we show attention, interest and respect to things and people around us now, then there will be no past to think of or regret or to live again. He opens his inner self up, which is like the world being turned inside out. He is not a prisoner of his suffering any more: 'It was as if the pain remained there but he had grown larger all round it and could contain it more easily. It no longer bent and racked his body' (250). Life is contingent and full of surprises, like 'every spring is a surprise' (246). He learns to feel respect, love, surprise and joy at the face of the contingent life:

> What a terribly complex thing his life must be to be able to surprise its owner! Miles felt as if everything had been somehow turned inside out. The shape was much the same, but the colour was different, the feel was different. It was the old world made new or else perhaps really seen for the first time. (247)

Lisa and Danby choose to make a joyful and voluntary return to the ordinary life itself rather than Danby going back to his old dull blind life and Lisa, trying to escape from Miles and Diana by going to India. She chooses to ride about London 'in Danby's new sports car and dining with Danby at riverside restaurants, dressed in extremely smart new clothes' (283). Danby gets the message/the iris of life when he jumps into the river Thames

after the duelling scene and experiences metaphorical death in the stillness and peace of the water. While swimming in the same river that drowned his wife he also experiences his wife Gwen's feelings before death. Danby's empathy towards Gwens's death is similar to Bruno's understandings of his wife Janie's feelings, who realised the pointlessness of her resentment on her death bed. That is why she had called Bruno just before she died in order to forgive him. Danby also sees the importance of the present in the presence of death through his imagining Gwen's feelings just before she drowned:

> Now there was sudden peace and silence. Danby swam slowly, breast stroke, scarcely stirring the surface of the quiet water. It did not seem cold. The still flowing tide took him gently with it. He felt a strange beatific lightness as if all his sins, including the ones which he had long ago forgotten, had been suddenly forgiven. The mist had lifted and the rain was abating. A little pale sunlight began to glow from behind him, and he saw that a perfect rainbow had come into being, hanging over London, bridging the Thames from north to south. Danby swam towards it. He swam under Battersea Bridge. (235)

Life is full of surprises. This is very much exemplified with Auntie, who develops in the reader's eye from a peripheral character into a round one. She has been introduced as a senile woman who imagines herself a Russian princess. The reader has to be careful so as not to fall into the trap prepared by the Implied Author and make premature speculations and judgements according to the description of Auntie in the beginning of the book as an old woman,

> ...parting company with reality over a period of several years. She announced periodically that she was a Russian princess, was about to sell her jewellery for a fortune, and was engaged in writing her memoirs of the Czarist court. Of late even her ability to talk seemed to be deserting her. In shops she mumbled and pointed to what she wanted, or uttered a stream of gibberish with Russian-sounding endings. *Da* and *nyet* she had probably acquired from the newspapers. (42-43)

She in the end surprises us all by turning out to be a Russian princess after all, whose memoirs which Will has been making fun of, becomes a 'best-seller, as well as being a mine of information for historians about the last days of the Czarist regime' (258). The book ends with the peaceful death of Bruno: 'The old spotted hand that was holding on hers [Diana] relaxed gently at last' (286) and united couples: Adelaide and Will, Danby

and Lisa and Miles and Diana. This is part of Murdoch's balancing endings--a mixture of death and life, sadness and comedy.

A FAIRLY HONOURABLE DEFEAT

In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* Murdoch is not only playing with the moral imperfections of her characters but, as usual, through them those of the reader as well. The book, Murdoch explains, is 'a theological myth'[12], the struggle between good-- represented by Tallis--and evil--represented by Julius. The characters, mostly belonging to the upper-middle class are: The happily married couple Rupert and Hilda, their 'drop-out' son Peter, Rupert's younger brother Simon, his boyfriend Axel, Hilda's younger sister Morgan, her lover Julius, her husband Tallis Browne and Tallis's father Leonard. The book opens with a conversation between Hilda and Rupert Foster sitting in the evening sun in the garden of their cosy house in Priory Grove, London. While talking they introduce the reader to the rest of the characters and the relationship between them and hence they let the reader form his/her own initial opinion and expectations about the characters according to the degree of attention s/he has given. The traps are there. This is where the reader has to be very careful because according to his/her judgement, s/he will be judged in the end by Murdoch's ironic betrayal of the reader's premature /hasty expectations, predictions and hence moral imperfections.

Rupert and Hilda Foster are, or rather appear to be, the happiest couple in the book. They have made themselves a little refuge from the effects of the outside accidental world. They have enclosed themselves in their orderly world, Priory Grove, talking about the other characters' problems and private lives, and philosophizing about good, love, truthfulness, and virtue. That is how their marriage has survived for twenty years. This gives them comfort, and polishes their vanity, thinking that they are protected and the others are in their private muddles and come to them for help.

Hilda is a typically Murdochian housewife who is blind to the outside and lives under the protective shadow of her husband, whom she sees as 'sagacious open-faced and virile.'[13] She is interested in domestic arrangements and charities. She is kind-hearted and is concerned with the material things and neatness and form around her. Details explain a lot of things in Murdoch. For example, on their wedding anniversary party, Simon rolls up

---

[12] Bellamy, p. 135. For Murdoch, the book symbolises the defeat of good by evil.

[13] *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1970, p. 16. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

his trouser legs and sits on the edge of the pool in their garden with his legs in the water up to the knee smelling a camomile luxuriously with his eyes closed. And the only thing that Hilda sees in this peaceful action is the appearance of Simon because she thinks, 'how crumpled his trousers will be' (33). Comparing herself with the others she considers herself lucky, except in her relation to her son Peter, who has left his university education just to sit in an enclosed room and think. In a way, she considers Peter as a hole in their self-esteem. She also did not approve of the marriage between Morgan and Tallis because Tallis is, unlike her husband, incapable of doing anything. He has no 'ordered completeness of life', which she considers as a bad sign for not being in love (13). Tallis lives in a smelly dirty house together with his father, Leonard, whom he still calls 'daddy'. According to Hilda, 'A grown man who calls his father 'Daddy' is really out' (ibid.) but the reader understands that Tallis loves his father and like Danby, has not let him stay in an institution. His messiness, on the other hand, signifies that for him 'there were no forms and limits, things had no boundaries', as Morgan says of him (79). With her relationship to her sister Morgan, Hilda considers herself the strong one. Indeed, we can see the parallel themes between this book and the previous one, *Bruno's Dream*. Hilda is like Diana, who also in the beginning of the novel has been living with her husband Miles in their secluded cosy house seeing other people as pets. She has considered her sister Lisa as a weak bird with its wings broken and thus comforts her self-egoism through her luck and happiness and security until reality enters in. Hilda also sees Morgan as somebody weak with whom she can spend her time trying to heal her wounds. She thinks, 'Morgan was coming home for refuge and comfort and help. Hilda would pick up the pieces' (33). She feels infinitely sorry for her poor sister Morgan through her sense of her own temperamental luck, quite like Diana. Morgan's failures in life give Hilda a sense of power and a renewal of life and self-satisfaction. She feels gratified that Morgan is coming to her defeated to be dependent on her, the feeling of which nourishes her vanity/ego.

Rupert, who is a civil servant as well as a 'Sunday metaphysician' (18), is proud of being a good husband. He is writing a book on morals which almost all the characters look on with suspicion because he is 'all words', rather a good example of the phrase 'all mouth but no trousers'. He considers what he is doing as 'just a meditation on a few concepts' (36). Most of the time we hear his words on love, truth and virtue. He believes that love is the key to all problems, such as his relationship with his son, his wife and then with

Morgan. But he cannot apply what he preaches. As Julius quite rightly observes, Rupert feels that because he is upright, noble and generous and his life is orderly, he gains consoling satisfaction from comparing himself with others (200). He argues that human relationships without love become mechanized which is the case in his relationship towards his son, Peter. Although he knows 'theoretically' that love breaks down the mechanism, he cannot manage that in his everyday life. Axel calls his book of morals 'a guide to etiquette' (36). This is an also ironic sub-comment on those readers who may try to approach Murdoch's novels as a guide to moral behaviour, that they can read at one sitting and be good. Rupert advises everybody to love. He advises Morgan to be honest and just towards Tallis: 'Love is the last and secret name of all the virtues' (81). What he argues is true, like knowledge is experience, not book-knowledge, and 'the truth is the reward of a hard discipline' (118) and so on. However, Rupert fails because he always tries to see things through these philosophical words. He is a theorist who holds some '*general* view which makes you *blind* to *obvious immediate* things in human life" (198). In short, his experience with life is just book knowledge and ideas, but no practice. He knows that for example with his son "love was the key" but he does not know how to achieve that. He thinks:

> He should have embraced his son, nothing else really mattered except an indubitable show of love. But a show of love was something for which Rupert was entirely untrained. He did not even know how to lay his hand on Peter's arm without the gesture's seeming artificial. How could he possibly convey to his son the tenderness with which his heart was now so over-brimming that it stretched his bosom with a physical pain? Love, love was the key. Suppose he were to write Peter a letter. Yet what kind of letter would serve his turn and would not his pen just stiffen in his hand? 'My dear Peter, I should like you to know--' Love was the key. But Rupert knew too that his whole training, the whole of the society which kept him so stiffly upright and so patently and pre-eminently successful, had deprived him gradually of the direct language of love. When he needed gestures, strong impetuous movements to overturn barriers, he found himself paralysed and cold. There is a path, he said to himself, because for love there is always one. But for him it was a mountain path with many many twists and turns. (121-122)

Rupert also imagines that his book would be a guide to people who are lost, people like Morgan. But it is strange that although he has been writing about these things on love, truth, justice, morality and virtue and knowledge, he has not seen what he has been writing on. And he feels proud with himself for his *courageous* enterprise --which makes him also

a figure of fun--daring to do what the other philosophers have no confidence to speak about:

> Rupert's mind swerved in a natural and familiar manner towards the book on morals which he had now so nearly finished and he wondered to himself if that book would ever help any who had like Morgan lost their bearings. Would his words ever bring comfort to another, help ever to check a bad resolve or stiffen a good one? It was a presumptuous thought. Rupert did not imagine that he was a great philosopher. He was a clear-headed and experienced man and he knew how to write. But there were plenty of men like that. What Rupert had extra, he often told himself, was simply a confident sense of moral direction and the nerve to speak about it. He knew where good lived. Moralists are far too timid, he thought.... (221-222)

And when this 'web of emotional confusion' is started between him and Morgan, he gets panicked because this is something that happens suddenly not out of his world of ideas but the world of reality and needs his spontaneous attention and action. He acts as predicted by Julius[14], who as a power figure creates this drama between them in order to experiment on human frailty. He wants to handle it through love but it is one-sided; he starts telling lies to Hilda in favour of Morgan. And only love will do. The Implied Author is making an ironic comment when he says, 'He [Rupert] would give her [Morgan] love, wise steady strong love, and this, he honestly believed, would set her free at last of the whole tangle, Tallis, Julius, himself' (321). He cannot lead Morgan in a good way because he does not think clear-headedly and calmly but in a frenzy and rush. He felt also vanity/flourished for being the object of Morgan's love and to satisfy his self-loving ego, he attempts to help her alone. He thinks,

> She had come to England, she had come, it was now suddenly clear, to him, as to a last refuge. To drive her out now would be to drive her into a life of desperation and perhaps into a mental shipwreck. I've got to enclose this thing, thought Rupert, I've got to contain it, I've got to live it through. (225)

After his lies start to mount one on top of the other forming a ladder of dreams, he loses 'the daily contact of absolute trust and love' (290) with his wife Hilda and the reality around him. He cannot practise what he preaches, as Morgan says to him (ibid.). Further, he mistakenly believes that if he were married to anyone other than Hilda it would all

---

[14] Julius, as well as Mischa Fox from *The Flight from the Enchanter*, can be considered the most demonic characters in Murdoch.

matter much less; as Hilda and Morgan are sisters, he cannot show each some special commitments. For Murdoch this does not matter at all. What matters is the just loving attention that brings with it proper action. In the book acts of 'duty' and 'love' are contrasted. Rupert approaches Morgan through a sense of duty: 'To deceive Hilda, temporarily of course, had seemed simply an essential part of doing his duty to Morgan'(320-321). Rupert's mistake is his self-esteem and vanity. He thinks that he can control the situation and Morgan by his order but things and people are accidental and mysterious, unlike the ideas that he puts in his book in a neat logical order.

Morgan is one of the typical Murdochian young female characters who have hysterical natures and who do not know who they are and prefer seeing themselves and others through the eyes of other people whom they see as heroes. She marries Tallis out of real love. She has had the chance to be good but her ego cannot stand this annihilation of her intellectual self. So she 'escapes' from the reality and unconscious morality represented by Tallis and goes to America only to meet a magical enchanter, Julius. The love she chooses is a 'romantic love' which involves the love of the self rather than the other. After this romantic love has finished between them, which is just a 'fire' rather than the real love, 'the sun', Morgan comes back from America defeated. She starts seeking consolation and pity from Hilda, Julius and Rupert and tries to go through some sort of a 'drama of suffering' and purgation. Murdoch depicts a moral question for the reader about abortion. It was a baby of 'love' but Morgan considered it as a disease and had an abortion. Love would be the answer to her hesitation but she is not capable of 'love' in the Murdochian sense. And even when she regrets this later she still does not see the baby as an individual but as something that 'might have been the solution to everything'--to get Julius back, for instance (297). Morgan goes through a false initiation/awakening in a flowery field. She thinks and also the reader thinks that she has at last awakened into reality because she starts to see the beauty of the flowers in the field quivering in front of her eyes. The intensity of her feelings misleads the reader:

> She leaned forward to caress the drooping flower heads and touch the strong slightly hairy stems. The next moment she was lying full length in the long grass and there was a great deal too much light. Light was vibrating inside her eyes and she could see nothing but dazzling and pale shadows as if the whole scene had been bleached and then half blotted out by a deluge of light. Her body seemed to be weighted and pinned to the sloping bank by a potentiated force of gravity.

> Rays from very far away were being focused through her flesh. Her head fell down into deep grass and she fought for breath. (164)

This scene, however, tells her resistance of her will towards the acceptance of light in her because she seems to be fighting against something she does not want to acquire. The words that Murdoch uses to describe her feelings are all very strong--in a negative sense:

> She lay there prone and *struggled* with giddiness and *nausea* and unconsciousness. She told herself and hung desperately on to the thought, I have got sunstroke, that is what it is, it must be. She got herself onto her knees, *panting*, *gasping*, keeping her head down. She did not know whether her eyes were closed or not. She seemed to see the expanse of green floor between the high flowering banks and it was alive with movement and huge forms. The great ray from afar was *pinning* her between the shoulder blades and trying to force her down again. Was it giddiness she was feeling now, a dazzled sensation of spinning drunkenness, or was it something else, *disgust, fear*, *horror* as at some *dreadfulness*, some unspeakable *filth* of the universe? *Saliva* was dripping from her mouth. (165) (Emphasis Added)

This scene shows us that she does not really understand and accept the visual awakening that happens to her; the vision, the sun ray and 'the touch of the sun' are too sharp for her will to accept, which is why she could not breathe. She does not let herself sink into this light and kill her ego. She struggles against this light of self-killing vision; that is why she is out of breath, gasping. She then relaxes and tells Peter that everything is good and heaven is all round about us in the present and she starts to see the details. She imagines that she is free and capable of noticing people with unblurred vision and in an unselfish way. But true vision comes with humbleness not with dignity. If the reader is attentive to the details s/he would understand the falseness or temporary nature of her awakening from its early stage because she says, 'I feel I've won a victory and I'm rather pleased with myself' (175).

Tallis, on the contrary, with his clear vision, sees that Morgan is not as she thinks 'wide awake' but 'hopelessly theory-ridden' and like Rupert, she does not understand the meaning of the words that she uses. For example, she says that her new way of life is going to be one of being free and loving people. But, blinded with excitement, she accepts Julius's suggestion of dividing Simon from Axel, the two people who love each other. She agrees on doing something which is not 'good' or 'love' at all. Just a couple of days ago, she was talking about loving people but then she accepts separating two people who might

love each other. And in the novel although Julius seems to be the enchanter, it is also him who reveals the people's vanity and blindness. And once again affected by Julius's magical and fantastical acts, she suddenly becomes '*blindingly* happy' and criticises The Turner paintings not through her own vision but through Julius's vision and see them as very limited and amateurish. And Julius decides to try his 'fantastical' play, as Morgan calls it, on Morgan and Rupert, those two who always talk without really understanding what they are talking about. With this 'puppet show', as he calls it (232), he believes that he will have the whole power on his puppets--Morgan and Rupert and Hilda--and make them sadder but wiser. He says to Simon, whom he takes to the museum to watch this puppet show hidden in a closet, that he will undo the enchantment later with no harm done.

Julius sends Morgan's love letter once written to him to Rupert and Rupert's love letters to Hilda to Morgan. Thus each thinks that the other is in love with him/her. And each acts with vanity and as usual, instead of talking directly and clearly, they talk with each other in a chivalrous and lofty language. Morgan thinks that this is her chance to gain her self-esteem back again. She is now the stronger one. She will bear this by herself and she will nurse Rupert through this. This is the drama of her suffering and purgation. And in the meantime, she forgets about her real task: loving and showing attention to the other people's needs--Hilda and Peter, whom she promised to help.

The pigeon in the underground station symbolizes Morgan's sense of inner freedom that she wants to set free out in the open air but she cannot do it; the pigeon goes down and down the underground stairs. She wants to make it fly to the daylight, to go out to the daylight and see the sunshine, not to be trapped in the 'warm dusty electric-lighted underground place' (291), which symbolizes the cosy inner cave of her self where she is trapped, like the pigeon, lighted by a fire, or an electric light rather than the sun. But she cannot manage it because she is not ready to leave her ego yet. And when everything is revealed in the end Morgan finds her drama of purgation because, she thinks that, 'the deception of her sister was a crime for which she deserved to suffer, to suffer with meaningful and purging pain with Hilda as judge and executioner and healer' (347).

On the other hand, when Hilda learns about this affair between her husband and her sister, she suddenly loses her secure refuge. And she does not want to listen quietly to her husband. The reader is surprised because they have been led to suppose that she would act more calmly and understandingly because for all those years living with Rupert and

listening to his ideas on love and trust she should let Rupert explain things without any rush or premature distrustful thought. That means that she has not been listening to him attentively. She refuses to listen to his explanations. She should have done what Nigel advises Diana to do in *Bruno's Dream*, to abandon her pride and 'see and pardon' them (222). But like Diana, Hilda thinks of her self. Sitting alone in the dusky *comfortless* room--note the irony of the room's giving no consolation--she thinks, '*I* am the one that is destroyed' (370) (Emphasis added). And like Diana, she thinks 'What will become of me now?' (371). It is almost the same utterance but Diana has learned to love and forgive before things get worse. After she learns the true story from Julius, she regrets having acted so rashly:

> Why had she in an instant judged Rupert? Why had she had so little faith in her husband and her sister? All those years of love and trust should have made her at least wait, at least keep quiet. (375)

Rupert again fails when everything is revealed. Instead of 'trying' to get his wife back, he gives in. And he thinks, 'There must be a way to halt the destruction, to switch off the machine' (339). But the machine is not something created outside. It is in the inside created by him. As Nigel in *Bruno's Dream* says to Diana, 'When we suffer we think everything is a big machine.[15] But the machine is just a fantasm of our pain' (223). Under the emotional web of his suffering self-image, Rupert cannot act. The reader is expecting the solution of the tangle in a happy ending as in *Bruno's Dream* but Murdoch again surprises the reader with the death of Rupert.[16] Things do not unravel without pain, as Julius thought. Life is accidental. And the 'puppets' get out of his control. Rupert accidentally falls into the pool drunk and with too many sleeping pills in his stomach and dies. This is not what the reader expects, either. Indeed, his death comes as a shock. But it is a very sharp ending because otherwise, it would not be a Murdochian contingent novel which defeats the reader's expectations with a touch of accident. It is a kind of test for the

---

[15] In the novel the characters try to see each other in mechanical terms. Morgan, for instance, earlier says to Tallis, 'It's no good, Tallis. You keep talking but I can't hear you. I'm mechanical. I'm just a machine. I look like a human being but I'm really a robot' (284).

[16] This is, as Michael Bellamy says, what gives Murdoch's novels a rather 'dicey' characteristic as things would not have gone wrong if, for instance, the phone at Hilda's cottage had not been broken; this prevented Hilda from contacting Rupert to tell him that all had turned out to be a game played on them by Julius. Murdoch takes this technique from Shakespeare. His comic as well as tragic plays have the tendency to begin with the same line of development but with one small change of scene--that is, with the point of no return--a comedy can suddenly turn into tragedy.

reader to see if they would understand the reason for the death of Rupert before he learns the real plan of Julius. If the reader fails the test and feels remorse, the book would be the 'Reader's Dream', as in 'Bruno's Dream'. As we remember, Bruno, all through the novel, was feeling regret for not going up to his wife's deathbed and listen to what she would say to him. He feared that she might curse him. But in his death bed he sees that she called him to forgive him. And the conventional reader might find the ending of the novel here a bit cold because nobody seems to be feeling remorse and regret for the death of Rupert. But here lies the trap. Murdoch is testing the reaction of the reader. What has s/he understood from morality, love, justice, truth, knowledge and attention so far? Does s/he still naively expect things to end in a nice form? Does s/he, like Rupert, think of himself/herself--now that s/he thinks s/he *knows* a lot about these moral issues and has read some Murdochian novels--believe that s/he knows more than the characters? Is s/he overconfident, like Rupert? Then there must be the 'death' of the reader, metaphorically speaking--the death of their emotional selves. Tallis, the good character in the novel, explains this in Murdochian terms--actually I also thought it was strange of Tallis not to think or say anything about Rupert's accidental death until I came to the last pages of the book. Tallis sees his accidental death with clear *mindless* eyes, not with any regret or anger or hatred or revenge. The Implied Author says:

> He thought a good deal about Rupert. The image of Rupert spreadeagled in the pool often came to him involuntarily, with the clarity of a memory, and regularly appeared in his dreams [like his sister]. He did not believe that Rupert had taken his life. But this was little consolation. The accident was deeply the product of its circumstances. Tallis did not try to *unravel* these nor did he speculate about the guilt of any person, not even about his own. He *grieved blankly* over something which seemed, in its disastrous compound of *human failure*, muddle and *sheer chance*, so like what it was all like. It went wrong from the start, he said to himself. But these were not his words and this was not his thought, and he put it away from him as a temptation. Then he tried just to remember Rupert and keep the memory *clear* and feel the pain of it *mindlessly*. (398-399) (Emphasis Added)

So do Morgan and Hilda. They go to America and Morgan starts teaching in a university and from the letters of Hilda to Tallis, we understand that Hilda does not feel any remorse or regret or obsession or accusation about the death of her husband. She does not turn his death scene into a drama, like Bruno. She accepts it quietly.

The only conventionally happy ending occurs between Axel and Simon, who unite again with more understanding and love, and go on holiday together. Julius chooses loneliness to human company but, 'for the present' (402) because he finds 'involvement with human beings bad for his nerves' because they don't respond to his forms as he expects. So we can say that he is wiser now as he has learned this. The reader feels sorry for Tallis because his father, whom he loves, will die of cancer. Tallis has suffered a lot. His sister was killed, Morgan has left him, and now his father is going to die soon but still he does not try to make an emotional drama out of it. He never asks for consolation or pity. He feels no hatred or anger towards the past or the accidental reality. For instance, we learn towards the very end of the book that his sister actually was raped and then killed by a sex maniac. But although he has been seeing his sister in his dreams, he never fantasises about any revenge scenes or any dreadful things that his sister might have lived through. This is what Murdoch advocates, pure animal suffering. And as he says to Julius later he never tells this to people because people's desire to help and console make it remain 'too dreadful' (385). So he has been telling people that she died of polio. It was like 'grieving over an animal' (48). Tallis is what Murdoch calls a good person who has no myth, as opposed to Julius, who is 'almost all myth' (ibid.). Although Tallis has been a rather passive person all through the novel--except for two scenes in the novel: the one when he saved a black man from the hands of a gang of youths who were torturing him and the other one when he forces Julius to phone Hilda and explain the game that he had played on them--, his very quiet existence is still enough to give hope to the reader for the struggle for the good. And despite the unconventionally unhappy ending of the novel, what Tallis says towards the end is quite optimistic:

> It went wrong from the start, he said to himself. But these were not his words and this was not his thought, and he put it away from him as a temptation. (399)

For, as Julius ends the novel, 'Life was good' (402). The struggle with the self may result in a defeat, as it does here. But it is an honourable defeat because it is not accepting blindly the power and control of form and magic and myth. Just trying itself is a virtue. The characters thus get inevitably defeated but it is an 'honourable' defeat in the sense that they learn something important from the defeat despite the tragic losses. It is 'fairly' honourable because what causes the defeat is unfortunately the self-love of humans, just like the

characters who get justly defeated by their own vanity not just by Julius's fantastic plans. The defeat was fair, after all.

CHAPTER II

HIS MAJESTY THE EGO

In this chapter three of Murdoch's male first-person narrative novels will be discussed: *The Black Prince*, *A Word Child* and *The Sea, The Sea*. The protagonists in these novels, Bradley Pearson, Hilary Burde and Charles Arrowby, are all self-dramatising--in both senses--narrators, authors of their own fiction. Because of their single narrative voice, which expresses their self-consciousness and egoism, they are collected under this heading, which is used by Sigmund Freud to define the ego-dominated character of human beings, 'the hero alike of every daydream and every story.'[1] They are all subject to the same machine discussed in the first chapter, the machine of language--as they voice their own memoirs with eloquence and power--as well as their fantasy mechanism in order to relive their own self-consoling illusions. And they all ask and try to answer the fundamental Murdochian question about the human psychology, which is:

> Why are people not good, and why, without being evil or even having bad intentions, do they do bad things? ... Some people who are not bad find themselves so situated that they are unable to stop themselves from doing the greatest possible harm they can to others.[2]

This chapter may also be called 'a court of appeal', as the characters by telling their own stories appeal to the just perception and understanding of the reader in their judgement. As Zohreh Sullivan says, they see themselves as 'victims of circumstance' particularly Bradley Pearson and Hilary Burde and because of their love for their ego, as we will see in the following pages, they 'refuse to accept responsibility for the consequences of their choices, actions and non-actions'.[3]

---

[1] Sigmund Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day-dreaming', *Art and Literature*, James Strachey, trans., Volume 14, London: Penguin, 1988, p. 138.
[2] Haffenden, p. 33.
[3] Zohreh Sullivan, 'Iris Murdoch and the Enchantment of Untruth', *Essays on the Contemporary British Novel*, Hedwig Bock and Albert Wertheim, eds. Munchen: Max Heber Verlag, 1986, p. 158. Hereafter cited as Sullivan.

THE BLACK PRINCE

The Black Prince (1973) shows very clearly the subtlety and skill Murdoch has gained over time in male impersonation. It is a very rich, multi-dimensional and ambiguous book. The whole book itself consists of three main parts: the two forewords written by the Editor P.A. Loxias and by the male narrator Bradley Pearson; then we have Bradley Pearson's 'love' story entitled 'The Black Prince--A Celebration of Love'; and finally the six postscripts written by Bradley himself, his four surviving 'Dramatis Personae' and the Editor again. With the Editor, Murdoch in the book achieves a further detachment[4] from her male narrator, his story and the reader because with the fictional editor there is here a new 'authorized' person interposed between her and the fictional author Bradley. And Bradley, in turn, achieves the authenticity of his authorship both through this editor, the forewords as well as the postscripts because all give the effect that Bradley--though he later dies in prison--as well as the other characters of his 'life drama' such as Loxias, Christian, Rachel, Francis Marloe and Julian Baffin have all lives outside the story entitled *The Black Prince: A Celebration of Love*. In the face of such multiplicity of viewpoints, the reader is required to be more attentive because the four postscripts by the main characters in Bradley's story refute Bradley's account of the story as well as one another's. Murdoch's aim in this is not to create a 'contradiction' but rather a mystification, which is the main characteristics of her fiction. As she says in *Encounters with Iris Murdoch*:

> ...the author must, I think, feel that his work convinces in a certain important sense, and that the story is clarified. These could be and, indeed, are willful mystifications in some books, where the author is positively trying to upset the reader by putting in contradictory constructions and so on, but this is not my desire.... I would want mystification to be something of a further intensification of the story--not a contradiction of it, but a kind of shadow hiding the story which people could see if they could unveil it.[5]

---

[4] Murdoch, as we know, maintains that a good novelist/artist should achieve detachment in his/her work of art. In her interview with Bryan Magee she differentiates a recognizable style from a personal presence and says, 'Shakespeare has a recognizable style but no presence, whereas a writer like D. H. Lawrence has a less evident style but a strong presence.... A literary presence, if it is too bossy, like Lawrence's, may be damaging; when for instance one favoured character is the author's spokesman.... I don't mind owning a personal style, but I do not want to be obviously present in my work' (p. 268).

[5] Richard Todd, *Encounters with Iris Murdoch*, Amsterdam: Free UP, 1988, p. 22.

This mystification, in other words, is for the reader to solve if s/he has gained the 'just' Murdochian perception. In the book the reader is invited to reconsider Bradley's 'case' carefully, for the book takes the form of a second 'trial' for Bradley on two main levels--on the literal level it concerns his relation to the mysterious murder of Arnold Baffin for which he was given life imprisonment and indirectly his sister Priscilla's suicide, and on the figurative level, it concerns his credibility as an 'artist' who narrates his own 'autobiography'. As he professes in his postscript the motive of his second 'testimony', as we might call it, is to 'render a *truthful* account of what has been so universally falsified and misrepresented'[6] (Emphasis Added). In this sense, in his 'court of appeal'--to the perceptive reader-- concerning his virtue, innocence and truthfulness, the reader becomes the judge and, typical of Murdoch, the judged.

Bradley, overall, tells his story in two voices: Bradley the wise narrator who has written the foreword, the story and his postscript in prison and Bradley, the naive persona of the self of several years ago who is unaware of what is to come. In the very beginning of his foreword, he says:

> I shall, that is, inhabit my past self and, for the ordinary purposes of story-telling, speak only with the apprehensions of that time, a time in many ways so different from the present.... And I shall judge people, inadequately, perhaps even unjustly, as I then judged them, and not in the light of any later wisdom. (11)

However, he immediately adds that the 'wisdom' that he believes he has received after his experiences will not be totally 'absent' from the story. And indeed, although he inhabits his past self in his story *The Black Prince: A Celebration of Love*, which is addressed to 'the reader', he sometimes cuts Bradley the persona's account to address his 'editor', whom he calls 'my dear friend', in order to rationalize and philosophize about his then naive self's wrong conduct in the light of the general human personality, art and love. Bradley the wise narrator raises the question about the clearness of his sight in the reader's mind from the very beginning of the book when he says in his foreword that he has endeavoured 'to tell the truth as I understand it, not only concerning the superficial and "exciting" aspects of this drama, but also concerning what lies deeper' (ibid.). As such, the question to ask here is 'How did Bradley really understand the events that he so artfully tells?'

---

[6] *The Black Prince*, London: Penguin, 1975, p. 14. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

The Black Prince is about art and love. And Bradley's story is, as the Editor says, 'a love story' because it narrates Bradley's search for wisdom. He says, 'Man's creative struggle, his search for wisdom and truth, is a love story' (9). And indeed for Plato and for Murdoch, love is the knowledge of the other. In the beginning of the story, Bradley the persona takes us back to the time when he was 58 years old and unaware of the sort of impression he might make on the reader with his 'self-ironic' vision and narration, starts to reveal unconsciously his true egoistic self. Typical of a Murdochian 'mediocre' character, Bradley is a 'cave-dweller', a fantasy seeker and hence a paralyzed artist. He is a 'cave-dweller' because he is imprisoned in his 'mind's cave' (192) pondering upon a thousand thoughts for the good of his psyche. In this sense, his description of the flat he lives in gains a further significance. He says, 'A sunless and cosy womb[7] my flat was, with a highly wrought interior and no outside' (22) (Emphasis Added). Hence he is a fantasy seeker because although what he seeks is the enlightenment of truth that lies outside, he ironically searches for it in darkness, solitude and self-contemplation. Hence mysticising art, together with love, he considers himself a 'saint of art', a 'martyr', who has waited mutely rather than profaning the purity of truth to please his readers, which--as he claims--is what Arnold Baffin, once his 'protégé' (185) but now a prolific writer, totally lacks.

In the opening of the story Bradley is packed and about to leave his cosy flat in London to go to a seaside cottage to 'meditate', as a sage goes to a mountain for quiet meditation. The only and main difference, however, between Bradley and the sage is that while the sage does visual meditation outside, Bradley intends to do verbal meditation inside his head. Being a 'mind-dweller', he likes living alone in his thoughts, filing and sorting them in different compartments and forming a pattern in order to console and protect his self against the accidental nature of life. Although he quite rightly believes that his inspiration as an artist would come with freedom, he mistakes this freedom *from* his will with freedom *of* his will to impose patterns on what is accidental. In that sense, it is significant that the god that he has been waiting for all through his life is 'the Black Prince', i.e. Eros as black symbolizing the darkness of his thoughts.

---

[7] The word 'womb' here symbolises his hesitation to be born into the everyday reality.

However, Bradley cannot depart from his cosy flat because the accidental nature of life starts to creep in first with Francis Marloe, his ex-wife Christian's ex-doctor brother, who comes in to announce the arrival of her from America as a rich widow. This suddenly awakens his feelings of hatred, anger, resentment, anxiety, obsession, irritation, fear, disgust and jealousy--the list continues--because he sees her as a 'diminisher', 'a death-giver' 'full of sheer will' (188). He fears that his self-importance would be bruised when faced with her as a successful happy woman. He says, 'The hatred for Christian which I nursed all these years was a natural product of my struggle for survival and its original spearhead' (ibid.). Bradley's escape from reality into the self-consoling cave is again further delayed by a telephone call from Arnold, who asks him to come round to his house as he might have killed his wife, Rachel, in a violent argument. With this telephone call Bradley's personal muddles start coming one after another--they will end after another similar telephone call this time from Arnold's wife towards the end of the novel. At the Baffins', in a 'Shakespearean style of enchantment'[8] again, Rachel falls in love with him. Obsessed with the urgency to receive the 'great visitation' that will save him from his 'literary dryness' which he rightly feels the urge to be connected with his physical dryness, he turns his 'philosophical' and physical attention towards two women--first on Rachel and then on her daughter, Julian. First, he 'sees' Rachel as the 'messenger of God' (144), 'the destined angel' that might give him the freedom that his book needs. Also as in the case of Rupert in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* Rachel's love for him gives him 'self-importance' (184) and nourishes his vanity and sense of power because Rachel likens him to 'a knight with a charge laid upon him, my knight, so necessary and precious, and I've always seen you a little as a wise man, a sort of hermit or ascetic--' (156). With a flourished vanity, Bradley starts feeling anxious about leaving his flat in London and going to solitude because he thinks he is now aware of 'a great dark wonderful something nearby in the future'--hence the *Black* Prince (190) (Emphasis Added). And after an unsuccessful attempt to make love to Rachel, Bradley the wise narrator--quite Fielding-like-- 'irradiates' his narration by making some observations on the ordinary human soul composed of anxiety, fear, envy, hate and egoism in order to rationalize upon Bradley the persona's 'unintentional muddles':

---

[8] In Murdoch, characters fall in and out of love as in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, regardless of their age, sex or relativeness.

> Vanity and anxiety had involved me with Rachel, and envy (of Arnold) and pity and a sort of love and certainly an intermittent play of physical desire....In kissing her I had, however, no thought of proceeding further. What happened was just an unintentional muddle. (185)

And in the meantime, he completely forgets about the needs of his sister Priscilla, who has come to him, leaving her unhappy marriage. Indeed, towards her, he always acts 'out of duty' rather than 'out of love'. That is why he fails to help her. Even his feeling of pity for Priscilla is not to be credited much as he admits, 'Poor Priscilla, I thought, poor poor Priscilla, with a pity for which I deserved no credit since I was simply feeling sorry for myself' (108). We have a similar situation here as in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. There Rupert gives the paperweight to Morgan that once belongs to his son, Peter. And here Bradley also forgets that he gave the water buffalo lady once to Priscilla for her birthday and now gives it to Julian. Murdoch gives the message to the reader in a symbolic way. Julian brings the bronze lady back with 'a large bouquet of irises'[9] (134) and lays them beside Priscilla sitting in the bed. And hence we have the message lying there signified by the irises, flowers of message, signifying the key to Bradley's muddle--to show love and care to Priscilla as Danby did to his father-in-law and as Tallis did to his father, rather than leaving her to the care of others or an institution.

Falling in 'love' with Julian, however, brings him indirectly the real consequences of his muddles--in the negative sense, Priscilla's suicide and then Arnold's murder and, in the positive sense, the great book that he has been waiting for all his life. In this physical love he puts himself in an ironical situation through the risible contrast between the wisdom and enlightenment that he believes he has received and the mythical form that he enforces on Julian. As he did earlier on with Rachel, he idealizes Julian as a holy object, 'a prophetess' to be worshipped mutely, not as a human being to be apprehended or even talked to for he feels that by knowing her he might desecrate his idea of love and his mythical vision of her. But in reality, Julian is just a twenty-year-old ignorant child. After revealing his solipsistic and blind love for Julian which he takes as 'a game I played by myself' (267), his lyricism about his false awakening into the sun makes him a figure of fun because having lived so long in that dark cosy flat generally his eyes are intolerant of

---

[9] Irises as flowers come up in some of her novels within the stories. Apart from being a playful joke on the part of Murdoch, they also serve quite subtly as her secret way in in her novels.

the sunlight (114). But he addresses the reader insisting that he has undoubtedly gained true vision:

> Some readers may feel that what I am describing is a condition of insanity, and in a way this is true...I can only say that until that moment I could not see her. And I have tried, as an honest narrator to reveal her so far dimly, through the casual blinded consciousness of the person that I was. Now I could see. Can any lover doubt that now he sees truly? And is the possessor of the enlivened vision not really more like God than like a madman? (207)

This shows that he blindly believes that his enlightenment has taken place. For his idea of 'true vision' or 'vision of selflessness' that this love has brought to him is not to *see* but 'to will another rather than oneself' (210). And thus he reveals his misinterpretation of Plato's ideas about love as the 'knowledge of the other'. For Bradley, Plato's dream was to leave the self 'to colonize and enlarge' upon the other until at last 'we will all that is not ourselves' (210) but we know that love, or rather Platonic love, is not 'to will' the other but 'to see' the other as other. Consequently, he wants to enclose his love for Julian with his own free will with no accidents. When they go to Patara, Bradley remarks: 'Our love is in the nature of a closed system. It is complete within itself. It has no accidents and no extension' (307).

And after he hears about the death of his sister on the phone, he does not really show any remorse. He does not want to go back to London and carry out the funeral at least, because he has another duty in his mind--to make love to Julian and thus to put an end to his physical as well as literary dryness. He says, 'There was nothing I could do for Priscilla. My duty henceforth was to Julian' (327). And he conceals this from Julian because:

> Of course I felt remorse. Love cannot really tolerate death. Experience of death destroys sexual desire. Love must *disguise* death or else perish at its hands. (349-350)

But we know that on the contrary, love is death, it is the acceptance of the death of the self. Love is not the knowledge of the other as if 'she were here inside my head' (366). Love is vision out in the open air not inside one's head. And with these thoughts inside his head, he rapes Julian.

Because he has not 'seen' Rachel, Arnold, Francis, Priscilla, Christian, and Julian things start to get more muddled. After he comes back from Patara defeated and alone with a bruised vanity--Arnold and Rachel have revealed everything that they 'know' about him to Julian, he decides to leave London urgently again as in the beginning of the novel, this time for Venice in order to find Julian, whom he thinks is kidnapped by her father by force. But at that moment again he receives a phone call from Rachel saying almost exactly the same things as Arnold said in the beginning of his story thus delaying his departure for Patara. Rachel asks him to come round to their house at once. There he finds Arnold lying dead in a pool of blood. Panicked, he destroys the evidence: the letter from Arnold about Christian which Arnold once sent to him expressing his love for Christian and his intention of running two establishments--which the reader feels to be the main reason of their argument that might have led to his death-- and then he cleans the poker which is covered with blood, thus leaving his own fingerprints.

In his postscript, Bradley continues giving confusing impressions regarding his moral development. He seems to have understood the incomprehensible individuality of the other, as he says, 'How little in fact any human being understands about anything the practice of the arts soon teaches one. An inch away from the world one is accustomed to there are worlds in which one is a complete stranger' (381). However, at the same time, we find that he is still trying to find consolation or comfort for his injured psyche. Most important of all, he has not seen the mistake he made by loving Julian in a physical and solipsistic way. Rather, he considers it as an ordeal, a means of his suffering for self-consolation. He professes thus:

> Because I loved Julian something huge had happened to me. I had been given the privilege of an ordeal. That I suffered through her and for her was, in addition, a delightful, almost frivolous comfort. (389)

The other postscripts by his 'dramatis personae' undermine his account of the events, such as Julian's 'alleged' love for Bradley. With the use of these postscripts,[10]

---

[10] In response to a question about her frequent use of male narrators and protagonists in her novels, Murdoch said that 'there are always at least many women talking, I should think, as men' (Bellamy, p. 132), and here with the three postscripts that belong to the major women characters in the story: Christian, Rachel and Julian, Murdoch allows them to voice themselves.

Murdoch gives her 'peripheral' characters who have all acted in Bradley's 'love story' an opportunity to 'voice' themselves rather than just being presented through Bradley's account. All these postscripts agree on one main thing: Bradley's flawed vision and fantasy forms. Christian, his ex-wife, argues that Bradley was in love with her and that he 'has a way of seeing everything in his own way and making it all fit together in his own picture' (393). Similarly, Rachel also professes his love for her and accuses him of writing a fantasy and says that 'he seems to be invincibly wrapped up in his own fantastic conceptions of what had happened and of what he himself is like' (402). Julian's postscript, on the other hand, throws some light on the truth. She quite rightly considers herself a 'child' then and describes his story as 'the story of an old man and a child' (408). And her utterance, 'I think the child I was loved the man Pearson was' (411), in a way, supports Bradley's account that these things did really happen. This statement confirms Bradley's basic truthfulness in rendering the 'events'; it does not, however, confirm Bradley's truthfulness of 'vision' because Julian immediately adds, 'But this was a love which words cannot describe. Certainly his words do not' (ibid.), for as we have seen, Bradley has described his love for Julian as something absolute and mythical with no relation to her reality as an ignorant child.

Though Bradley 'in life' fails to be a 'good' man, 'in art' with this novel about his 'life drama', we can say that he succeeds because he has written down his 'vast novel, wherein a hero not unlike myself pursued, amid ghostly incidents, a series of reflections about life and art' and love (62). He has written down his fantasies, egoistic psyche, his personal feelings, his weaknesses, his blurred vision honestly and truthfully. After Bradley's death, the Editor, P. A. Loxias, has also given his 'Dramatis Personae' the opportunity to speak for themselves and thus to the reader the opportunity to hear them directly through their own voices. In that sense, Bradley is a 'good' artist because, through his life drama published by his editor, he manages to teach truth, morality and real love to the 'perceptive reader'.

In this novel, the place of the 'not perceptive reader' in this chess game with Murdoch is very slippery. The reader may fall into the traps in the novel by starting to condemn Bradley and the others. But we know that in Murdoch, as in good art, the reader should approach the work not with condemnation or judgement but true loving, just understanding and forgiveness with 'a percipient mercy' in the face of the 'numerous

shortcomings of its author' (19) and the characters. Otherwise, the reader will also fail because s/he is not sitting on top of a safe place feeling superior and looking down upon the weaknesses of these characters with derision and mockery. Bradley, after all, does know that he is not totally right. And with all his deficiencies, he unfolds himself up to the vision and the understanding of the perceptive reader for the 'sins he can remember', 'the sins he cannot remember', and 'the sins he cannot even recognize' (80). The reader must first 'look into his own heart' (28). If not, 'The work of art laughs last' (413).

A WORD CHILD

In A Word Child (1975) Murdoch is again writing 'as a man'. Murdoch thus by making Hilary Burde the author and narrator of his own story achieves again the impersonality and detachment that she thinks is necessary for a good writer to do. As the fictional *author* of the book, Hilary does his best to assure the reader of the credibility of his characters and his story and hence his 'authorised' authorship. In the very beginning of his story, Hilary says to the reader, 'I shall try to be *just* in *telling* the story, however *unjust* I am *in* the story told'[11] (Emphasis Added). Hilary, like Bradley, achieves this aim in the story because although his *vision* of events and people is unreliable, his truthful and honest narration of events as they have happened partly as a result of his weak and selfish nature can be given credit. About the credibility of the existence of his characters inside and outside his story, for example, Hilary reminds his implied reader about some shared knowledge. Christopher Cather, his lodger, when he was eighteen, was the member of a pop band the Treason of the Clerks,[12] one of whose songs made the top ten in Australia. And Hilary addresses the reader saying, 'It was called *Waterbird* and may still be remembered by connoisseurs' (2). In other words, the connoisseurs of this band while reading Hilary's story may remember this song. In addition, the fact that he keeps the name of his hometown secret from his implied reader all through the story also gives the story a touch of truthfulness. The cynical reader, if he does not believe, might want to go to that town and check the truth but Hilary is ashamed of those days--the fact that his mother was known as a 'tart' and the fact that he was forced to go to a bad orphanage there. These are the bad memories that he wants to blacken out in his mind and close his eyes to. He says that 'I was born in a town in the north of England which I will not name since for me its memory is accursed' (17).

It is very common in Murdoch that the base for the fantasy-ridden existence of her characters in her novels usually goes back to their childhood, the lack of love they receive then from their parents. *A Word Child* points out this impact of the lack of parental 'love'

---

[11] *A Word Child*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1975, p. 36. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

[12] In fact, the same band is also mentioned in *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987: p. 17). The same band is supposed to play music at the Commem Ball that takes place in the opening of the novel but the college fails to secure them.

on the adult life of a man very clearly. The book is about a middle-aged man Hilary Burde --aged 41 at the opening of the story-- who does not want to grow up because of his miserable childhood years that he thinks has left him unlovable and 'alone, out in the cold without a coat' (269). This is symbolized in the story by the office pantomime that Hilary's colleagues want to play. It is intended to be *Peter Pan* and in the story there is a subtextual reference to Hilary as Peter Pan.

Similar to most Murdochian male characters, Hilary lives in a Platonic cave. He lives in a flat which is 'cramped and dark, looking out onto a maze of *fire escapes* in a *sunless* well' (2) (Emphasis Added). Murdoch uses the words very cleverly because Hilary, like the Platonic cave-dwellers, looks at the *fire* and just sees the shadows of things and people and this he does in order to escape--hence the fire escapes--from the accidental nature of reality. The dramatis personae of his story is very limited, which is quite appropriate insofar as the plot of his story goes. He has a step-sister called Crystal, aged 35. For Hilary, Crystal symbolizes his only tie with innocence in childhood because she is a virgin and a domestic girl who has sacrificed her life to care for him like a mother. As we will see in the story Hilary unconsciously makes this clear-- his need of the care, pity and love of women as mother figures who can protect him. This is, in a way, implied through the story of Peter Pan. There are parallel scenes between these two novels. In *Peter Pan* we have the Darling family--Mr and Mrs Darling and their children Wendy, Michael and John. Peter Pan lives in the Never Land with six other boys who are 'lost'; they are the children who fell out of their prams and are unclaimed for seven days. Peter Pan, their captain, runs away from his home because he always wants to be a little boy protected by his mother and have fun. He runs away to Kensington Gardens, which is also quite significantly the popular haunt of Hilary as well, especially the Peter Pan monument--which he calls 'a monument to innocence' (339)-- where Hilary meets Lady Kitty, Gunnar's second wife, a couple of times. In *Peter Pan*, Peter Pan takes Wendy and her brothers to the Never Land so that Wendy can be their mother and tell them stories. In Hilary's story, Hilary calls the women he loves, i.e. Crystal, Anne, Thomasina and Lady Kitty , all of whom he sees as his mother, 'darling'--as in Mrs Darling. Similar to Peter Pan, Hilary likes his women to be knitting or sewing, that is doing domestic regular soothing things which remind him, even though he does not like to admit it, of 'images of complacent family life' (258) which he did not have in his childhood. Crystal, for example, all through the story until she gets

married to Arthur, is sewing in her small room waiting for Hilary to come and visit her once a week. And Thomasina, Hilary's 'ex-mistress'--as he calls her--- takes up knitting because Hilary once told her 'I love to see you knit, it looks so domestic' (257-258).

Hilary, as a result of his childhood which passed unloved and motherless, has defended himself by forming rigid routines and patterns as well as taking refuge into words. He describes the reason for his escape into 'merciful pain-killing sleep'--in its both senses--since the orphanage as 'A talent for oblivion is a talent for survival' (16). The fact that he lost his mother when he was seven starts his dark cave life. He talks about his remembrance of his mother which is for him 'a memory of a state of being loved, a sense certainly of some lost brightness, an era of light before the darkness started' (17). That is why he feels resentment, anger and hatred towards the world, the people in the orphanage, his father, his mother, his aunt for leaving him in the world alone 'unclaimed' and forever 'unlovable', like Peter Pan. He feels himself as 'victimized', incurably maimed by injustice. He says as follows:

> I was brimming with anger and hatred. I hated, not society, puny sociologists' abstraction, I hated the universe. I wanted to cause it pain in return for the pain it caused me. I hated it on my behalf, on Crystal's, on my mother's. I hated the men who had exploited my mother and ill-treated her and despised her. I had a cosmic furious permanent sense of myself as victimized. It is particularly hard to overcome resentment caused by injustice. And I was so lonely. The bottomless bitter misery of childhood: how little even now it is understood. Probably no adult misery can be compared with a child's despair. (19)

The only people who managed to save him from this misery and gave him hope are his sister Crystal, who, he says, 'had to be my mother' and Mr Osmand, his schoolmaster back in Hilary's orphanage years. Mr Osmand is one of the agents of the good in the Murdochian world of fiction. Mr Osmand loved Hilary in a quiet way and gave 'his full *attention*' (21). Like Crystal, he wanted Hilary to be good. Mr Osmand taught Hilary many languages--French, Latin, Greek, German. Then Hilary taught himself Italian, Spanish, Russian, and so on. Through *words*, floods of *light* came in his mind. Hilary learnt how to write the best language accurately and clearly. In other words, he learnt the *mechanics* of language, the grammar rather than the communicative aspect of it. Words have thus become his salvation from the thoughts of the misery of his childhood. Since he could not be 'a love child', he became 'a word child' (21). Although Mr Osmand wanted to teach

him 'a respect for accuracy, a respect ... for truth' (22), where Mr Osmand and Hilary failed is this mechanical understanding of a language. Mr Osmand asked him to understand thoroughly 'every word, every case, every detail of the *grammar*' (22) (Emphasis Added). As a result, Hilary has become 'good' at words and grammar; learning new words from the dictionary has become 'an image of goodness' for him (22).

Instead of loving people and things in nature, Hilary loves words which he cannot use in daily life. He considers himself 'a word-watcher' (28). That is very clear in his narration of his memoirs. The book is very rich in detailed description of places and people and things but he does not understand or rather see what he is writing about so elegantly. As Laura tells him, 'You do nothing artlessly. You use words as a hiding place. You're always *hiding*. But what from?' (51). From the reality. The following quotation shows very well his ability to describe things which he 'sees' through words rather than his eyes:

> A damp vaporous haze, which left visibility at about ten yards, fuzzed *yellowly* about the lamp posts and thickened *brownly* between them. The cold sulphurous sooty gas entered the lungs with every breath, tormenting the throat and chilling the body. The great concourse of motor cars, their lights blazing *ineffectually*, illuminating nothing but fog, crawled one after the other in slow cautious procession. Up above a blanket of *thick fuzzy darkness* pressed down upon the scene. (166) (Emphasis Added)

As seen above, generally his descriptions are rich in adverbs and adjectives.

Hilary starts telling his memoirs on a Thursday in November. And until the very end of the novel he tries to keep to his 'days' and 'hours' of narration. His routine goes as follows: Thursday is his dinner day at the Impiatts. Laura and Freddie Impiatt are a childless couple. Freddie Impiatt is working in a senior position in Whitehall. Friday is Thomasina Uhlmeister's day. Thomasina or Tommy is, as he calls her, his 'ex-mistress'. She is Scottish and she loves him very much. She is 34 years old and divorced. As part of his routine he usually goes to her flat well after seven after having a drink in the station buffet. Saturday is his sister Crystal's day. He usually goes to her flat to have dinner with her about six-thirty. And once a month on Saturday Thomasina also goes to Crystal's flat for a brief drink and disappears at his nod at about ten past seven--note the preciseness of his days and times. It is significant that being without religion Hilary skips Sundays for a while in his narration of his days until towards the middle of the story when his routine starts to be disrupted by reality. For example, on the Monday after the first week of his

narration, he says to the reader in parenthesis that ' It looks as if nothing ever happens on Sundays, but just wait a while' (137). He also skips the second Sunday with just a couple of sentences that he inserts on Monday saying what he did on that day: he went to three cinemas on Sunday and that he could remember nothing about what he had seen (185). Monday is Clifford Larr's day. Freddie Impiatt works for Clifford Larr in the department. He is a homosexual. Hilary goes to have dinner with him on Mondays. Tuesday is Arthur Fisch's day. Arthur is Crystal's prospective husband. And Wednesday is his day for himself. This daily and hourly routine gives him consolation, safety, form, a self-imposed pattern on the contingency of life. He says:

> My 'days' gave me identity, a sort of ecto-skeleton. Beyond my routine chaos began and without routine my life (perhaps any life?) was a phantasmagoria. (28)

In that sense, his love of Big Ben gains significance. Indeed, we can see Big Ben staring at us from the pages of the story. In a way, instead of 'a slice of reality', he attempts to give the reader 'a slice of time', or rather a 'slice of *his* time'. We can hear the hours ticking, clocks chiming, days passing in his own way. This mechanical time symbolizes what is audible but the sun symbolizes what is visible. In the book, Big Ben symbolizes the mechanical vision Hilary casts on people and things around him. He takes his light from Big Ben rather than from the sun, i.e. instead of the sun shining upon his face, there is 'Big Ben shone upon it' (275). His life is like Big Ben ticking away in order and which will never break down. To put it in another way, he has set his life like a clock to different days and hours, different compartments that happen again and again in a clockwise circle which symbolizes 'the mechanical and habitual part of my mind' (315). He thinks that like Big Ben, 'I would go on indestructibly, day after day, week after week, year after year, and I would not break down' (224).

Hilary is a self-centred person who does not let the other exist. He lives in his own inner self. That is, in a way, why he likes the dark and cosy Underground very much. We find that whenever he feels anger, resentment, defeated and hurt in the pride, he immediately finds himself in the Underground, especially in the Inner Circle, which he loves best, because he prefers the dark. That is why he calls himself 'an Undergrounder'. He also thought of calling his story instead of 'A Word Child' either 'The Memoirs of an

Underground Man' or just simply 'The Inner Circle'-- either way would describe him equally well.

In the same sense, the room he works in also gains significance because it symbolizes his self-centred existence in his mental, mechanical, self-consolatory and blind world and the space he leaves for others to exist. Indeed, he also observes the 'tiny' importance of the 'Room'--notice the capital R indicating the room being his Room--by saying 'the physical world figured the mental world' (28), as is also the case for his love of the Inner Circle, i.e. his inner self. Hilary is sharing the Room with two other people, Mrs Edith Witcher and Reggie Farbottom. Among them only Hilary's desk is facing the bay window overlooking Big Ben. However, Mrs Witcher and Reggie Farbottom change the *order* of the desks and symbolically put his desk facing the wall--metaphorically implying the wall of Plato's cave. Upon this Skinker, the messenger in Whitehall, objects saying that it is 'Mr Burde's room' but Reggie Farbottom says, 'The old order changeth, giving place to new' because 'It's our room too' (70). As Hilary the wise narrator himself rightly observes this incident in the Room is just the beginning of the successive break-downs in his routine orderly life.

A Word Child is similar in style to *The Black Prince*. Like Bradley, Hilary's narration of his memoirs is a sort of appeal to the understanding of the reader because Hilary has also committed crimes, however indirectly. If we remember, Bradley indirectly caused the death of his sister Priscilla and his writer friend Arnold Baffin. Here Hilary also indirectly causes the death of his 'benefactor' Gunnar's wife Anne and then in a way again indirectly the suicide of her son Tristram and later again Gunnar's second wife Lady Kitty and the suicide of his friend Clifford Larr. All these deaths in a way are caused by his selfish nature and his blindness to the existence and the problems of the other people around him. All of these are connected to his being 'a word child', meaning he uses 'words whose sense I could scarcely understand' (384). We cannot say that he does not know anything about morality, goodness, knowledge and love but he gives his attention to what he knows in a mechanical and theoretical way. For instance, he very perfectly defines the meaning of morality to his lodger Christopher as 'forgetting yourself and making careful distinctions and respecting the existence of other people' (47). Although he knows the definitions or the terminology when it comes to application, applying them to daily life or

to himself, as with the case of all Murdochian mediocre characters, he is paralysed by his will and 'mind-numbing routine' (97).

However, as said above, Hilary, although he has a flawed mechanical self-consolatory vision, his narration of events is very truthful and honest. He does not attempt to hide his bad selfish character which has caused almost all the unhappy events in the story. It is only the reader who has this privilege to know everything about this character, his sins, crimes and regrets told without any false credit on his part. He has always been clear about his destructive need of women. For example, he has also in a way destroyed his sister's life--though, on the one hand, the good part of him has always wanted to take her out of her enclosed uneducated environment and teach her languages and give her a nice country house to stay in with so many dogs. On the other hand, he has also always wanted her to 'mother' him, to forget about her existence. He likes being the centre of other people's existence--or as Laura puts it, 'to live in other people's world' (8). He has wanted Crystal to be 'there' as a virgin waiting for him whenever Hilary wants to come and see her to 'be protected and cherished' in a pure, innocent, childish way (68). His *train of thoughts* on this subject runs as follows:

> I needed to see her regularly but not very often. She just had to be always available in a place fixed and controlled by me. I had to know, at any moment, where she was. I needed her sequestered innocence, as a man might want his better self to be stored away separately in a pure deity. Did I want her to remain a virgin? Yes. (60)

Crystal as a pure virgin under his control is his only connection with his tie with innocence that he thinks exists in one's childhood. In a similar way, he also indirectly destroys Tommy's life by always keeping her in suspense closed in a cupboard--metaphorically speaking--and just to be there to be visited once a day, i.e. on Friday nights. In other words, again he wants Tommy to 'mother' him but from a distance by her just existence there as a place of 'absolute security' that would help him keep sane and secure. His wiser narrating self is aware of his weaknesses and egoism, and he truthfully discloses himself , his fears and his vulnerable parts to the reader by saying:

> I may have seemed in these pages (so far: and there will be no improvement) to be a monster of egoism, but I was just capable of willing Crystal's happiness as something separate from my own. The idea of her marriage sliced into me like a knife. It was not exactly jealousy. Crystal had said 'compared with you, Arthur is

> nothing' and that I knew was the truth. It was just a sense of utter dereliction, the end of the world, the vanishing forever of some absolute security, some indefeasible right to be protected and cherished. So many things would change, I darenot list them, and would these changes not rip me and leave me in tatters? (68)

Indeed, 'hundreds of things' changed when he learned that Crystal, contrary to what he had imagined, was not a virgin (253). For Hilary, Crystal thus changed the past with the loss of her innocence--her virginity by sleeping with Gunnar the night after the car accident. His innocence, 'a tie with childhood, a refuge, a pure unsullied place' (257) is in Hilary's eyes 'lost and spoilt and ruined forever' (255).

We can say that Hilary is honest. Being a first-person narrative, we are limited to Hilary's point of view and his memory only. Hilary himself is also sometimes aware of his own visual limitations. That is why his narration is full of question marks that indicate his uncertainty about the feelings of others let alone himself as in the quotation above. Or for example when reflecting about the possibility of a marriage between his sister Crystal and Arthur Fish, he cannot be sure about his sister's feelings and he says: 'When we had talked after her weeping I had seen *(or imagined?)* some shadow of pleasure in her, as if she were suddenly amazed at herself for conceiving of another mode of being, and not just the endless round of Thursdays and Saturdays' (68-69) (Emphasis Added). The word 'imagined' followed by a question mark shows clearly his acceptance of his limitation to have access into the consciousness of the other.

Hilary tells Arthur the tragic events of what happened twenty years ago after almost one third of the book. This story is, according to Hilary, 'the centre of this story' and he assures the reader that what he is going to tell is the truth without any emotional colourings and excuses on his expense. He says:

> I will now tell the story which is at the centre of this story, and which it was necessary to delay until the moment when, in this story, I told it. I will tell it now, as far as it can be told by me, truthfully and as it was, and not as I told it that Friday night to Arthur. In telling Arthur I omitted certain things, though nothing of importance, and I doubtless told it in a way which was sympathetic to myself, though, since I gave him the main facts, I could not in telling it excuse myself. (111)

Indeed, Hilary is the only person in the story who knows what really happened between Anne and himself--since Anne died in the car crash. When he met Gunnar's wife Anne in

his undergraduate years in Gunnar's college, Hilary was 23 years old. Hilary fell in love with her because Anne, like a mother, looked at him and 'saw' him; her shining gentle eyes 'from the very first moment, looked right into my soul and I felt myself *known* for the first time in my life' by a stranger (116). According to Hilary, he did not do anything directly to seduce Anne into loving him. Instead, he tried to keep his love and pain and agony in himself and hence considered himself 'a martyr' (117). However, indirectly, he showed himself to Anne as a weak man, maimed by injustice and loneliness, a sad and unhappy person in need of love. She pitied him especially when he told her about his miserable childhood, his hurt soul and this pity changed later into 'love' at the expense of Gunnar and their son Tristram. Hilary and Anne started having a secret 'love' affair and when Gunnar learnt about this he sent a letter to Hilary asking him to leave his wife alone. However, Hilary did not want to lose his grip on the happiness of his 'hurt soul'. He tried to kidnap her with her unborn baby from Gunnar despite Anne's protestations to the contrary which drove him into further fury and despair. As he describes his situation at that moment, 'Fearful rage and misery possessed my body, making it violent, mechanical, precise' (125). He drove the car fast and in a way thus caused her death in the car accident with her unborn baby. Long after that Tristram, her son from Gunnar, committed suicide. As he himself admits, Anne, her unborn baby and later Tristram are all 'destroyed by me and by my terrible love' (125) a love that is very selfish, blind, self-consolatory, violent, full of resentment, anger, fear and fantasy. According to Hilary, he knows that 'he had behaved wickedly' but at the same time he puts the blame on Anne by saying,

> If only *she* had not come back to me after that first kiss. If only *she* had not told me that Gunnar knew she was pregnant. That revelation had some sort of terrible importance at that moment. If *she* had not told me it would all have seemed a problem, an obstacle, something to be dealt with by *me*, I would not have been precipitated straight into fury and despair. (126) (Emphasis Added)

Here he reveals himself to the reader very well by turning the table and putting the blame of the causes of these tragedies on to Anne herself, whose first kiss and then revelation of her pregnancy made Hilary lose control of his life--though he accepts his crime in killing Anne and her unborn baby 'almost as surely as if I had hit her with an axe' (127). However, he did not and could not repent because he could not suffer purely but with resentment against the unfairness and accidentalness that crushed his soul/self. He very

honestly tells this to the reader, 'I could not clean the resentment out of my misery. Did I repent?... I doubt it' (126). This resentment and his hurt self made him more proud. After the accident instead of talking with Gunnar openly and asking for forgiveness and understanding (not necessarily with words but maybe with a handshake as Tallis did with Julius in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*) Hilary immediately disappears and thus lets this incident grow both in his mind and in Gunnar's mind for almost twenty years. According to Murdoch, goodness needs humiliation rather than pride which denotes self-love and self-protection.

When after twenty years he faces Gunnar again this time as the head of Whitehall, he feels 'the old sickness' starting to persecute him again (149). Hilary's sense of time again shows itself as an effective factor in his blindness as he thinks that although twenty years have passed, it seems like *yesterday* to him. His only escape is to 'hold onto order and routine' (ibid.). Since Hilary did not clean himself from this resentment and anger and hatred, he commits the same crime again this time with Gunnar's second wife. When Lady Kitty sends him a letter asking him to talk 'quietly' about the past with her husband, who has been also suffering from resentment, anger, hatred, jealousy, and a hurt pride, this nourishes Hilary's vanity: to be in a position of power, to be the 'only person who can cure him' (193) in Lady Kitty's eyes. After that Hilary closes his eyes--both metaphorically and literally after he hears this sentence from her. Not surprisingly, he falls in love with Lady Kitty. After that his routine life ticking like Big Ben starts to get broken. He cancels his engagement with Tommy and postpones his weekly routine meetings with Arthur, Crystal and Clifford in favour of this knightly mission of Lady Kitty's. His 'hours' are now taken by Lady Kitty and he feels that his old order is broken by her and he sees the pieces making now 'a new pattern' and showing him a new way to cure himself (200). Hilary again mistakenly believes that what he is doing is an act of heroism sacrificing himself to cure Gunnar's obsessions (280). But what about his obsessions? He says:

> I now had a task, I was like a knight with a quest. I needed my chastity now, I needed my aloneness; and it seemed to me with a quickening amazement that I had *kept* myself for just this time. (200)

He is so wrapped up in his own feelings of suffering, pain and self-pity that his belief of his false awakening makes him a figure of fun, as in the case of Bradley. While

watching a group of ducks enjoying themselves in the rain on the lake in St. James Park he thinks he has gained a new clear vision, as if 'a cataract had been peeled off my eyes' (206). This is especially so when he neglects Crystal, Clifford, Laura, Tommy and Gunnar and then just directs his selfish attention on Lady Kitty. Like he did with Anne, Hilary also manages to gain Lady Kitty's pity and then her 'love' for his life of pain and suffering and misery and his self-sacrificial, humiliating act to save Gunnar. Lady Kitty says to him, 'I pitied you so much and you had thought so much about it too, about the past, and suffered so much, and you were so honest and so helpless and like a *child*, and I couldn't help--' caring about him (313) (Emphasis Added). The letter Hilary writes to her shows how 'good' he is in words, 'words' that have the power to enchant the other to pity and love one. It also makes him a figure of fun in the eyes of the Murdochian reader. His letter reads as follows:

> I will do whatever you want, I will do if I can what is needful, and then I shall disappear. I shall pass like a *comet*. I think in fact, now in my later *clearer* vision of it, that there is little, though there is possibly something, that I can do for Gunnar. (222) (Emphasis Added)

Immediately after that he adds in parenthesis 'And, alas, little that Gunnar can do for me' (ibid.). He is as usual mistaken because we know that what is good for Hilary as well as Gunnar is a quiet understanding of the past and forgiveness of each other, the accidental nature of it all. In his appeal to the decision of the reader for his crimes, he discloses openly his deliberate act of eloquent wording of the letter in his favour, as he says, 'Of course the letter reeked with self-pity, it was full of absurdities, even pomposities' (223). He had done the same thing to Tommy in order to influence her in his favour: 'Of course I had lied to Tommy at the start. I had implied too many encouraging half-truths, to pave the way to bed' (44).

The 'miracle of love' that Hilary thinks has happened to him is then actually his need for a mother figure this *time*--in the 'slice of his time'--filled by Lady Kitty, in whose will he wants to leave his childish self to rest and to take refuge. He has the need as 'a word child' to be claimed, pitied, cared for and loved by her in a safe dream world, in 'the Never Land' of Peter Pan, and never to grow up. With Lady Kitty in charge of his new routine, Hilary goes back to 'sleep' and dreams that 'Lady Kitty spread a tent of quietness

above my dreaming head' (224). This simile is very touching as it is definitely very hard for the reader, particularly the female implied reader, not to feel sympathy towards Hilary because of his motherless childhood and his need of the protection of a woman--here Lady Kitty. Is he once again managing to influence this time the reader in his own favour and gain his/her sympathy?

Hilary on the whole is not a bad person and he knows his weaknesses and what he should do but where he fails is that he does not 'try'. He always thinks it is impossible to achieve goodness, to 'be even for a moment simple, sincere, together' with Gunnar. He gives up without trying. As we know, this is the mistake people generally make according to Murdoch. People should try and try to be good no matter how much they fail because this is an 'honourable defeat' rather than a defeat of the pride. That is why Hilary fails in the first reconciliation scene with Gunnar. He acts very mechanically with dignity and a sense of power --going through all this humiliating scene under the petition of his wife--, rather than with simplicity, quietness, good will and truthfulness and self-forgetfulness. Real reconciliation and forgiveness appear in their second meeting when they talk about the past quietly; Hilary explained what really happened that night--i.e. Anne was not actually leaving Gunnar; it was Hilary who was trying to kidnap her. In fact, she wanted to go back to Gunnar. Gunnar has all this time wrongly blamed and hated Anne for this misunderstanding which could have been settled long before the time immediately after the accident if both sides, meaning Hilary and Gunnar, had not chosen to wrap themselves hurt and proud inside the dark cave with the ghost of Anne. Gunnar says to Hilary, 'There is so much accident in all things--I suppose in the end all things must be forgiven--I wish we could have had this talk years ago' (327). This is also what Hilary learns when he sees Mr. Osmand in a dream-like state after he is drugged by Christopher. While lying down unconsciously, Mr. Osmand comes to see him, his 'prize student', and he approaches him crawling on the floor. In that unconscious state, Hilary notices Mr. Osmand's eyes looking right into his eyes, 'the eyes had a thousand facets and each facet had a thousand facets' (298). Eyes that can see the details in the world. Eyes that are love. After that Hilary remembers the conjugation of the word 'love' that Mr. Osmand once had wanted him to learn and he understands the *sense* not just the mechanical part of grammar in the end in this unself-conscious state that:

> *Amo amas amat amamus amatis amant amaui amavisti amavit amavimus amavistis amaverunt amavero amaveris amaverit* . . . Everything was love. Everything will be love. Everything has been love. Everything would be love. Everything would have been love. Ah, that was it, the truth at last. Everything would have been love. (ibid.)

He understands the equation of the universe :

> I could forgive. I could be forgiven. I could forgive. Perhaps that was the whole of it after all. Perhaps being forgiven was just forgiving only no one had ever told me. There was nothing else needful. Just to forgive. Forgiving equals being forgiven, the secret of the universe, do not whatever you do forget it. (298)

However, this awakening does not last long. In fact, he just sees it as 'a good dream' which fades away after his 'ordinary' self-consciousness, with its self-pity, reasserts itself again. For example, for an instant, although he sees the impossibility of it all, he accepts Lady Kitty's suggestion of having a secret affair with her and give her a child as Gunnar cannot have one after the operation he had long ago. And he immediately goes back to his former routine of events and decides to insert the Jopplings on Wednesdays: 'I pictured regular dinners at Cheyne Walk. They could have Wednesdays' (344). However, nothing has remained from that old pattern any more. Clifford commits suicide because of feeling uncared for and unloved, so Mondays are free altogether; Arthur and Crystal get married in the end of the novel so Tuesdays and Saturdays also become free; the Impiatts do not want him to come to Thursday dinners anymore because of the misunderstanding between Freddie and Hilary--Freddie thought that Hilary was having an affair with his wife-- and last of all Tommy decides to get married to a teacher called Kim Spranger and leave her job and go away from London, which thus makes his Fridays free altogether.

What really wakes him up from this mind-numbing sleep is his jumping down into the mud over the jetty in order to protect Kitty. Hilary decides to meet Lady Kitty for the last time on the jetty to say goodbye. Here the reader as usual cannot know the truth for sure because s/he is limited to Hilary's narration as there are no survivors or postscripts. Hilary himself is also not sure what he was really intending to do that night, which he reveals by his remark related to his meeting Lady Kitty to say goodbye forever when Gunnar found them that night. He questions himself, 'was it even true?' (380) that he was really leaving Lady Kitty forever. It is very significant that he jumps into the mud, him

being a 'muddler'. In that sense, his survival is also symbolic. It symbolizes his survival from the grips of his own muddy self. He then throws himself into the cold water of the Thames and just like Danby, awakens up. Lady Kitty dies in hospital.

After the accident in the river, Hilary's patterned day-to-day narration is cut off. *His* days become general days. He loses track of his days and so does the reader. As he says on the opening of a new page--both literally and figuratively--, 'IT WAS later, later, later. There were no more days' (377). He goes to visit Clifford and it was '*an* evening, *not* Monday' (ibid.) (Emphasis Added) only to learn that he is dead.

We do not have a consolatory ending again in the traditional sense with romantic unions. Except maybe for two couples. Arthur and Crystal get married and settled in a country house in the prospect of making a big family. Biscuit, Lady Kitty's half-Indian maid, gets married to Christopher and goes to Benares as a rich woman as she gets a lot of money from Lady Kitty's will--so the rumour says. Again Murdoch in the end of the novel develops her peripheral characters like Biscuit and Christopher into full ordinary individuals. On the other hand, we feel that there is hope for a new quiet life for Hilary, even maybe a prospect of a union with Thomasina. We can also say that Hilary becomes a good 'writer' in the sense that he has written a very truthful account of his memoirs despite his protestations that 'I never thought of myself as a "writer" or tried to become one. I was just a brilliant plodder with an aptitude for grammar and an adoration for words' (23). He does not consider himself now 'the author of everything' because in religion God is the author of all actions and he asks 'What I wonder is its secular equivalent?' Surely, as Murdoch would say, the answer is *Good.* The thing that remains is the verdict of the reader. Is he guilty of the crimes that he has committed? In addition, 'Did not the same crime twice committed merit more than double retribution?' (381). Of course the reader cannot consider the case 'closed' because life is not closed. It is accidental and contingent and human beings try all the time to protect themselves but what needs to be done is to try to be good even if that means being defeated repeatedly all the time. No, the case is not closed because human beings are not closed. As Hilary says, 'If I had been the only recipient of this violence the incident might have been, in some recording angel's book, regarded as closed' (ibid.). Time has shown and 'time will show' (391), as Hilary says at the end of his story. Indeed, time has shown. However, before he was thinking that time

could not take the sense of guilt in him and the sense of hatred in Gunnar but it does that in the end by breaking his rigid routine. He says:

> Time could not do it. Had time done anything, changed me so that I was a different person? Was I still and forever the person who...? (228).

He is a different person now. Did he then kill them indirectly knowing that both of them--Anne and Kitty--would never belong to him totally? Or was it all a result of accident? Hilary supplies the answer to all these questions that might pop up in the reader's mind by a rhetorical question directed to the reader: 'did it matter that I [and also the reader] could probably never answer that question?' (201). What matters is the forgiveness, that equation which is the secret of the universe because as Hilary rightly observes, 'Even a law court lets you off at last' (228). The reader needs to be very careful and attentive in his/her 'reading' of Hilary's story because s/he is not in a position to judge him. Indeed, the use of the indefinite article 'a' in the title of the book serves to generalise Hilary's case as 'a word child', as in 'an accidental man'. What is expected of the reader is not to be a 'word reader' but 'love reader'. As typically of Murdoch, it is not just the reader reading and looking at the characters and criticising them; s/he is also being read. The work of art in Murdoch looks back at him/her.

THE SEA, THE SEA

The Sea, The Sea, published in 1978, is another novel in the good series that talks about a recognisable character who is trapped in his past. The good reader in the Murdochian world of fiction is expected to recognise the famous main character and his crew from the bourgeois circle of artists: 'Yes, yes,' he says, 'I am Charles Arrowby and, as I write this, I am, shall we say, over sixty years of age. I am wifeless, childless, brotherless, sisterless, I am my well-known self.'[13] Apart from the vast cast of actors and actresses introduced in the book, we have actors and actresses from previous novels that come up again. Indeed, in the book we have many cross-references that once again proves the continuity of Murdoch's world of fiction and reality. We have already known from *Bruno's Dream* that Will Boase has become one of the 'most famous and popular actors in England and Adelaide becomes Lady Boase' (275). The sceptical reader may not have believed in this while reading *Bruno's Dream* but here they are again mentioned in *The Sea, The Sea* by a world-famous director Charles Arrowby. Charles says of him 'I hear that idiot Will Boase has been knighted' (499). We learn that the actress Rosina Vamburgh, one of Charles's ex-mistresses, 'was never able to play Honor Klein' (73). Honor Klein, as the regular Murdochian reader will remember, is a character in *A Severed Head*, which is one of Murdoch's novels adopted for the stage--there is, in that sense, a two-way irony here. The reader is expected to recognise them. He cannot forget about one book as soon as he finishes reading and closing the book because it is like a continuous developing prose that expands its crew and the same people or their relatives or successors/descendants may come up again as for instance Charles talks about the marriage of Erasmus Blick, a rising Shakespearean actor, (496) who is apparently a relative of Calvin Blick from *The Flight from the Enchanter*. This gives the reader the feeling of proximity to her fictional world because the characters, peripheral or central, develop and expand as in life like real people, together with their habitual readers, book after book. This gives Murdoch's novels a life-like continuity--hence her idea of serial writing. They do not die with one novel.

---

[13] *The Sea, The Sea*, London: Penguin, 1980, p. 3. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

Indeed, the Murdochian series reader knows Charles perfectly well. He is a wanderer in the Platonic cave because he spends almost the whole book creating and wandering in his 'mentalscapes' rather than seeing the visual landscapes. The book itself is, as usual in Murdoch, full of visual scenes from nature, told but unseen by the characters. In Murdoch, scenes from nature are generally symbolic because the appreciation of the beauty in nature shows the virtue in man. For instance, there is a scene where James and the fly look at each other before James releases it (179). A loving gaze cast upon nature exhibits in a way the extent of human love that covers everything from stones to insects, the kettle handle, the knob of the door, or the stars. This visible contrast is there between the thick, suffocating clouds of Charles's thoughts and the vast, free relaxing landscape and seascape in the book. Hence the reader is expected to have a visual impression rather than a mental response, which is as we know Murdoch's idea of fiction. Good art renews our attention in a good way. It is very hard for the reader to stay 'in the dark' because the visual steps are there for the reader to climb up into the open air. If s/he follows the words, however, s/he will be drowned in the deep whirling sea of Charles's 'philosophy' (2).

Like the other Murdochian mediocre artist characters, such as Jack in *Under the Net*, Miles Greensleave in *Bruno's Dream* or Bradley Pearson in *The Black Prince*, Charles Arrowby cannot produce art. He spends hours and pages trying to describe nature but because of his egocentric nature he always comes back to himself and his mental way of 'seeing' things and people. He wants to control and direct the other characters around him. That is why he fails as an artist but becomes well-known as a stage-director. Like Hillary in *A Word Child*, he wants to mold time according to his own form, that is why he starts writing a diary which then turns into a memoir and then an autobiographical novel when the ordinary time is interrupted by his mental time. The book in that sense consists of three main parts-- Pre-history, History and Postscript titled, 'Life Goes On'. And it is, overall, narrated in a mixture of diary and memoir. The first and the last parts are mainly narrated in the form of a diary with daily sketches and personal reflections of the male narrator about his present life. There is, in this sense, a minimum delay or even sometimes 'zero-degree'[14] of narrative distance between his experience and narration. The advantage of this technique is that both the narrator, Charles himself and the reader experience and

---

[14] Bertil Romberg, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1962, p. 99.

respond to the events of the story simultaneously and with the same degree of uncertainty as to how the events will develop. For example, right at the very beginning of the book, the narrator says :

> I have considered writing a journal, not of happenings for there will be none, but as a record of mingled thoughts and daily observations: 'my philosophy', my pensees against a background of simple descriptions of the weather and other natural phenomena. This now seems to me again to be a good idea.... From my sea-facing window *at this moment* I can see three different kinds of gulls.... (2) (Emphasis Added)

And indeed in the book it is this emphasis on simultaneity and immediacy between the experience and its recording that gives Murdoch the aesthetic detachment that she wants to achieve. It also gives the male narrator the authenticity of his fictional authorship. Further, with the postscript that he significantly titles 'Life Goes On', Charles Arrowby, like Bradley Pearson, invites the reader to make-believe that he and his characters go on living outside his story. He is, in other words, one of us, which puts the reader in this game together with the characters. The reader is never in a superior position in Murdoch. Charles in the beginning of the book argues wrongly that 'the audience is also a court against which there is no appeal' (33). When we think of the Murdochian reader, however, we see that the relationship with the reader and the characters is reflective--the reader is being read, seen and judged by the work of art according to his/her response. It is like a chess game, in the sense that the events can turn against him/her any moment with just one moment of inattentiveness. S/He is not in a superior position. Neither the theatre nor any other art forms need to 'stoop' because good art deals with the everyday issues; it is not somewhere up or *there* or *then* but down *here* in the reader's daily life.

In the History section, however, the interval between experience and narration widens and the medium changes mainly into a continuous narration in the past. It is at this period that Charles narrates 'his history' (his+story) and hence his narration takes the <u>form</u> of a 'novelistic memoir' (229), as he calls it, combining his present life with his past in a more ordered form. This medium of narration with a blend of present and past is significant because it suits the personality of the male narrator, for what Charles seeks both in life, in love and in art is some kind of *form*, however illusory it might be, that

'would connect my end with my beginning in a way that was destined and proper (371). And this form he finds in his past as he says, 'writing my life, after all, as a novel "means" a matter of finding a form, and somehow history, my history, has found the form for me' (153).

With the 'Pre-history' period, Charles starts his 'demon-ridden pilgrimage' (502). To revert to Plato again, he is living in a state of 'eikasia', a world of shadows and demons where he is 'the King of shadows' (93) looking for a 'great light-source' to guide him towards what he thinks he sees as the daylight. He says :

> Since I started writing this 'book' or whatever it is, I have felt as if I were walking about in a dark cavern where there are various 'lights', made perhaps by shafts or apertures which reach the outside world. There is among these lights one great light towards which I have been half consciously wending my way. It may be a great 'mouth' opening to the daylight, or it may be a hole through which fire emerges from the centre of the earth. (77)

The great light-source that Charles has been seeking and will persistently seek throughout the book is the fire, i.e. his first childhood love Mary Hartley Smith, the 'object' of the idealised love of his fantasy in the book.

Charles Arrowby retires from the theatre after he is sixty and settles in a house by the sea called 'Shruff End', which symbolically means the Black (Shruff: schwartz) End emphasising further his abode in the dark cave. Charles thinks that retiring from the real life that he has been living to a life of seclusion in a house by the sea will give him the illumination and the 'moral change'(3) he has been looking for. He has been a famous director but never an actor. He thinks that after this seclusion by the sea, he can 'learn to be good' (2) and produce a good piece of work, that is his memoirs as he thinks nothing is going to happen but his 'recollection in tranquillity' (1). However, as James, who is his cousin and the agent of good, later points out it is very difficult to write about oneself without indulging into self-love and the cave because 'Most of what we think we know about our minds is pseudo-knowledge' (175). Charles thus takes the wrong 'steps' leading to enlightenment. The habitual reader knows by now that nothing but self-consolatory fantasy and suffering can be gained by mental recollection which cannot be done in 'tranquillity' at all. This does not, however, make Murdoch's novels the least bit boring because the reader is expected to know that the characters are 'out there in real life'

experiencing common moral dilemmas. Mind without the eyes is like a cave because eyes, if they are open and attentive, provide lucid and just vision. Without eyes, which is mainly the case with Murdoch's mediocre characters, mental recollection, which is like an eel that twists and coils, takes over and leads to madness. Similarly, Charles's 'whirling mass of emotions and ideas' (344) are like the 'eel' (300), 'closely, blackly coiled together' (152). This is mainly the story in *The Sea, The Sea*. Charles 'thinks' that 'The end of life is rightly thought of as a period of meditation'. His idea of reflection or meditation about the world and the other is 'through reflecting about *my own* adventures in it' (3) (Emphasis Added). However, Murdochian reader knows that the real end that is related to the good is death, the death of the self and the awakening of sight so it is visual meditation--what the Zen Buddhists carry out--that enlightens the way to the good/sun. However, Charles cannot see the sun for the *clouds*. He is wandering in the dark under his 'cloud of reflection' (17) and his word-images rather than seeing the visual reality behind the clouds.

Charles Arrowby is trapped in his past. The main question that psychologists usually ask to their patients is 'Tell me about your childhood'. This is what Murdoch seems to be doing because almost all the central questing characters' problems with their present everyday reality rest on their past and their wrong idea of love. Similarly, Charles's failure in his life and art results from his failure to love. Rather than trying *to* love Charles has chosen to stay *in* love, or rather in his past love. Indeed, Charles finds consolation <u>in</u> everything rather than move <u>on</u> with the ordinary time. He has lived all his life in resentment, envy, blindness and anger against people since his childhood. First of all, against his cousin James, whom he has seen all his life as a malicious, mean, nasty person--if the reader is naive enough to believe it. The reader through experience should suspend his/her judgement and not make any premature speculations and conclusions until the very end. Charles's resentment is partly because of his envy of James's rich and lively mother Aunt Estelle, James's ponies, and his fear that James would succeed in life while he would fail. Under all these clouds of personal feelings and reflections, Charles admits that ''I lost sight of James because for a time I lost sight of everything, the lights went out in my life'. This visual blindness will continue until the very end of the novel.

Charles is, in fact, aware that what he is doing is 'a sort of dream-search' (86). Romanticising the memory of his love for Hartley, he turns his childhood love into 'a sacred love' that they lived 'in paradise' conversing 'as angels' (80), a love 'almost any

speech would profane' (129). It was, what he calls, 'a very special blend of innocence and chaste passion' (85). And when Hartley left him for another man, he argues that she destroyed his innocence. In other words, Charles blames Hartley for making him a 'worldly man' rather than a spiritual man by refusing him *then* for 'moral' reasons, like he cannot be faithful and love her enough. It is because of '(her) and the demon of jealousy' (84) that he has become an unfaithful as well as an incompetent man in his love affairs. He is a good example of the Zen koan, 'A piece of dust in the eye, illusory flowers dance wildly' because with that black spot of jealousy in his eye, optical illusions dance wildly. In this sense, the sea monster in the form of a black snake with green eyes and an open mouth with a pink interior that appears in his vision throughout the book gains further significance for it represents both his intense jealousy and anger as well as his sexual disgust, fears and inhibitions as a man which have sprung from Hartley's rejection of him as a boy. That is why, as Rosina, one of his ex-mistresses, tells him, 'You are a cold child....You've had love affairs but somehow you've stayed innocent, no not innocent, you are fundamentally vicious, but somehow *immature*' (108) (Emphasis Added). His words read as follows:

> Ever since the recognition scene (of Hartley) physical passion, roused, disturbed, confused, had twisted and turned in me (like a snake), my senses in dialogue with my thoughts, because, as I worked and worked to join together her youth and her age, I so much desired to desire her. To achieve this was a crucial test, a trial.... Now I realised, it was done; and my desire was like a river which has forced its channel to the sea. She made me whole as I had never been since she left me. She summoned up my whole being, and I wanted (her to).. give me back *my own best* self. For she held my virtue in her keeping, she had held it all these years, she was my alpha and my omega. It was not an illusion. (18) (Emphasis Added)

Thus he believes that with reliving his childhood, his best self, he can develop as a man. In the meantime, however, he totally disregards the possibility of the development and expansion of other people and things around him. As the above quotation shows, Charles's pursuit of Hartley as his first love turns out to be actually his self-justification to veil his own narcissism and egoism and to reclaim his own youth; and it is his youth and not Hartley with which he is actually in love, as he will also admit to himself in the end of his story. In order to console his own self-pleasing ego by trying to relive 'his best self', his real first love--his own youth--, under its veiled face of his imaginary love for the

Hartley of his childhood, he creates, what he calls, a 'dream text' (499) in his present reality.

However, with the Hartley history Charles enters what the Buddhists call the 'bardo', which is equivalent to Plato's cave or *eikasia*. Being a Buddhist, James explains this Tibetan belief in bardo as 'the souls of the dead, while waiting to be reborn, wander in a sort of limbo' (384), where one meets all kinds of demons and ghosts. Man has a chance to become free of this bardo at the moment of death because as James explains, 'At the moment of death you are given a total vision of all reality which comes to you in a flash.... if you can comprehend and grasp it then you are free,' out of the wheel of 'attachments, cravings, desires, what chains us to an unreal world' (385). As is also the case in *Bruno's Dream* and *The Black Prince*, here Murdoch wants to show that death is the real end, escape from the bardo back into reality. Living in the darkness of Plato's cave or the Buddhist bardo, Charles only sees the shadows of things and people. As Peregrine rightly calls him, he is 'the king of shadows' (93).

In order to be able to relive, clarify and purify his past, Charles forces Hartley to remember the details in the past, meaning why she left him then. Again we see the power of time in leaving everything in the past and its power to cause forgetfulness. For Hartley, all those things happened 'a lifetime ago' (216). However, 'To me', Charles says, 'it's yesterday... It's yesterday, Hartley. That was the only real time I ever lived through' (216-217) and after that rejection he has built his whole life on her *words*. Although he has a wonderful seascape and many details in nature to notice, he prefers brooding and self-contemplation. Rather than enormous vistas of scenery, 'enormous vistas of thought' keep unrolling in his mind, which he significantly calls 'the whirl of my thoughts', in other words the cauldron near his house where he falls into when pushed by Peregrine (249). It signifies his fall and being lost in his cauldron of thoughts and personal feelings and emotions, hatred, jealousy, revenge, anger, yearning for the past, and so on. It is significant that he falls down into the vortex of his thoughts and loses consciousness and part of his memory which he wants to hold tight. In his idyllic mental picture of him and Hartley living in a house by the sea with Hartley sewing and him doing the gardening, he also wants to place Titus somewhere. To revert to the sea image, Charles tries to use Titus as a bait to catch Hartley in his cauldron of thoughts and speculations and self-contemplation. However, life is accidental and it gives Charles a chance to turn back to the daylight with

Titus. He could take care of Titus but he misses this chance as he totally ignores him during his attempts to get Hartley back. Just words--Hartley's words--have become his life. He is another Murdochian word child.

The book tries to illuminate the moral questions that we face in our everyday life: Should Hartley leave her husband for Charles, her childhood love? Can one go back? What is love? What is 'the language of love? What is suffering? What is art? Recollections in tranquillity? Or everyday moral present? The answers all lie in the reading and the vision. The language of love is not words about one's emotions and obsessions and the past; it is about what is ordinary and everyday and outside oneself. The reader should take care not to be drowned in the deep vortex of his speculations and calculations. Charles's idea of art and the relationship between the actors and the audience is wrong. Yes, the effect of good art is, in a metaphorical way, to drug the reader or the audience, according to Murdoch, i.e. to drug them into forgetfulness/self-forgetfulness but only to wake up back to reality. However, Charles's idea of theatre/art is to 'be deceived, drugged, incarcerated, stupefied' (33). His idea of drama is 'a fictitious spell-binding present moment' that imprisons the spectator in it (36) but for Murdoch, the task of drama or art is not spell-binding but awakening, not imprisoning but freedom. It is not, as he thinks, something magical or supernatural but everyday.

Charles all through the book tries to be a 'magician', as Lizzie, his ex-girlfriend calls him (45). In his 'dream text', where he is a 'fantasist', a 'dreamer', and a 'magician' (499), he 'bodies forth' the Hartley of his childhood past into his adulthood present as he thinks that this can only connect him to his own youthful innocence. And in this 'optical illusion', which he suffers throughout the novel, he tries to form a 'similarity', a continuity between the two images of Hartley that connect his past and his present, his beginning and his end. For example, he says, 'the shape of her face and head and the look of her eyes conveyed something untouched straight from the past' (114). However, she is not Hartley but Mary now, an old, ordinary and even somewhat eccentric woman married to the man she has loved, i.e. Ben, and not to the man whose love is utterly possessive, narcissistic and like that of 'brother and sister' (216). Mary--i.e. Hartley-- as well as the other characters in his present reality try to make him see that their love was childish and not real. *Mary* says, 'it's pointless, it's irrelevant, it's a dream' (280). As is the case with James, Charles also sees Ben as a nasty, malicious hateful person. Ben tells him

commonsensical facts, such as Charles may have known her a long time ago but 'a long time ago is a long time ago' (150) because time changes everything and people: 'Things change and people have their own worlds and their own places' not the inner place that Charles has been keeping Hartley in since then (ibid.). James, being one of the agents of good in Murdoch, tries to show Charles the difference between reality--that Hartley is a different person now married to Ben--and Charles's dream to change the past into an idyllic story. Charles's own version of the story is that Ben is vile, a 'hateful tyrant' (152), and Mary is a captive princess in love with another man (meaning Charles himself), but she is too scared to leave her husband (Ben). With the help of Charles, the destined prince, she will come to Charles and they will live the past happy ever after. In a way, Charles ironically projects his own negative qualities onto Ben as a bully, a tyrant, and a jealous man. For example, when he says of him that he is 'clinically mad' for 'what mad people do (is to) see everything as evidence for what they want to believe' (223), he is actually referring to himself :

> *I reviewed the evidence* and I had very little doubt about what it pointed to.. Hartley loved me and had long regretted losing me. How could she not ? She did not love her husband. How could she ? He was mentally undistinguished; there was not wit or spiritual sweetness in that man... And he was, it seemed, a barbarian and a bully. He was a tyrant, probably a chronically jealous man, a dull resentful dog, a limited shut in fellow with no sense of joy in life. Hartley had been a captive all these years. She may, in the earlier times, have thought of escape; but gradually she fell, as so many bullied isolated women do, into a gradual despair. Better not to fight, not to hope. The shock of seeing me again must have been enormous. Of course she had digested some of it by the time I discovered her. Her frightened negative behaviour was easy to explain. She was probably afraid of her husband; but she was much more afraid of her old love for me, still alive, blazing away there like an underground oil fire....(158) (Emphasis Added)

When read between the lines, the passage shows his <u>own</u> intention to keep Hartley as a captive. In fact, she has been an 'imaginary captive' inside his narcissistic and totally egoistic self all these years causing a black spot in his eyes/vision. As James, his cousin, also tries to point this out to him:

> You've built a cage of needs and installed her in an empty space in the middle. The strong feelings are all around her--vanity, jealousy, revenge, your love for your youth--they aren't focused on her, they don't touch her. She seems to be their prisoner.... (442)

In this dream text, to justify himself, in his 'rescue plan' of his 'phantom Helen', he assigns himself the role of a 'redeemer' who would 'rejuvenate' her like a prince who 'transfigures' his princess 'with a kiss in a fairy tale' (213). And with him, she would 'actually regain much of her old beauty - like a prisoner released from a labour camp who at first looks old, but then with freedom and rest and good food, soon becomes young again' (373). He merely disregards the importance of forty years which have brought a 'lifetime' change in the Hartley of present reality from the Hartley of his imagination. Through his fantasy mission as 'the destined prince' (356), he also reveals his 'Machiavellian' nature as he says, 'let there be disaster upon disaster, crisis upon crisis, let it all break down quickly into shambles. That will benefit me' (231). But the disasters that he has been expecting in his 'dream-text' start to happen in his actual present life--notably the death of Titus and his fall into the cauldron--both of which are indirectly its end results. In this sense, his present reality interferes with his 'Hartley plot' where he is in complete control both in terms of the events and their narration, and his attempt to direct events 'backfires in his face'[15], as Steven Cohan puts it, making him lose 'control of my life and of the lives with which I was meddling.... I had wakened some sleeping demon...' (310).

With his fall into the Minn's cauldron, Charles's revelations start because it is where he faces the demon that he has wakened. In other words, by pushing Charles into the cauldron, Peregrine exposes him to the destructiveness of his own twisted forms and speculations whirling in his mind. This is where he frees himself from the grips of the snake with the help of James's paranormal spiritual powers and starts seeing the contingency of *Time* and reality. The chain of accidents and the intrusion and the destruction of the ordinary time take over his dream text: Titus's death, which helps Mary and Ben to emmigrate to Australia, as now there is no moral tie that links them to stay in Britain. In a way, it is all an inevitable lesson for him to see the connection of the web of causes and that contingency kills. He seems to realize his should-have-been ordinary moral responsibility towards Titus, that is, to give his attention to him, to bring him up, give him an education in art. He could have made him real, rather than as Rosina once told

---

[15] Steven Cohan, 'From Subtext to Dream Text: The Brutal Egoism of Iris Murdoch's Male Narrators', *Women and Literature*, 1982, Volume II, p. 236.

him, 'a dream child' (459). He then regrets that Hartley was not his sister, for 'If only Hartley had been my sister, I could have looked after her so happily and cared for her so tenderly' (460). Should we believe him? The reader is skeptical and rightly so, because after that statement he still considers obsessively the possibilities of getting Hartley back, even though she is now in Australia with Ben. He thinks it is a hopeful sign that Hartley did not destroy his last letter and hid it under the bathroom linoleum, though she did not read it. A possible answer can be found in many of Murdoch's novels, as in *The Black Prince*--the relationship between Bradley and his sister Priscilla--or in *A Word Child*--Hilary and his sister Crystal. They all forget about their sisters because of their selfish quests.

His final illumination, however, occurs in James's flat in London that he inherits after James's death. The curtain that has been covering his sight is lifted totally making him see the outside rather than his inner mind, as the following image points out/shows:

> And curtain after curtain of gauze was quietly removed, and I saw stars behind stars.... And I saw into the vast soft interior of the universe which was slowly and gently turning itself inside out. (475).

He sees that James was not a secret spy in Tibet but was following Tibetan Buddhism and had spiritual discipline and a quiet disposition rather than snobbishness. Like Danby and Lisa, who start enjoying the ordinariness of life by going about in town, Charles also starts going about in London, going to parties, eating and drinking-- doing the everyday things rather than thinking and trying to find deep meanings. Charles returns back to the momentariness and ordinariness of the present. His situation can be explained very well symbolically with a Buddhist koan: 'Eat when hungry! Sleep when tired!'[16]. That means that, most of the time, when people eat, they eat but at the same time they think of other things in their minds and when they sleep, they do not sleep but dream of many things that they have imprisoned in their minds' caves maybe since their childhood. This is what Charles has been doing, like the other Murdochian mediocre characters. Charles likes eating, like Hilary. However, his mind has been elsewhere all the time and he did not have a sleeping problem at all because he has been sleeping at daytime--metaphorically speaking--and seeing all those optical illusions--the green sea monster, Hartley hanging

---

[16] Shigematsu, p. 49.

herself in the inner room at Shruff End and so on. But as he also points out to the reader, he must have seemed very egotistical in the preceding pages but 'am I so exceptional?' (482), asking the question back to the reader, who now has to question himself/herself or look at himself/herself. He says, 'Yes, I go to parties now. I go about in London, I eat and drink and gossip just as if I were an ordinary person. Well, am I not one?' (482).

Charles also starts appreciating Clement and what she did for him. He was actually in love with Clement; otherwise, he would have searched for Hartley then. And when he met Hartley again, he psychologically started a game with himself; in a way, he feels that he has had to live through all these in order to see that he has fought for a 'phantom Helen', as once James told him: 'Have I indeed relived my love simply in order to explain to myself [and to the reader] that it was a false love, compounded of resentment stored from long ago and the present promptings of mad possessive jealousy?' (491). Clement, he realizes, should be the true subject matter of his history because it was to Clement that he owes his development as a person. He says:

> Clement was the reality of my life, its bread and wine. She made me, she invented me, she created me, she was my university, my partner, my teacher, my mother, later my child, my soul's mate, my absolute mistress. (484)

Clement is the 'unwritten history' and will probably remain so because his fall into the Minn's cauldron, which has started the chain of 'revelations' in him, has also ironically caused his 'loss of memory'. Now the past does not seem like yesterday. His memory falters for the first time :

> Damn it, I was in love with Clement, I must have been, though I tormented her by denying it! Was it possible that, by then, I was relieved that I could not find Hartley ? I have no diary to tell me and even if I had I might not believe it. I cannot now remember the exact sequence of events in those pre-historic years. That we cannot remember such things, that our memory, which is our self, is tiny, limited and fallible, is also one of those important things about us, like our inwardness and our reason. (492) (Emphasis Added)

Murdoch at the end of the novel shows the reader the unimportance of the past because what matters is the present. Charles cannot remember if he was in love with Clement. Memory is weak because it is based on what is past. What about reading then? The answer is, for Murdoch, like memory. As we read through the pages, we as readers want to connect the past, the future and the present but they all fall apart in Murdoch. We cannot form

judgements as we go along based on what we have read because almost always accidental reality kills these forms and death is the only teacher. In a way, Clement's death has helped him to see the reality.

The book is a good illustration again of the difference between mental time and ordinary time. This is very cleverly shown with the chapter titles: Prehistory, History, and Postscript: Life Goes On. Mental time, as the book shows, can hypnotize and separate us from the reality of people and turn them into 'ghosts' (352), dream figures. James calls this 'a mental charade' (353) and it is in a way necessary for the person to go through that stage but not to stay there forever, as 'nothing human is eternal' (ibid.). Indeed, he cannot stay forever even if he wants to because ordinary time does not let things and people stay forever the same. It is messy and accidental. The task is to accept defeat and let the past free. After that freedom will follow automatically with ordinary everyday obligations and interests. Like Hilary, he wants to mold time according to his own form, that is why he starts writing a diary which then becomes a memoir and then an autobiographical novel as the daily interruptions begin to break down his mental time--to live in the past with his childhood love Hartley. Time, like life, goes on and destroys all the limiting forms and knots. He says:

> Time, like the sea, unties all knots. Judgements on people are never final, they emerge from summings up which at once suggest the need of a re-consideration. Human arrangements are nothing but loose ends and hazy reckoning, whether art may otherwise pretend in order to console us. (477)

From the beginning of the book, considering the literary form his book is going to take, he rightly thinks that 'Time will show' (1). His 'diary', 'memoir' and then 'autobiographical novel' becomes, as in *The Black Prince* 'a love story'. Like Bradley's editor P. Loxias, who calls Bradley's story a love story because as he says, 'Man's creative struggle, his search for wisdom and truth, is a love story' (9), Charles also calls his autobiography, in the end, 'a love story' because it is in a way a search for truth and enlightenment 'upon the demon-ridden pilgrimage' (502) that comes after silence, a silent visual meditation; this is the escape from the bardo: 'The past buries the past and must end in silence, but it can be a conscious silence that rests open-eyed' (500).

Charles in the beginning of his autobiography tells that he fails as an actor and a playwright. However, he proves himself a good artist with this novel. Like all the other

male first-person novels, in the end by writing a '*love* story', he manages to show the moral truth in his story for the reader to perceive. His idea of art has also changed. In the beginning of the novel he argues that art drugs people and stoops to conquer. Now he sees that art wakes the spectator/reader . In a way, it is a drug effect but the unconscious state does not involve the outside but the inside. There is no eternal happy tie at the end of art. I would like to quote at length his final revelations about art:

> That no doubt is how the story ought to end, with the seals and the stars, explanation, resignation, reconciliation, everything picked up into some radiant bland ambiguous higher significance, in calm of mind, all passion spent. However life, unlike art, has an irritating way of bumping and limping on, undoing conversions, casting doubt on solutions, and generally illustrating the impossibility of living happily or virtuously ever after; so I thought I might continue the tale a little longer in the form once again of a diary, though I suppose that, if this is a book, it will have to end, arbitrarily enough no doubt, in quite a short while. ...I might take this opportunity to tie up a few loose ends, only of course loose ends can never be properly tied, one is always producing new ones. Time, like the sea, unties all knots. Judgements on people are never final, they emerge from summings up which at once suggest the need of a reconsideration. Human arrangements are nothing but loose ends and hazy reckoning, whatever art may otherwise pretend in order to console us. (477)

He makes fun of the expectations of the reader for a traditional happy ending with happy scenes from nature and some loose ends tied up by unifications. However, one just watches life go on, thinking 'what next I wonder' (502).

CHAPTER III

THE METAPHYSICS OF LIFE

For Murdoch, philosophy is related to simplicity, clear vision and everyday reality. The philosophers portrayed in Murdoch are all in touch with abstract *words* rather than the *world*. The novels discussed in this chapter *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), *The Good Apprentice* (1985) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989) are, in a way, representative of such philosophers, like Professor John Rozanov and Marcus Vallar, and also some would-be philosophers, George McCaffrey, Edward Baltram and Stuart Cuno and Alfred Ludens. All of these questors try to find the secret of the universe or the *meaning* of/for everything. However, as Antagoras, one of the speakers in *Acastos,* says, '*There's nothing deep*, that's the message of the modern world and we've got to live with it!'[1] These novels deal with this gap between theory and forthright action and try to show the inability of the theory-ridden minds, blinded by deep conceptual speculations within their minds' cave, to act in the face of a simple everyday accidental reality.

---

[1] Iris Murdoch, *Acastos: Two Platonic Dialogues*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1986, p. 87.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S PUPIL

'This book,' says Murdoch in an interview with Haffenden, 'is very scattered, and has a lot of people in it, and that's *good*'[2] (Emphasis Added). Indeed, in *The Philosopher's Pupil* we as readers almost know all the inhabitants of the spa town, Ennistone. Murdoch also as usual once again proves her rich, vivid, true to life eye, ear and word for character and nature. The town together with the Ennistonians themselves is, in a way, one can say, painted in such a realistically detailed way that the reader can visualize its river, the Enn, passing through it, the spa buildings, the Institute, the Ennistone Rooms, its streets and bridges. The reader is given a great deal of information about the geography, history, culture, morality and everyday life of the town, rather, of 'Our Town', as the second section of The Prelude Part is significantly called. If the implied reader wants to learn more about the town, s/he may even consult the book *Ennistone, Its History and Antiquities*, published in 1901 by Oscar Bowcock, the brother of James Bowcock, the owner of a shop in the town. It is, in a way, (metaphorically speaking) our town that we live in as readers and inhabitants of it wherever we are in reality--full of different individuals, moral problems, accidents, death, suffering, love, hate, anger, resentment, vanity and so on . It is a 'town with a view', meaning not a dead town in neverwhere and enclosed without any opening to the reader's everyday reality.

The narrator is called 'N' and the town is named after his own name 'N's Town', i.e. 'Ennistone' as he lives and knows everybody in the town where the events recounted took place. N artfully informs the reader that the book is not about him. As far as the story is concerned, he introduces himself just as 'a shadow, Nemo', that is nobody, who will present the story and characters in 'a discreet and self-effacing'[3] manner. This is quite ironic because all through the novel, typical of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century novel style, he adopts a humorous and sarcastic tone towards his 'dramatis personae'. He calls himself 'an observer, a student of human nature, a moralist, a man'; and (like the narrators in Fielding, Thackeray, and Eliot) allows himself 'here and there the discreet luxury of moralizing' (ibid.). In other words, he is nosy and gossipy. He is everywhere

---

[2] Haffenden, p. 32.

[3] *The Philosopher's Pupil*, London: Penguin, 1984, p. 23. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

watching everybody in the town and revealing their secrets to the reader. He is gossiping with the reader about his townsmen and their relationship. In that sense, he is a distinct character in the novel itself. That of course also brings up the question of his reliability as a narrator. Again the reader is expected to use his/her common sense and imagination to decide.

The Philosopher's Pupil as the title clearly denotes tells about the master-pupil relationship. Murdoch says, 'it is about the nature of power in human relations'[4] as the philosopher, John Robert Rozanov, is a powerful and thus destructive person in terms of his will, theoretical and philosophical knowledge and self-freedom. The main characters are again trapped in their past. The book is narrated in three parts: Prelude, which includes i- An Accident and ii-Our Town; The Events in Our Town and then the conclusion part called 'What Happened Afterwards'. Quite significantly the book opens with *an* accident, rather than *the* accident. It is like '*A* Fairly Honourable Defeat'. Here Murdoch is again trying to generalise the accident, meaning any accident that triggers off the chain of contingent events and brings unexpected changes in the lives of the characters in *our* town. This shows once again Murdoch's emphasis on the importance and place of accident in the solutions to many of the characters' problems. George McCaffrey, who is the pupil of the title, suffers from the lack of love and true understanding from the people around him--his mother, brother, wife, his dead father, the people in Ennistone, particularly once his teacher now the world-famous philosopher Rozanov. All his life he has not got the attention and love of the other, which has automatically driven him to despair, brutality, obsession, hatred, anger and so on; in other words, to Plato's cave. The accident starts with a quarrel between George and his wife. They are driving back home from George's mother Alex on a rainy March evening. The narrator right from the beginning puts the reader in the psychological atmosphere of the characters by personifying the nature--the rain and the car:

> It was raining hard. The *malignant* rain *rattled* on the car like shot. Propelled in oblique flurries, it *assaulted* the windscreen, obliterating in a second the *frenetic* strivings of the windscreen wipers. Little *demonic* faces composed of racing raindrops appeared and vanished. The intermittent yellow light of the street lamps, illuminating the grey atoms of the storm, fractured in sudden stars upon the rain-swarmed glass. Bumping on cobbles the car hummed and drummed. (9) (Emphasis Added)

---

[4] Haffenden, p. 31.

The scene is so alive that the reader can see and hear the rain and feel the wetness outside the car. The reader, in other words, is in the car with them. When Stella tells him that he is mad with fear because his former teacher who later rejected him is coming back from America to Ennistone, George attempts unsuccessfully to drown his wife Stella by driving the car right into the river. A similar accident in a way will repeat itself later when George will attempt to kill Rozanov by drowning him in his bath tub. The relationship between Stella and George is based on a power relationship. Stella, we learn, considers George as a challenge. She is, in everybody's eyes in the novel, full of vanity; George, for instance, sees her 'grand like royalty' devoid of any feelings. The gap between George and his wife Stella is, in a way, a result of the failure to love and understand the other. George blames Stella for the death of their son Rufus because Rufus died in an *accident* at home due to Stella's one moment of carelesness--though we do not know how it happened. This has remained with him and with her. Stella talks about his death and how she feels perhaps for the first time only to N; after Rufus's death, everything has been for her--and also for George--'a dream of life', that she feels his loss every second. Guilt, vanity and resentment on the part of Stella and black anger, hatred and resentment again on the part of George create this blindness in them.

John Robert Rozanov, the philosopher of the title, symbolizes the futility of philosophy as theories, or rather as abstract theories, in daily life. He can write and speak of philosophy very efficiently. In fact, he has written elaborate books, like *Logic and Consciousness,* another long book called *Kant and Kantians*, *Against the Theory of Games* and the seminal work *Nostalgia for the Particular;* his book on Plato *Being and Beyond* and then a short book on Plato's *Mathematical Objects*. He also wrote a short book on Greek ships and sea warfare, which is considered a classic! Our narrator, as well as the reader, is sceptical about the practicality of the books he has written. He expresses his surprise and amazement explicitly in a humorous tone in a secret dialogue between the reader and himself. He says in parenthesis, 'There was arguably an engineer as well as a mathematician hidden inside John Robert' (83). In addition to his suddenly-discovered ability in ships and the sea, Rozanov, says our narrator, 'further amazed everyone by writing a book about Luther'. However, as William Eastcote, one of the speakers of good in the story, puts it, while he has been 'letting off fireworks in all directions' and

philosophising about abstract concepts, he turns a blind eye to his present immediate surroundings, i.e. first of all, to his daughter Amy and then to his granddaughter, Hattie. After his wife's death, he resents his daughter and because, what he likes is talking on 'intellectual academic topics' and not emotional muddles, he forms no loving relationship with her. Instead he hires nurses and housekeepers to take care of her and then sends her altogether to a boarding school. As his heart has long ago been 'walled up and frozen'--this reminds us of the image of the dark enclosed cave without the warmth and the light of the sun-- and has become 'an intellectual organ' (306), he repeats the same *frame of mind* towards his granddaughter, Hattie, who becomes an orphan at an early age. He hires Pearl, a gypsy girl, to take care of her while she is studying in America. Rozanov, as stated above, talks to people as long as they interest him intellectually. His only friends actually are William Eastcote from Ennistone and Hugo Belfounder, Jake Donaghue's friend in Murdoch's very first novel *Under the Net*. This reference to Hugo and Jake is very significant in what Murdoch is trying to do: the characters do not live and then die in the limits of one book. They live on inside as well as outside one book as in life. Here is Jake and Hugo whom the reader knows in a story written in 1954 and in a much later book written in 1983, that is after 29 years, the serial reader hears about them again (99). The feeling that this leaves with the reader is the continuity of the characters, the fact that they grow old and die, which is also in a way quite sad--i.e. to learn that Hugo died several years ago. As a reader, one does not, traditionally speaking, expect a character who lives in one novel to die in another novel published almost 30 years after--which is of course quite natural in everyday life. But again art/fiction, for Murdoch, is where you can see and experience real life and secondly, Murdoch defeats the expectations of the reader.

Rozanov represents the theoretical and abstract approach to philosophy which is criticised by Murdoch in her writings. For him, 'Artists have beauty and nature at their side, but a philosopher must contain his world inside his head until ... it be unified, clarified ... until he can become a god ... or else perceive that his all is nothing' (133). Similar to the other Murdochian mediocre characters, Rozanov also has lived all these years 'in the foggy space of his own thoughts' and 'innumerable abstract interconnections' (135). With his obsessive mind, Rozanov

> pursued quarries into thickets, into corners, into nets, and at the end found nothing there... If only he could get down deep enough, grasp the difficulties deep

> deep down and learn to think in an *entirely new way*. He gazed and gazed with amazement at what was most ordinary, most close, until the light of wonder faded, leaving him unenlightened, without clue and without key. Philosophy may be called a sublime ability to say the obvious, to exhibit what is closest. But what is closest is what is farthest. He longed to live with ordinariness and see it simply with clear calm eyes. A *simple* lucidity seemed always close at hand, never achieved. (ibid.)

The Murdochian reader already knows from his/her reading experience that the philosopher is looking for the truth under the net rather than right in front of him. He mistakenly believes that philosophy and art are different, in the sense that philosophy is intellectual knowledge. That is why he sometimes regrets being a philosopher rather than an artist. However, the important question is, as the reader knows, is there really a difference between them in life? Not for Murdoch. Both focus on love, knowledge, clear vision, respect for the other, and the attainment of the good. Thus the simple answer to the question that Rozanov always finds himself asking 'What could he *do* but think?' is obviously 'to see', which brings with it all the *other* good aspects. However, his brooding brings with it fantasies instead of good acts. He makes himself 'a figure of fun', though tragic as well, when the reader learns with shock that he is 'in love' with his granddaughter, Hattie. Unlike the case with Bradley Pearson in *The Black Prince*, the reader cannot feel sympathy for him as he, being such a great 'philosopher', loves his granddaughter in another way. Is the reason really the fact that he has seen her so rarely, as Rozanov argues, that has turned her into a mysterious girl? Yet again one can also ask, considering the Murdochian philosophy of good, 'Would familiarity have dispelled her charm?' (308) It is a rhetorical question to which the Murdochian serial reader would know the answer. If in doubt, the reader has many references to go to in the Murdochian world of fiction. It is not a matter of being 'braver and *more intelligent*' in order to have an ordinary loving relationship with his granddaughter. The philosopher himself is tested in his everyday present reality and he fails, morally speaking, despite his elaborate, well-worded philosophical books. In the book, he suffers from thousands of 'Oh if only's'. He even imagines that having failed with Amy and then Hattie, he might be able at last to 'establish some perfect love relation with *Hattie's* daughter!' (314) Rozanov himself, let alone the reader, is skeptical about it as the italic and the exclamation mark point out. Indeed, Rozanov continues to shock the reader further. In panic, he attempts to marry her off to

Tom McCaffrey, imagining that he would maybe have the chance to comfort her in her early widowhood if Tom dies. Tom McCaffrey, the son of Alan McCaffrey and his second wife Fiona Gates, like so many people in the story, is initially enchanted by the words that the philosopher uses and he accepts, in a way, Rozanov's proposal to marry Hattie. Tom feels elevated as he has the role of a prince marrying a young virgin. When rejected by Hattie, however, he feels humiliation and regret. Iris Murdoch, in scene after scene, shows the intrusion of contingency into the lives of the characters as in the case of the so called 'Slipper House riot'. After the rejection, Tom wants to go and speak with Hattie. Because of a misunderstanding, his friends follow him there with their costumes--as they are planning to stage Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*--thinking that there is a party there. They get drunk and serve as the chorus in Shakespearean plays by repeating Hattie's words when George secretly enters the house in order to see Hattie, his god-like philosopher's granddaughter. Among the spectators are Diane Sedleigh, George's mistress; Valerie Cossom, Father Bernard, Ruby, Alex's maid, and our narrator N. It is on that night that the journalist working for *The Ennistone Gazette* learns from Ruby about the secret plan of the philosopher to marry Hattie off to Tom. He then publishes it in a very 18th-century mocking tone, like 'the siege of the two damsels in their flossy seclusion (with) the revelers, who included the parish priest Reverend Bernard Jacoby, attempted to gain access to the house, and failed, proceeded to wreck the garden, fouling the lawns and damaging valuable trees and shrubs' (400). The account is, of course, not true at all. However, the significance of the incident is that it serves to make the reader see the characters as comic, and 'with this came notions of forgiveness and change' (402) as is the case with George. The other characters take him too seriously, as Tom thinks, but he should be laughed out of it because laughter/comedy makes things/people ordinary.

George's obsession with Rozanov is in fact the result of his hurt vanity resulting from Rozanov's rejection. What Rozanov needs to do is to be kind with George without seeming artificial; 'anything would do', says Father Bernard to him, 'any signal of kindness' (227). N says, 'Pride and vanity and venomous hurt feelings obscured his sun. He saw the world as a conspiracy against him, and himself as a victim of cosmic injustice' (82). So George falls 'in love' with Rozanov, with philosophy, with Rozanov's philosophy--Rozanovism--; and as we know, in Murdoch's fiction, to be <u>in love</u> means not to love somebody or something in the openness and light as the preposition 'in' also

metaphorically speaking points out this imprisonment in his innermost feelings. He wants to attract Rozanov's attention and be the one who in a way translates his philosophy to the world; however, he is a failed artist, just like Rozanov is a failed philosopher and a grandfather. George has just managed to publish a little work at the age of 44 called *A Short History of the Ennistone Museum,* which is, according to our narrator and surely to the reader, 'well written but necessarily of limited importance' (81). George, however, is not a bad person. He saves for example Adam's dog, Zed's life from drowning in the sea. He also does not approve of Alex's treatment of her maid Ruby. However, people take him and his failures too seriously because bad characters attract more attention, as is the case with George. People like to create 'George theories' or 'George legend' (82). He is actually a comic character as Tom realizes this side of him at the Slipper House riot, together with the reader. Alex also later sees him as just 'an ordinary worried muddled mediocre shop-soiled man' (486). Typical of a mediocre character, George wants to find a pattern in things around him, which is the number 44. This desire shows how small coincidences lead people to believe in superstitions and magic. In the Ennistone Baths, the number of his changing room is accidentally 44 but George thinks:

> The number 44, which was the number of the cubby-hole where he left his key, was the same as the number of his house and was also the last two figures in the number of his car. It was also his age. Little things were significant. It was a portent and all portents now were frightening. (97)

It is accidentally also the room number of Rozanov at the Institute, which George will see 'with tremor but without surprise' (220). As said before, the same parallel scene occurs between Stella and George towards the end of the story. George decides to divorce Stella and go to Spain with Diane and Alex. They start arguing and Stella, whether on purpose or not, tells George that after they get divorced she will go to America to visit the philosopher there and talk about philosophy. This infuriates George, as it did in the very beginning of 'the events in our town' when Stella again mentioned the name Rozanov. He decides to kill Rozanov once and for all in order to take him out of his life. He goes to the Institute with 'the crammed blackness of his soul remorse, regret, resentment, loss, anger and terrible longing, that composition of love and hate which can be the most painful and degrading sensation in the world' (298) and drowns Rozanov--or thinks that he has

drowned Rozanov,[5] who has already been dead or unconscious because of the fatal drug he has taken to kill himself--in the bath tub. So we cannot really know for sure if George has really succeeded or not. Again we find the tragi-comic aspect of life and death. Murdoch finds humour even in his death. George also wants to drown Rozanov's notebooks, which is going to form his last philosophical publication, in the bath tub. He goes back to the bathroom and sees the dead floating body of the professor as a 'big hippopotamus'[6]--a funny comparison(536).

The death of the philosopher is quite symbolic; it symbolizes the death of philosophy as abstract ideas, which is also why George drowns Rozanov's philosophical book too. After this accident, when George comes out into the sun, he becomes temporarily blind because the death of the philosopher symbolizes his exit from his dark, mental cave into the sun. When he attempts to look at the very core of the sun, or rather the 'pupil' of the sun, which is impossible, he temporarily loses his vision. George thinks:

> I'll look at the dark part, then I shall be all right. As he watched, the dark part was growing so that now it almost covered the central orb of the sun, leaving only the long burning petals of flame which were darting out on every side. The dark part was black, black, and the petals were a painful shimmering electric gold. The thing shone and shuddered and seemed to be getting closer, while at the same time it gave less and less light and the sky was darkening. It's killing me, thought George, it is a death thing, this is my death that I prayed for. Oh God, if I can only look away, or my eyes will be destroyed in my head. (540)

He becomes blind because one cannot see the centre of things directly and immediately after one comes out of the utter darkness. One has to train his/her eyes first patiently and through observation. It happens step by step on the ladder. However, Murdoch does not banish George's attempt completely because he gains his sight later after a fortnight. From this utter darkness again, Father Bernard rescues him by showing him Rozanov's suicide note.

The narrator describes the events in the style of a theatre play, introducing the characters one by one in the beginning of the events at the prelude section. He says, 'At

---

[5] John Sturrock in his article 'Reading Iris Murdoch' points out Murdoch's world of 'humbling contingency' which is while George thinks that he has murdered Rozanov, it turns out that Rozanov had already taken an overdose. (*Salmagundi*, No 8, Fall 1988, pp. 152-153.)

[6] The presentation of the world-famous professor floating in the bath tub like a hippopotamus is a Murdochian joke to show the same way '[c]haracters in novels partake of the funniness and absurdity and contingent incompleteness and lack of dignity of people in ordinary life'. (*Metaphysics*, p. 97.)

the time of this story Alex is sixty-six, George is forty-four, Brian is forty-one, Tom is twenty, and Adam is eight. And then the story begins with 'The Events in Our Town'. N, like a stage-director, describes the setting and time to the reader as the audience:

> A bird was singing in the cold spring-time afternoon in the garden at Belmont. The sky was radiant on one side, leaden on the other. A rainbow had glowed intensely, then faded quickly.
>
> In the drawing room a wood fire was burning. Beside the fire stood Alexandra McCaffrey, *nee* Stillowen. Near the door stood her old servant, Ruby Doyle. Ruby had just asked Alex about a pension. (39)

This technique serves to detach the reader and puts him/her in the position of an observer of the events alive on stage. N is also very good at directing and catching the scenes as if with a camera throwing light on more than one character doing and thinking things 'in the meantimes'. For example, after the car accident, Stella goes to stay with Gabriel and Brian. Ruby is also there sent by Alex. N focuses his narration one by one like a camera first on Brian, then on Gabriel, then on Ruby and then on Stella and records what they think and see in the meanwhile. The reader can see all the eyes set on Stella:

> At the foot of the sofa stood Brian. He also, with an expression resembling his son's, looked at his sister-in-law with grave concern. He admired and valued Stella....
>
> Gabriel, also gazing at the phenomenon of Stella lying on the sofa, was also at a loss. It had been her idea to bring Stella here....
>
> Standing watching Stella from near the door was Ruby Doyle....Ruby liked Gabriel....She did not like Stella, whom she regarded as the sole cause of George's misfortunes.
>
> Stella, lying on the sofa and looking at the way her upturned feet made a bump in the chequered rug, felt altogether alienated from her customary reality, or was perhaps realizing that she had not, and for some time now had not had, any customary reality. (104-105)

This focus of the light of the camera on people 'in the meantime' is very clear in the following scene when there is a power cut in the town. The camera first finds Diane inside a shop, the only shop in Ennistone owned by the Bowcocks. She immediately hurries out for fear that someone should accuse her of stealing. Then the light shines upon Valerie Cossom and Nesta Wiggins trying to write a Women's Lib manifesto in Nesta's house. They shout down the stairs for light from Nesta's father Dominic Wiggins. Then the camera finds Father Bernard with Miss Dunbury, who has had a heart attack. Meanwhile,

> At number 34 The Crescent, William Eastcote, who had been sitting at his desk and looking at his will, was suddenly plunged into a twilit darkness. He had made a careful rational will... (323).

In short, N is always everywhere and knows everything about the characters. For instance, Rozanov goes to the Baths on Saturday and makes a sensation there as everybody usually goes to the Baths on Saturdays and he says that 'I was there myself on that particular Saturday' (85). He was there at the 'Slipper House riot' as he was coming from a 'learned meeting' at a house nearby and the noise 'drew a number of late home-comers including myself (N, your narrator)' so he was able to witness some of the things happened that night (385). After the incident, he followed George, who was also followed by Father Bernard and two other women. He says:

> George ran away down the road, turning in the direction of the canal. In the confusion not everyone noticed (*but I did*) that he was followed by two women, first Valerie Cossom, and then Diane. Following the two women padded the priest, Father Bernard, and after Father Bernard padded I. (Ibid) (Emphasis Added)

We learn that he had an argument with Rozanov. He knows all the people in the town, and everybody there knows him. In fact, most of the people do what he tells them to do, except for Stella, as Brian says. He watches and follows people secretly. He finds Valerie Cossom 'the most beautiful girl in Ennistone' (390). He is, in short, a peculiar person. He is, as George calls him, 'an impotent voyeur' (489). In fact, George surprises the reader by being the only character who is aware of N's secret inquisition. He is aware that N has been following him all along. He says to Stella, 'I saw his sly old face in the street, he's always after me' (489). This is quite significant in the sense that the narrator thinks that he is the only person who can watch other people secretly and have access to their privacy; but here is George, who has seen him watching him. He thus reveals himself not as 'a discreet and self-effacing narrator' at all because the reader can learn about his conspiracy with him in-between the lines and in-between the parenthesis as is the case in the quotation above-- '(but I did)'. For instance, Father Bernard does not want to tire himself much by walking with Rozanov and talking philosophy at the same time:

> He therefore suggested that since he had to pay a brief pastoral visit at Blanch Cottages *(a lie),* they should go by Westwold and the Glove Factory and the Roman bridge and through Victoria Park and ... (they) had crossed the bridge when John Robert kindly remembered that the priest had forgotten to call at Blanch Cottages. (186) (Emphasis Added)

The word 'a lie' in parenthesis is addressed to the reader. It serves the same purpose as an aside in a play. N was also there looking out of his window early in the morning when Tom kidnapped Hattie from Rozanov:

> Who, drawing back his curtain in the early morning saw, in that clear sunny light, through empty streets, Tom McCaffrey running away with Hattie Meynell? I did. (529)

Hattie in the beginning seemed a weak and stupid girl but she proves her strength as a character with the way she tries to handle Rozanov after he reveals his love for her--although she is just seventeen and has not studied philosophy. She tells Rozanov to try to be ordinary, to be together as 'loving relations, as loving friends, as *family*' (522) but Rozanov wants to suffer and to console himself by this suffering; he says to her,

> 'It's not like that, Hattie, and cannot be. I ought to stop this conversation but I cannot bear to, I wish it could go on forever, it's agony but what will come after will be worse. It's wicked to talk to you like this because it's an image of things which are unspeakable and impossible, and that is why I want to prolong it - oh the pain-' (ibid.)

Of course the reader does not want to express pity to Rozanov's romantic love towards his granddaughter, whom he 'sees' as 'an image of purity and innocence'--the common image seen in the fantasy of the Murdochian mediocre characters (526).

As opposed to both George and Rozanov, who have lost all their sense and vision of ordinary reality, Adam, despite his age--he is eight--, has the attention, respect and love in him to be good. He is aware of the otherness of the other. Tom asks Adam to give him an idea for a pop song, and Adam comes up with a small Murdochian story and a

title called 'It's only me' (179). The story is as follows: 'There's two snails on a leaf, one on each side. Then one comes round the leaf and says to the other one, "It's only me"' (ibid.). He also identifies himself with Rufus, the dead son of Stella and George. He dreams about him and about Zed, his dog. Indeed, the names Adam and Zed are symbolic; they are, in Adam's words, 'Alpha and Omega' (45), the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet and of life. Adam has the room and the patience to show loving attention towards everything from A to Z, from a cracked jug, to a smudge upon the kitchen wall which resembled a bear. He also transmits his goodness to other people. Gabriel, for example, acquires her animism from Adam. He helps her feel secure and content in her interior castle. This is a sort of animism,

> whereby everything, not only the flies which had to be caught and let out of windows, the wood lice which had to be tenderly liberated into the garden, the spiders which were to be respected in their corners, but also the knives and forks and spoons and cups and plates and jugs, and shoes, and poor socks that had no partners, and buttons which might become uncherished and lost, had all a life and being of their own, and friendliness and rights. All these became an extension of her existence as they were an extension of his and in this common being, as in a vulnerable extended body, she secretly mingled with her son. (61)

As said before, William Eastcote is the speaker of the good in the novel. The speech that he makes in the church affects the listeners as well as the reader. He talks about the advancement of science, on the one hand, and the suffering and blindness that people experience on the other. He advises a return to simplicity, to a simple orderly open and truthful life. He says:

> 'My dear friends, we live in an age of marvels. Men among us can send machines far out into space. Our homes are full of devices which would amaze our forebears. At the same time our beloved planet is ravaged by suffering and threatened by dooms. Experts and wise men give us vast counsels suited to vast ills. I want only to say something about simple good things which are as it were close to us, within our reach, part still of our world. Let us love the close things, the close clear good things, and hope that in their light other goods may be added. (204)

After Rozanov's death, the narration turns into a long account in which N narrates 'What Happened Afterwards', as the last section is entitled. The accident, his death, brings many changes in the lives of the characters as if it has made them open their eyes and wake up from the customary sleep. Father Bernard and Diane Sedleigh decide to go to Greece via Paris. However, Father Bernard loses Diane in Paris, so he goes to Greece alone and starts to lead a monk-like life on a mountain by the sea teaching the love of simple things in everyday life. In a letter that Father Bernard sends from Greece, he tells the enlightenment that he has gained there, the futility of philosophy and the importance of the 'infinitely great and utterly demanding present' as opposed to the 'supernatural elsewhere' because he says, 'Metaphysics and the human sciences are made impossible by *the penetration of morality into the moment to moment conduct of ordinary life:* the understanding of this fact *is religion'* (553). That is also, according to Father Bernard, what Rozanov saw before he killed himself. Diane Sedleigh goes to see the hotel that George used to mention to her and there accidentally meets Milton Eastcote, a cousin of William Eastcote. They get married and live happily in Paris. Emmanuel Scarlet-Taylor, Tom's friend, and Pearl have also 'done well' (551), although without any romance. Pearl starts studying in London with the money that she has saved from Rozanov. Emma gets his degree and becomes a fellow in Balliol College, Oxford. Tom and Hattie get married. Tom also gets his degree and plans to start teaching, while Hattie is learning Russian. George and Stella come together again, but this time the relationship between them is quieter. George is now 'gentle, polite, quite humorous (though he smiles little), attentive to his wife, interested in the details of everyday existence, even has a modest social life' (547-548). Stella, according to N, has changed also: 'She was always possessively watchful, but now seems to me, when I see them together, to be more tender and "sentimental"' (548). Alex, on the other hand, has never recovered from the accidental fall down the stairs in her house after a dispute with Ruby. However, she is quieter now; her 'bright, restless power' has gone. Ruby is gentler and more affectionate towards Alex.

There are maybe many questions left unanswered after the death of Rozanov that cause confusion and various speculations in the minds of N and the reader himself/herself. These questions are: But did Rozanov actually take the poisonous compound, did such a thing even exist? What really caused his death? Was he, as is possible, already dead by the time George immersed him? And even if Rozanov did swallow a supposed lethal dose,

would it necessarily have proved fatal? Supposing Father Bernard had arrived before George (as he might have done had he not gone first to Hare Lane)? Could the philosopher have been resuscitated? What would the law have judged George to be guilty of? And what indeed, asks N to the reader, as things stand, is he guilty of? (543) Who caused the 'provocation' in George's sudden attempt to murder Rozanov--John Robert's final letter or Stella mentioning his name to George? The answers, as usual, are bound to remain opaque due to the contingency of life. N says, 'Such are the chance 'triggers' which may determine our most fateful actions and yet remain opaque particulars with which science can do little' (556).

Although the reader may think that everybody in the story seem to go through a change and the book is coming to an 'end' because of the plot but our narrator N confuses the minds of the reader more by pointing out that just like this one, 'The end of any tale is arbitrarily determined' (558). Because the end is artificially determined, the question remains: Is all well that ends well? The reader may also wonder how N knows so many things about all these people. Partly, he likes listening to other people and as we have read he has spoken to almost all the characters about the events in the town; he has had access to the letters. Most important of all, he has had the assistance of a 'certain lady', by which he means Stella[7] as far as the plot goes--as he has had long conversations with her about George--, and Murdoch--tongue-in-cheek, as far as the novel goes. However, the best possible answer is again a question: 'Where does one person end and another person begin?'[8]

---

[7] Murdoch admits in her interview with John Haffenden that there is a 'structural problem with the role of Stella' in the book because after the unsuccessful murder attempt of George in the opening of the novel, Stella disappears from the story until the end of the book. And Haffenden rightly points out that 'the reader may be rather sceptically surprised to discover that Stella has in fact been harboured by N'. In a typical Murdochian joke, she also expresses her own surprise in finding Stella in N's house, 'I never solved the problem of Stella. She had to be put off stage for a while, and it occurred to me later on that she was with N' (Haffenden, p. 32). This being a playful joke on the part of Murdoch, it serves very well her intention to create 'a house fit for free characters', characters that are free in ways in which they even surprise their creators.

[8] Murdoch in *Metaphysics* talks about the tendency of the reader and the critic as well as the artist to move toward 'closing the object and making it into a limited whole' but, she says, they are, 'as real people, unfinished and full of blankness and jumble; only in our illusioning fantasy are we complete' (p. 97).

THE GOOD APPRENTICE

The Good Apprentice (1985) is, as part of the Good series, full of moral questions that people come face to face with in every day life. The book is divided into three parts: The Prodigal Son, Seegard, and Life After Death. As the title of the prelude part is called, the story is based on the Parable of the Prodigal (or Lost) Son in the Bible. As far as the action part of the story goes, it begins with the recounting of an accident involving the death of Mark Wilsden, a friend of the main character Edward Baltram. Edward (aged 20) gives Mark, who is staying in his small flat in Camden Town, a drugged sandwich without Mark's permission and knowledge. Under the effect of the drug, Mark loses his self-consciousness, which, as the reader will remember, was the case with Hilary in *A Word Child* who also enters into an unself-conscious state after eating a drugged cake --which is for Murdoch a much-desirable but difficult-to-achieve virtue--experiences the death of his ego and hence gains vision. The narrator says, '...he was experiencing the Good Absolute, the vision of visions, *the annihilation of the ego.*'[9] However, this vision does not last long. Edward, receiving a phone call from his friend Sarah Plowmain, goes to see her leaving Mark lying asleep in his locked flat. His one moment of thoughtlessness and irresponsibility quite accidentally causes the death of Mark, who during that brief 20 minutes of Edward's absence, in that state of unconsciousness, walks out of the window and falls dead. This 'accident' switches on 'the machine' in Edward's and Mark's mother's mind giving way to the feelings of anger, hatred, resentment, self-consolatory suffering, guilt, remorse and so on, which form the main part of the story.

Edward Baltram is the step-son of Harry Cuno, once married to Chloe, now a widow but having a secret affair with Midge McCaskerville, the wife of Thomas and Chloe's younger sister. People try to help Edward to get over this accident and we find that each shows his/her moral vision through their reaction and 'perception' of this accident and its consequences. Harry, his step-father for instance, tells Edward:

> 'This is a small incident in your life, it's almost nothing to do with you at all, you'll see that later, all life is accidental, of course we blunder against each other, and there are wicked men, but you're not one. Buck up, stop thinking about

---

[9] *The Good Apprentice*, London: Penguin, 1986, p. 1. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

> yourself, *that's* what's wrong, don't let this business lodge in your soul, it isn't anything, it isn't deep, it isn't a great spiritual drama... (17)

What Harry says to Edward here may seem to present Harry as a 'good' character. However, he then suggests that Edward should forget about it as if it were 'a bit of mud or a bit of ash'. Through Harry, Murdoch, in a way, is answering indirectly to a possible misunderstanding on the part of the reader about the degree of responsibility and suffering involved in such similar cases. The thing is not to close one's eyes to one's responsibilities and love towards the other, even though that person is dead, but to suffer, yes to suffer, but purely and quietly not *forgetting* the demands of one's immediate attention. The incorrectness of Harry's thoughts is shown when he attempts to pick up a cinder from the grate and burns his fingers. Harry believes in the idea of living eternally in the present, in the sun, with nothing but the truth, rather than the lost past or lies. However, the Murdochian reader is by now in a position to see the selfishness behind his love for reality and the present. He says to Midge, 'He lives eternally who lives in the present' and in this present--or rather his present--what is important is only their love: 'Our love is the truth, the concrete, that's what's true, the truth of our whole being' (91). His idea of living in the truth and the sun is to tell their love to everybody. The sun he means here is not Plato's sun but his self-loving ego because the morally good behaviour is to think of the other in the same present, to respect his/her otherness--here the fact that she is married to Thomas and they have a 13-year old son called Meredith. He completely disregards the existence of Thomas and Meredith.

Stuart Cuno, Harry's real son and the good apprentice of the title of the book, tells Edward to suffer without anger, resentment, regret, hatred, or the feeling of guilt because even though he cannot suddenly 'jump out of it all', he can 'think about it in a bit of clear light' by holding onto something good, like the birds singing, 'some poetry, something from the Bible, Christ' (47) or look at something with love, like the azalea Midge gave to him. Suffering is not like 'a riddle with a magic solution' (45); it requires moral discipline and selfless, loving, attentive meditation of the other with one's eyes open to the beauty and goodness around one. However, his talk with Edward is not a success because Edward cannot really see and understand the death of Mark yet. What he sees is his shame, loss of honour and his self-esteem resulting from his connection with Mark's death. He cannot *see*

Mark as *dead* as he is alive in the form of a fire 'in the chamber of his mind' (11). He says to himself:

> he was arrested forever in the place of his crime. Something blood-stained and heavy would travel on with him always, through all of his life. How does one live after total wickedness, total failure, total disgrace? (10)

Edward wants to suffer in order to get his honour back and to purify his name. However, we know that for Murdoch, suffering is not a means of purification; on the contrary, 'Suffering as a punishment would be a consolation.'[10] In *The Sovereignty of Good*, she says,

> Even suffering itself can play a demonic role here, and the ideas of guilt and punishment can be the most subtle tool of the ingenious self. The idea of suffering confuses the mind and in certain contexts (the context of 'sincere self-examination' for instance) can masquerade as a purification. [11]

This suffering with resentment, hatred, and anger is also what Mrs Wilsden, Mark's mother, feels towards Edward. Through these characters Murdoch seems to be offering us some answers to moral questions that every one of us as readers might come across in similar situations in our daily lives. Like Edward, Mrs Wilsden loses her vision, metaphorically speaking, as she says to Edward in her letter, 'my mind is blackened by your hateful image' (375). These letters help Edward keep the memory of Mark and his guilt burning fresh in his mind. Typical of Murdoch, although we have a serious accident resulting with the death of Mark, the tone of the implied author is comic. The implied author tells the reader that Mark's body was cremated and his ashes were scattered and 'It was as well. If that smeared and broken body had still existed, buried somewhere, Edward would have had to go and lie upon it' (12). For Murdoch, life with all its tragedies is still comic because 'fortunately for the human race, the comic is everywhere, it is in the air which...we breathe'[12] and literary art is 'a tragi-comic, or perhaps one should say sad-comic, condensation.'[13] As seen, she differentiates between tragedy and real sorrow,

---

[10] *Metaphysics*, p. 108.
[11] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 68.
[12] *Metaphysics*, p. 92.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

because tragedy belongs only to art; whereas, real life is not tragic[14] because one cannot *express* the horrors of real life, like wars, in art. Willy's father's accidental death in Egypt, for instance, is a very good illustration to the sad-comic aspect of life. When Willy was a child, he saw his father being killed by a camel, who was also shot dead afterwards. The narrator's comic tone is there again when he says, 'The camel, perhaps mistaking Brightwalton senior for a driver who had ill-treated him, knocked him down and knelt on him.' (22). Since then Willy has been thinking of this incident all the time. This death which was an 'unheroic' death--in the romantic sense of the word--with no dignity on the part of poor Brightwalton senior, is nothing but the sign of the contingency of life. Murdoch explains this as, 'Characters in novels partake of the funniness and absurdity and contingent incompleteness and lack of dignity of people in ordinary life.'[15] Similarly, this sad and serious incident has later become a joke among Willy's friends. The narrator says:

> This tragic business had, in the callous hurly-burly of social life, become a joke, and people warned each other how important it was never to mention camels in Willy's presence, and how mysteriously difficult it was to keep off the subject. (22)

The novel also brings into focus the difference between good art and bad art. Edward in order to forget about his terrible feeling of guilt, remorse and suffering, starts reading thrillers. Meredith is also found watching secretly pornographic video cassettes. Midge and Harry consider this natural and as something that Meredith should get 'vaccinated' against at an early age, as 'Pornography,' says Harry, 'is part of the modern scene, it's something we all really like, and it's perfectly harmless' (32). Stuart, the good apprentice and the speaker of good in the story, opposes this idea saying:

> Pornography isn't compulsory, people can recognize what's bad and keep away from it....What children get used to and regard as permissible at an early age can weaken all their moral defenses, it's an early training in cynicism, and as deep and as lasting as any other training. It's not a bit like vaccination, it's more like acquiring an incurable virus, something that degrades and corrupts, and the corruption of children is an *abomination*. (32)

---

[14] For a detailed discussion of Murdoch's idea of comic and tragic aspects of life, see Section 5 in *Metaphysics*.

[15] *Metaphysics*, p. 97.

We know that good art, for Murdoch, offers knowledge, clear vision, morality and goodness. What the reader or viewer experiences is not just pure delight; it is something moral as well. And bad art is morally damaging. Murdoch defines pornography as 'really damaging and degrading."[16] She also considers the thriller as self-consolatory fantasy. She says,

> One can see how the thriller or the sentimental picture may be simply a stimulus to the private fantasies of the reader or viewer. Pornography is the extreme instance of this private use of 'art'.[17]

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, she argues that we should feel socially responsible about 'what in our society people [including the children] always or never see' because perception or vision is both 'evaluation and inspiration, even at the level of "just seeing".'[18]

Thomas McCaskerville, the psychiatrist, tries to heal Edward not through drugs, which is quite unlike Ursula Brightwalton's--the family doctor-- method, but through his own will, or 'an act of well-intentioned *concentration*' (71) since it is a psychological disease of the mind. Harry asks Thomas, 'Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow?' (18). The answer is no, because Edward should go through his pilgrimage alone, which will be a moral pilgrimage, even though there may, rather will, be defeat in the end; he will still find *the* path. Thomas says to Harry, 'The patient must minister to himself' (19) and they have to be 'spectators of that change' for a time (37). Edward is suffering from 'neurosis', whose symptoms Murdoch explains as follows:

> 'Neurosis' is characterised, almost in a popular sense defined, by a mechanical repetitive imprisoning of the mind. The idea of the unreality of the self mediates the idea of death, which has a greater hold upon the religion of the east. It is not difficult to distinguish between absolute or deathly pain, and what one might call relative or art pain. The latter can of course be severe, but is different because it can be manipulated and does not altogether destroy one's ordinary world and sense of one's being. It does not radically alter one's consciousness, but can be looked at with some degree of detachment.[19]

---

[16] Magee, p. 272.
[17] Ibid., p. 272.
[18] *Metaphysics*, p. 329.
[19] *Metaphysics*, p. 139.

And then Murdoch continues which describes Edward's case exactly: 'The sufferer can become an artist in relation to his own consciousness, he can for instance dramatise the situation.'[20] According to Thomas, Edward's pain is due to the fact that his proud ego, his self-illusioned picture of himself is defeated, yet Edward cannot bear its 'death', the death of its illusions. He should not feel guilt and remorse but suffer quietly and truthfully with his sense of guilt, *recognising* the events and its consequences because he says,

> Truthful remorse leads to the fruitful death of the self, not to its survival as a successful liar. *Recognize* lies and reject them at every point. You want to unhappen what has happened, you feel anger and hate at what prevents this, and which you see as the cause of your "loss of honour". These old deep "natural" desires appear to you to be irresistible. Check them, see them to be illusions and lies. Move beyond them into an open and quiet area which you will find to be an entirely new place. You have never been in such a place before and the person who is there is a new person. You say you live in pain. Let it be the pain of the death of the old false self, and the life-movement of the new real truthful self. (71-72)

To come back to the idea of the sufferer as an artist, due to his self-consolatory suffering, Edward has also become an eloquent 'artist'; he describes his pain with many images such as 'captivity, machinery starvation, electrocution, the dying chrysalis, the plunging aeroplane, the dead butterfly' (77). To enact his own 'myth' in order to recover from this state, Thomas sends Edward to Seegard, his real father's house for a change of place so that Edward can create his own 'individual work of art' (ibid.). That takes us back to the very opening of the book with the words of the Prodigal Son, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son' (1). Seegard, seeming a magical, eerie place serves the realization of Edward's own myth very well: the step-mother and her two daughters, Bettina and Ilona, all having long red hair and wearing the same clothes, a half-senile demonic-looking man, Jesse Baltram, Edward's real father, locked-up in the tower, Ilona dancing without her feet touching the ground, and strange loud sounds heard in the darkness of the night. Edward, in a way, is like the male version of Cinderella, going to see his step-mother and his step-sisters and performing endless domestic tasks:

---

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

> He washed dishes, he worked the washing machine (powered by the precious generator), he dug and weeded the vegetable garden, he filled the oil lamps, he watered the potted plants, on one occasion he helped Bettina to cement cracks in the wall of the stables, he fetched rain water for drinking and cooking ('The spring water is full of nitrates'), he peeled onions and potatoes, he chopped herbs with very sharp knives, he sawed and carried wood, he fed the stoves, he swept the vast slated floor of the Atrium. He dusted. He was touched and secretly gratified to find how extremely *dirty* Seegard was in spite of the ceaseless activity of its inmates. (125)

Thinking of his father as 'a holy man' who can cure him by forgiving his sin and giving him his love, Edward finds his father one day locked up at the tower. It is quite symbolic that the key to his room is hidden behind the carved message over the fire place that says, *I am here. Do not forget me*. Ilona describes it as 'a general love message' (165). In other words, *I am here* means things and people that need our attention; our solution to our troubles are right *here* in the present around us. One just needs to *remember* to look at it. The key is there. Thence Edward finds Jesse. He has always mistakenly thought that 'Jesse was elsewhere' (183). However, as he connects everything with his need for Jesse, he looks at the three women through Jesse and he feels scared:

> Is this a holy place where pure women tend a wounded monster, a mystical crippled minotaur? Or have I been lured into a trap, into a plot which will end with my death? I cannot leave. When Jesse said 'I want to see your youth' how could he not hate me for being so young and so alive? He is capable of rage and hate—and lust too perhaps. Have the women lured me here to punish me, to execute some communal revenge upon Chloe? I am the perfect victim, the fine upstanding youth with the wrong mother. Or is it just that, for some reason I shall never know, I have to take part in the final act of a drama which only incidentally concerns me and in which I shall be casually annihilated? God, how they frighten me, all of them. Jesse said they'd poison him. They could poison me any time. (201-202)

Apart from Edward, Seegard also attracts the other characters there. Edward meets Brownie, Mark's sister, at a railway cottage near Seegard. The cottage turns out to belong to the mother of Sarah Plowmain, whom Edward hates the sight of after the death of Mark, for which he partly blames her. As we know Murdoch writes in the consciousness of a slow and attentive reader. If the reader *remembers*, in the beginning of the novel at Sarah's flat, Sarah told, at least started telling everything about herself and her mother, that they know Jesse through his second wife, May Barnes, who is Sarah's mother's friend in the past before she married him. She also tells him that they have got a cottage there; at

least she implies because she says that she knows 'that bit of coast, my ma's got a cottage'(5). However, because Edward was not listening to her at the time, he missed these details so he cannot understand what Sarah, her mother and Brownie are doing there. Brownie wants to meet Edward to learn about his side of the death of her brother's story. She tells Edward that she does not hate him. She understands his suffering also but he should go on with his life and education. Edward falls 'in love' with Brownie. Of course this is what the Murdochian reader has expected from Edward, who is suffering from a similar case to the other Murdochian mediocre characters, who are all in search of something or somebody that they have lost in the past.

The climactic accident that starts the revelations and in a way the death of Jesse occurs when one night Harry's car breaks down near Seegard. Harry and Midge have been coming from a weekend trip together, Thomas being away for the weekend. They introduce themselves as Mr and Mrs Bentley to Mother May, Bettina and Ilona, not knowing that it is Seegard, where Edward and Stuart are also present. Contrary to Edward, Stuart, having known of their secret affair from Meredith, realizes the situation. While all are in the living room, Jesse comes down and kisses Midge, confusing her with Chloe. Jesse then points his stick to Stuart and says, 'There's a dead man, you've got a corpse there, it's sitting at the table, I can see it' (292). This is quite interesting because we know that Stuart is the apprentice to good and Jesse, who has had demonic forces with him and who as Mother May says to Edward 'is an incarnation of evil. He has opened the door of evil and seen within' (238), sees him as an opposite force, and as Bettina will explain to Edward later, 'There was a collision of forces' (478) and due to Stuart as the agent of good (the good source of death), Jesse at that moment sees the good and comes to terms with reality. It is significant that his mysterious death happens immediately after that night.

According to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Stuart is the elder brother 'who never went away'. He does not leave the ordinary, everyday reality in order to enact a myth, which is quite unlike Edward. Although he is the apprentice in the title of the novel, he does not *play* a significant role as far as the action goes. Edward, being the charming and interesting character, is in the centre of action. However, like Tallis, Stuart helps initialize the changes with his mere existence as the model for morality, goodness and death in life even if he does not do anything sometimes. Midge says to him, 'Oh you've spoilt everything *just by existing*, by being there, by being you' (330) (Emphasis Added). He is

wrongly *seen* as 'a blunt instrument' (329), a nightmare figure, a horrible ghost' (330) by Midge; 'a by-product' by Harry (396); a 'detestable complacent prig', 'a charlatan' who enjoys 'cruelty and power' by Elspeth Macran, Sarah's feminist mother (387); a 'horrible and hateful person' by Mrs Wilsden (ibid.); and 'stupid' by Sarah herself (388). This is all because he is the non-dramatic and inelaborate character. He is inelaborate because he cannot express himself or theorize about everyday things--he is after all not a philosopher's *pupil*, but an ordinary clumsy *apprentice*. That is why when Thomas asks to meet him again to talk about deep moral issues, Stuart does not accept this. He says, 'Oh, I don't think we'll ever talk *like* this again, it wouldn't do. Things get spoilt by being talked about' (147) and life is not a matter of 'explaining' things because life is contingent and messy and 'All sorts of important things have no explanations' (143) like the 'plaits' of girls' hair in a museum in Auschwitz. There is just innocent and pointless suffering.

In the third section of the story called 'Life After Death', the revelations start. Edward leaves Seegard after the long disappearance of Jesse, whom he actually saw floating dead in the river. As his mind does not want to accept this he decides to consider it a simulacrum. He leaves Ilona, who begs him to take her with him to London. His obsession is now to continue his search for Jesse and for Brownie in London. Stuart asks him to speak with Midge to make her see the senselessness of her suddenly falling in love with him. Actually, Stuart tells her himself that the reason for her sudden cry of love is the fact that she is just 'suffering from shock, from finding me and Edward at that place—naturally you resent my having been there' (371). However, his *talk* is not a success again. Edward, on the other hand, as a neutral onlooker in this complex relationship between Thomas, Midge, Harry and Stuart, helps Midge more to see the reality. Edward sees Midge's reason for falling in love with Stuart, who represents for her 'an escape' from having to choose between Thomas or Harry. Edward calls Stuart as something external, 'a sort of jolt, a solid entity, something you bump into' (469) and says, 'This idea of your being in love with Stuart seems to be perfect nonsense, it's daft, it's false, it can't be so' (468). The talk with Edward, which was so quiet and sensible, makes Midge see the 'event' in a different light. She thinks:

> Stuart had seemed so authoritative, so complete, something lethal making all her previous existence worthless, inspiring that terrible craving, that pain, which could only be alleviated by his presence and feared like death itself the possibility

> of banishment. Edward, who had been suffering so terribly himself (this fact only occurred to Midge later) appeared here on the side of the ordinary world where absolute choices between life and death did not take place, where reason, gentleness, compassion, compromise brought about viable ways of life. (486)

With sadness yet hope and faith, Midge goes back to Thomas, whom she admits that she has been loving all along. In order to have the strength to leave him, however, she has just been trying to hate him. Her moral pilgrimage is completed because she gains 'anamnesis'. She says to herself:

> Now she was free to discover all her old feelings for Thomas, or rather to find out what had been happening to them, as if she had *come back* to find them *grown, developed, refined,* and most evidently powerful. Had she not always known that Thomas was better, stronger, more lovable, more interesting? Thomas had won the game. (491) (Emphasis Added)

Thomas wins the game because he puts aside his feeling of resentment and his hurt pride. When Thomas learns about this secret affair through the article published in the newspaper which is a part of Jesse's memoirs written by Mother May, he leaves the house instantly, concerned with his hurt dignity, and goes to Quitterne, his countryside cottage. Harry comes to see him there and insults him. He tells Thomas that Midge loves Harry and finds Thomas a cold person. While Harry is thinking, 'I've won', Thomas takes off his glasses and opens a drawer in his desk in order to find something to clean them. Harry thinks that he is reaching for his gun so he jumps up. This atmosphere of misunderstanding and tension is eased by a very typical Murdochian scene: the entrance of a robin through an open window. The bird connects them together without them being conscious of it. They act together to help the bird fly out of the open window again. The interruption caused by the bird is 'providential' as Thomas also thinks because Thomas has been in a state of shock and anger. In face of Harry's 'deadly and awful insults' he feels that he should have responded in a violent way but he could not so he was about to burst into tears in front of Harry (429). After the interval due to the entrance of the robin, Harry says he is sorry before he leaves and Thomas accepts his apology with a wave of his hand. Thomas goes back to Midge and kisses her hand. As we know for Murdoch, small acts or gestures made without its seeming artificial, like here him kissing her hand, unite people.

Talking to Midge about her daft love for Stuart has made Edward look at his immediate surroundings that need his attention. He has felt 'good, perhaps simply because it had aroused some ordinary animal-like curiosity about the world outside himself which had been dead for such a long time' (473). He accidentally meets Ilona in Mrs Quaid's flat, where he goes to have a psychic seance in order to learn about his father. Ilona has cut her hair short and is working as a dancer in Soho. He leaves her again because after he discovers the dead body of Jesse among the weeds in the river, his sole concern and duty is now to find Brownie and get married to her. When he goes to Seegard for the last time to make his peace with Mother May and Bettina, he begins to see things that have happened in his life more clearly. He realizes that Bettina is a separate individual, not part of a trio, which is as he has always seen her. He learns that he was welcomed to Seegard by them after they received a letter from Thomas McCaskerville, which was telling them his misadventure and asking them to entertain him there for a change of environment. Edward has all this time been thinking that it has been their idea to bring him there; he has felt himself the longed-for son. He gets disappointed to hear from Bettina that Jesse did not really know or remember who Edward was. However, later Edward finds Jesse's will hidden behind the radiator in Jesse's room which was saying that he leaves everything he has to 'my dear much loved son, Edward Baltram' (482). The tree men, who have been 'seen' by Edward as hostile and strange men also change in our eyes. They first helped Edward carry the corpse of Jesse from the river to the house; and secondly Edward notices that the two witnesses who signed on Jesse's will were the tree men, Tom Dickey and Bob O'Brein, who once seemed so supernatural. By revealing their names towards the end of the novel, Murdoch turns them into ordinary people in the reader's eyes. They also come alive in the eyes of the reader as individual people. Edward destroys the will because he does not need the money and he does not want to disinherit Mother May and *his sisters*. He has got what he has wanted to know, a sign that shows that Jesse recognized him when he saw him and he had loved his son. He says, 'The will had performed its only good important task of *reminding* Edward, for he had always known it since the first moment when he had opened the bedroom door, that his father knew him and loved him' (483). Back in London Edward receives a lot of letters from other people that show him the existence of other people around him. Murdoch, in most of her fiction, uses letters which

aim to prove the authenticity of her fictional world to the reader. Edward, like Midge also gains 'anamnesis'. For instance, he receives an invitation to a party from Victoria Gunn and another invitation to a dance from Julia Carson-Smith. However, initially he cannot think of who these people are. He also receives a letter from Sarah Plowmain, explaining her feelings when Edward left her room that night without saying anything and never called her again, and when she first thought that she was pregnant from him but which turned out to be a false alarm. Sarah also changes positively in the eyes of the reader. The reader understands her plight. Edward receives a 'good' letter from Mrs Wilsden which forgives Edward. She says that she has understood his suffering and pain when 'an angel has spoken on your behalf' (504). This shows that Stuart's attempt to do good has worked, though it did not seem to be working at that time as he was mocked and insulted by Elspeth and Mrs Wilsden when he went to speak with her. After all these good revelations, however, Edward's obsession for Brownie still continues; for him, 'Nothing was left now except Brownie, that was all that remained of his task, his ordeal, his penitence, that was all and everything, for everything depended on that' (501). Edward sees everything totally when he receives a letter from Brownie, who tells him that she is going to get married to Giles Brightwalton, the son of Willy and Ursula Brightwalton, and settle in America and leave Mark behind in peace:

> And I hope that you too, dear Edward, will be at peace, feeling no guilt or self-destructive distress about the past. No one was to blame. Life is full of terrible things and one must look into the future and think about what happiness one can create for oneself and others. There is so much good that we can all do, and we must have the energy to do it. (506)

Brownie's letter brings Edward back to reality and the ordinary life. He realizes that his feeling of dependence on her has been a pretension; she has been a substitute for Mark in his eyes. Just like Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, The Sea*, who in the end realizes that Mary Hartley Smith has not been his story at all because all has been just a part of his fantasy/ his dream, Edward also realizes that Brownie has not been a real part of his 'story' after all, he has 'contrived and imagined' it all (507). He then remembers the words of Harry, Stuart and Thomas, such as,

> personal responsibility is a fiction, you're simply ill, it's an illness, you will recover, think of it as a spiritual journey, your image of yourself is broken, there

> is fire after death, you will thrive on disasters, suffer, don't evade anything, live in pain, reach out and touch something good, remorse must kill the self not teach it new lies, hope only for the truth, the soul must die to live. (511)

He feels he is back where he has started but with the difference that he has recovered his sense of ordinary vision. He does not blame himself for the death of Mark any more; it was just an accident. He understands the existence of other people and his responsibility towards them. He says, 'My life belongs to others, those who are here now and those who are to come' (515). For the first time, he admits that he enjoyed the time he spent with Sarah that night and that it was not her fault, either. He feels that he has to go and see her as she is feeling unhappy. He also remembers the days he spent in Seegard, his first wonderful evening, the 'festival' that they made for his arrival. He sees it as an innocent and charming place. Anyway, whatever it was, it was its *mystery* which he feels he cannot fully understand even if he thinks about it for 'years and years'. He now sees Seegard as 'a house where people lived, he had a mother and a sister there' (518). They were not his enemies, but free, ordinary women who wanted him to love them, as once Mother May asked him and which he did not understand at the time, 'Can you love me enough?' (ibid.). He also remembers who Victoria Gunn, 'the dotty American girl he had met when he was looking for Jesse', and Julia Carson-Smith, 'the person who had lived in Jesse's house and knew about Max Point'--Jesse's lover and Mother May's lover and Ilona's father (516)--were. He says,

> I'll be there, thought Edward. I'll talk to Sarah, I'll drink with Victoria, I'll dance with Cressida. There are girls in the world. It's as Ilona said, there are all kinds of other people. I'll start studying again, and I'll learn Russian, and I'll write a novel.... Anyway I'll try to do some good in the world, if it's not too difficult, nothing stops anyone from doing that. (516-517)

Like Edward, Stuart, the elder brother of the Prodigal Son, also finds his path, the path to goodness. Although he has tried to help everybody, Edward, Meredith, Midge, Harry and Mrs Wilsden, what he has got in return for his attempts have been entirely their insults, anger and hatred. When Harry, resenting the fact that his relationship with Midge is destroyed because of Stuart, tells him that he is a 'devil' and he brings trouble to people, Stuart feels dejected and he goes to the church, which he always visits as it used to guarantee the existence of holiness or goodness that connected him with it. There he

realizes that he is alone in this fight because there is no God in the traditional, supernatural sense of the word. However, he yearns for a sign to make him see his path more clearly. This he receives at the underground station. While waiting for his train, feeling shame, loneliness, sadness and grief, 'as if he were banished from the human race and condemned for eternity to be a useless and detested witness of its sufferings', he sees a live mouse at the bottom of the black concrete track, eating something (447). Unlike the pigeon that Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* has tried hard to get out of the underground station, where it has been trapped, this mouse is not trapped, '*It lived there*' (Ibid). He realizes that "Life', as Suguna Ramanathan says, 'may be seen as either a trap or a dwelling place.'[21] One just needs to look clearly and attentively, with love and respect. The signs are everywhere, trees, animals, works of art, stones, and so on. It was just like what Edward has noticed about Seegard. Mother May and his sisters may seem trapped in Seegard but it is actually where they live. It is their home, although outside it they may not survive.

Stuart decides to set up a school and teach young children aged between four and eight since he rightly points out to Harry, 'things must be got right at the start' in terms of 'thinking and morality' and 'the idea of what goodness is'(520) and how to love it. Stuart is, however, aware of the difficulty of doing this but he is determined to 'learn' it. Harry tells him that he will always be 'a beginner', in other words, what Thomas called it, he will be 'apprenticed to goodness' (138) for his whole life, as goodness is not 'something part-time, not something optional' (140). He will, in other words, be an 'apprentice for good', for good used in its both senses; first, for 'goodness', and second, for his whole existence because of the mysteriousness 'the inexhaustible detail of the world, the endlessness of the task of understanding.'[22] This explains the use of the determiner 'the' in the title of the book '*The* Good Apprentice'. Unlike *The Philosopher's Pupil*, there is no search for a master in the story. Thomas asks him if he is not looking for a master or guru. Stuart replies, 'Of course not. To imagine that somewhere at the end of the world in a cave there's a wise man - that's sentimentality, it's masochism, it's magic—' (140). One has to go on doing good by himself. In a sense, that is also the difference between the two

---

[21] Suguna Ramanathan, *Iris Murdoch: Figures of Good,* Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990, p. 165. Hereafter cited as Ramanathan.

[22] Iris Murdoch, 'Symposium: Vision and Choice in Morality', *Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume 30, 1956, p. 46.

novels. In *The Philosopher's Pupil*, George has been after Rozanov's scientific theories; he has been his *pupil*. In *The Good Apprentice*, on the other hand, as the title also clearly shows, Stuart is not just concerned with thinking about good, he also wants to be an *apprentice*, which means to' carry out' or to 'act' goodness.

Iris Murdoch, by taking the base of her story from a parable, 'universalises' the events more in terms of the reader's point of view. In 'Vision and Choice in Morality' she argues that fables and parables are 'continuous with our most everyday methods of reflecting on and understanding our lives.'[23] For her some parables, like the parable of the prodigal son, because they are powerful, ambiguous, 'paradoxical, infinitely suggestive and open to continual reinterpretation,'[24] they supply moral inspiration. *The Good Apprentice* is also full of ambiguities, which in that sense makes it the more powerful and morally-stirring. Like the characters, the reader also gains anamnesis as s/he sees the events and the characters with fresh vision at the end of the novel with all their ordinariness and mysteriousness. Murdoch says,

> It may be said, that a moral attitude which lays emphasis on ambiguity and paradox is not for everyday consumption. There are, however, moments when situations are unclear and what is needed is not a renewed attempt to specify the *facts*, but a *fresh vision* which may be derived from a 'story'....[25] (Emphasis Added)

The reader while reading the story is also reading, reenacting some moments of his/her life because art and real life is a 'whole complex thing, internally connected' and it is as if the readers were 'all parts of a single drama, living inside a work of art' (518). This is just like the characters themselves, for example Edward and Midge, who start their spiritual pilgrimage with an accident and reenact their dramas and in the end reread their own myths or self-fiction with a fresh enlivened vision. In other words, as T. J. Rica says, the characters see themselves ' "as if" they were characters in a novel, or drama' which turns them into a ' "reader" of the text'[26] that contains them.

Life, as in the beginning page of Proust's novel *A la recherche du temps perdu -- Rememberance of Things Past--*, is full of pain as well as joy, which good art tries to

---

[23] Ibid., p. 36.
[24] Ibid., p. 50.
[25] Ibid., p. 51.
[26] Lindsey Tucker, ed., *Critical Essays on Iris Murdoch*, New York: G. K. Hall, 1992, p. 83. Hereafter cited as Tucker.

imitate. *The Good Apprentice* is also full of sad and happy unions and separations and revelations but as with the mouse living in the underground, people try to live in this messy world. They learn to accept it as it is. Everything just depends on how they see and evaluate it. Just like Edward and Stuart. At the end of the novel, they are back at their father's flat, drinking to the good things in the world. The world is, after all, full of them if the person knows how to look at it.

THE MESSAGE TO THE PLANET

The Message to the Planet (1989) is related very distinctly to the line of thought concerning ordinary morality, the preservation of everyday language and simple goodness discussed at length in the foregoing chapters. Murdoch in the book concentrates on the connection between the ordinary world and the demands made of a philosopher, a Christ-figure, the god-man, for the secret of the universe; in other words, for his 'message' to the planet earth. In the novel, the action of the story is based on the pursuit of Alfred Ludens for the secret message of Professor Marcus Vallar--who is the enchanter, the power figure--that affects almost most of the characters' lives in the story even though he has disappeared from their lives a long time ago. These are mainly Jack Sheerwater, the painter; Gildas Herne, an Anglican priest; Patrick Fenman, a penniless Irish poet; and last but not least Alfred Ludens himself, the 'romantic' historian working at a London college. Gildas, for instance, leaves the church because Marcus accused him of being a 'deceiver, a charlatan, a false priest' who is 'living a lie' as he does not believe 'in the old personal God or the divinity of Christ.'[27] These are almost the same criticisms that Professor John Rozanov directed towards Father Bernard in *The Philosopher's Pupil*. What occasions this quest of Marcus is Patrick Fenman's illness. In the opening of the story, Patrick lies critically ill in Jack's house because he believes he was cursed by Marcus Vallar before he disappeared from their lives. The rest, Gildas, Jack and Ludens, decide to find Marcus in order to make him take this curse off. Ludens, who considers himself as Marcus Vallar's 'favorite pupil'(72)--as George does with Rozanov--decides to find him. Ludens's other main reason is his secret vow to follow Marcus wherever he goes until he finds out his 'final secret' (341). Being just an ordinary mediocre character, Ludens is dissatisfied with his position and with himself. He wants to make 'some great achievement' like being 'a philosopher, or a novelist, even a painter' (7).

As in most of Murdoch's novels the narrator's attitude to the characters is humorous, parodying generally what they think they know which they do not know. The aim is to make Ludens and others ordinary everyday blundering people. For Murdoch, with all the horrors and sadness, life is extremely comic. For instance, the narrator mocks

---

[27] *The Message to the Planet*, London: Penguin, 1990, p. 15. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.

Ludens's vision and understanding of Marcus Vallar. The narrator says that Ludens has begun to take 'a deep and passionate interest in Marcus's *ideas*, in which he clearly "saw" something which the others did not. He was not content, as they were, to admit that he did not understand' (12-13). The verb 'saw' put in quotation marks gives away the scepticism of the narrator as well as the reader. Ludens feels that he *almost* understands what Marcus says and means about 'deep foundations, pure cognition, the nature of consciousness, [and] a universal language' (13). However, it is obvious that Ludens is on the wrong track, just like Marcus Vallar himself, who is concerned with the 'theoretical and mechanical' (54) part of the language rather than its everyday aspect.

The great Marcus mystery and legend starts when Marcus Vallar was just three years old. He is considered 'a mathematical infant prodigy' (7). At nineteen he becomes a genius after he discovers the Vallar Theorem. After this 'great explosion of *intellectual* sovereignty' (Emphasis Added), rather than the sovereignty of good, Marcus changes his track and first becomes a chess champion, and then a philosopher for a short time. He then decides to be a painter because he soon 'sees through' philosophy and finds 'nowhere to go', theoretically speaking. The Murdochian reader is sceptical, however, of Vallar's development from mathematical logic to visual arts because his interest seems still to be in pure technicalities, like 'visual cognition' (8)--Murdoch is against using such technical terms like 'cognition' that makes the thing abstract and scientific and not everyday. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, she describes Sekida's idea of 'pure cognition' or Simone Weil's idea of 'pure perception' as 'perception without reverie', by which she means 'animal attentiveness', 'good conscience', 'only doing what you know' and 'simple truthfulness'.[28] Not surprisingly, Marcus, who just 'wants a theory', later becomes an 'abstract painter' (10). His painting is said to represent 'the creation of the universe, heaven and hell, sexual intercourse, lingams, vulvas, lotuses and so on' (ibid.). For him, his pictures do not represent anything or derive from anything. When people try to *naturalise* his abstract figures, like 'geometrical mandalas, orange objects floating in seas of red, red globes in seas of blue-black, circles, triangles, ovals, knotted lines' as shapes suggesting 'seeds, trees, flowers, fishes, flames', he just says that he is 'simply painting', experimenting with colors and shapes, and can 'see nothing' of the so-called 'meanings', some of which shocked him very much (11). Through these criticisms, Murdoch is making

---

[28] *Metaphysics*, p. 247.

a subcomment on various literary criticisms, such as author-based, text-based and audience/reader-based approaches. Vallar, by expressing his shock at all those 'so-called' interpretations that people make about his paintings, seems to believe in the sole authority of the artist in giving meaning to his/her work of art. However, art is a cooperative experience between the author, the work of art and the reader/audience/spectator. After painting, Marcus decides to study languages, such as Japanese and Sanskrit and disappears with a Japanese Zen thinker/disciple into the country. That is when Marcus's and hence Ludens's urgent quest starts. However, as the Murdochian reader knows, theoretical knowledge is not reality in the everyday sense of the word. In that sense, to explain Marcus's case, the following description by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch applies quite well. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch quotes a schoolmaster saying that,

> .... a well-informed person is an object of terror. His mind seems to be so full of facts that you cannot, as it were, see the wood for the trees; there is no room for perspective, no lawns and glades for pleasure and repose, no vistas through which to view some towering hill or elevated temple; everything in that crowded space seems of the same value... [29]

After Marcus Vallar 'revives' Patrick Fenman or raises him in a way from the dead, by the simple act of touching, Irina, his daughter, who has always been sceptical of Marcus's so-called magical powers and great ideas, takes him to an institution as she thinks he is mentally disturbed and needs a rest. This infuriates Ludens as he wants Marcus to continue thinking on the answers to the universal questions. In the institute, a group of people who call themselves 'Seekers' or 'the Stone People' start coming to see Marcus when his fame as a 'healer' spreads around. These people 'seek the peace of the spirit' through the simple things of 'the earth, trees, and flowers, and stones' (309). They believe that Marcus has a message. These 'Stone People' symbolize the need people feel to worship somebody or something. As Suguna Ramanathan points out, these people are 'ready to believe or disbelieve at a moment's notice, but all in need of a faith which commands their allegiance'.[30] The seekers want to 'touch' him and also he touches these people. This is, in a way, what Emmanuel Levinas calls in his work called *Otherwise than Being*--otherwise

---

[29] *On the Art of Reading*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1920, p. 17.
[30] Ramanathan, p. 207.

here meaning towards the other--'a non-verbal language of skin,'[31] which includes the sense of touch, gestures and vision. Indeed, this idea of language as 'wordless but tactile and visual communication' is animistic because it is 'the proximity of the person to the Other that cannot speak also, the responsibility towards plants, animals and living things in general'.[32] We find such *response* quite frequently in Murdoch; this respect and response to stones, spoons, chairs, flowers, birds, dogs, spiders, moths, kettles, and so on. In short, everything from alpha to beta, from A to Z--if we remember in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, this is given by the relationship between Adam and his dog Zed: A is for Adam and Z is for his dog Zed. Marcus, in the beginning, sees himself as a holy person giving spiritual healing to these people. Ludens, on the other hand, wants him to stop these charades and start thinking and writing down 'his life-long philosophical quest' (335). Ludens wants a 'written gospel'[33] that can survive everything. He even buys him colourful 'notebooks' as he thinks it is impossible 'that weighty ideas could be written down on such flimsy paltry pages' of Marcus's thin little exercise books (239)--Murdoch here is ironically referring to Wittgenstein's *Blue and Brown Books* and his *Notebooks*.

The book is also about suffering, its being 'some sort of universal language' (509). Being a Jew, Marcus always thinks about the suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust. Marcus wants to achieve pure suffering; for him 'The suffering will be the message' (543). However, as we know from the world of Murdochian fiction, it is very difficult although not impossible to suffer purely like an animal without any hatred, anger or resentment. As Ludens says to Dr Marzillian, 'we all experience it but we don't understand it, the meaning of it lies beyond us, something like what you called the murmur of contingency' (509). Irina says that Marcus had been concentrating on 'suffering, pain, pure suffering, pure pain, how to become a god, because only a god suffers purely, and only pure suffering will cause a cosmic change!' (105). But as Ludens says, 'One suffers in the mind'. Similarly, Marcus is suffering in his mind from his obsession due to the suffering of the Jews in the Second World War. Because of all these thoughts in his mind's cave, he feels not surprisingly that he is 'crammed full with demons' (98). That is why he cannot enjoy the pure vision of things around him with 'clean thoughts' (ibid.). We learn that he has read a lot of books on

---

[31] Simone Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 179. Hereafter cited as Critchley.
[32] Critchley, p. 180.
[33] Ramanathan, p. 209.

the Holocaust and the murder of the Jews; he visited Auschwitz and fainted there. Irina says that he wants to,

> ... be a great sinner and understand evil as well as good and be the victims and Hitler too and Christ and Anti-Christ. He wants to enact the spiritual or something destiny of the human soul. He wants to fall into awful depths of suffering and degradation and die a terrible and famous death and to be taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, it's all in the mind, just as you say, and he still expects to get his breakfast on time. (105)

Irina, quite realistically, points out the existence of immense suffering and everyday needs like eating and drinking side by side. This is also expressed in the book with the word 'tricotage'. This is the word that Marcus uses to explain the suffering of the Jews in the war. He once tells Ludens a short story about a Polish or Czech woman who was in a concentration camp in Auschwitz. When Marcus asked her what she had done all day, she said *tricotage*[34] (46). The word 'tricotage' in French means 'knitting'. It symbolises simple acts of goodness happening side by side with the horrors of the Holocaust. As Gildas explains it to Ludens, it means 'improvising, making things for others, being practical and unselfish in *that* situation, the mystery of goodness' (559). It is, in a sense, a sign of ordinariness, simple virtues, the murmur of contingency, an escape from the net of anger, hatred, resentment, obsession or mental suffering. Marcus was unable to see the real meaning of that action because he despised 'the whole sentimental muddle of ordinary morals' (558). He was puzzled and disturbed by it. According to Dr Marzillian 'tricotage', for Marcus, means 'the cosmic matrix ... perhaps a term in physics, or mathematics' (261). In other words, Marcus connects it with the 'knitting together of ideas and terminology.'[35] This explains the idea behind his search for a universal language. What he finds instead is a 'private language' with a linguistic structure but which cannot be understood by others. As we know, for Murdoch the preservation of everyday language in philosophy, art and everyday life is important because it is morality itself; it carries with it truth, consciousness, apprehension of the other, responsibility and presence. Murdoch maintains that philosophy's task is 'of finding a simple open mode of discourse concerning ordinary

---

[34] In *The Good Apprentice* we have a similar example of 'tricotage'. Stuart tells Thomas about the exhibition of 'plaits of girls' hair' in a museum in Auschwitz and how the Nazis used everything at those camps and he imagines a girl waking up from sleep and plaiting her hair carefully--which is an everyday action--side by side with the horrors lived afterwards. (p. 148)

[35] *Metaphysics*, p. 194.

evident (for instance moral) aspects of human life.'[36] Gildas, who sees Marcus more objectively and truthfully, says that Marcus 'knew the language of mathematics, but he wasn't at home in any ordinary language' (556). In a way, the universal language that he thinks he has found to express suffering as a human condition only conveys his 'private language' which is his 'private property' (509) that does not refer to the world at all.

When Marcus understands this and tries to tell the Stone People that he is just an ordinary person without any 'message' or a 'mission' or powers to heal people (383), the Stone People start throwing stones at him. His suicide follows this scene. That takes us to the mystery of Marcus's death and his wish to be cremated after death, which is symbolic. In this way he wants to enact the suffering of the Jews. He is found lying on the kitchen floor in front of the oven with the gas on. Ludens thinks that he gassed himself. However, according to Dr Marzillian, Marcus killed himself by his paranormal powers because there is good ventilation in the chalets. Another mystery is that in his suicide note, he wrote 'I die by my own will' (471). Simone Weil argues that 'will is obedience not resolution.'[37] It is, for Murdoch, 'obedience to reality'[38] which comes with the experience of clear vision. If will is related to the exercise of the self upon the world, then 'total denial of the will is the best.'[39] Which one Marcus meant--'obedience to everyday reality' or 'the exercise of his self upon the world'--can be inferred from his wish from Ludens to 'destroy everything' (491) he had written or recorded. Or did he die 'in despair and confusion' (557)? Or did he die seeing at last, like Rozanov, 'the futility of philosophy'? Ludens speculates on his death and says that he may have died of 'a dose of ordinary morality'--his realisation of the true meaning of tricotage (497). Again for Murdoch these questions are not important; they just show the desire of human beings to put things in a form. But, as Gildas also says in a Murdochian way, 'Any death is essentially accidental. As for meaning, that is our affair' (557).

Like George, who drowns Rozanov's book, Ludens burns Vallar's notes. There is so much fire in the book--the furnace/incinerator in the cottage. The reader can feel and read the blazing fires coming out of the book. Ludens earlier in the book expresses his desire to find out what it is that Marcus is after, and says, 'is it an experience or a thought,

---

[36] *Metaphysics*, p. 212.
[37] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 40.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[39] *Metaphysics*, p. 33.

is it something you'd put in a book, or die for, or die of?' (45) Marcus's pilgrimage has been all of these things together. He has searched for pure suffering and pure cognition and he has found out that it is something to *die for* and *of*--metaphorically speaking, i.e. the death of the self. Like Rozanov's death, Vallar's death is also symbolic in that sense. It symbolizes the death of his obsessive thoughts about suffering, Auschwitz as well as language as deep foundations; in other words, language as linguistics or science or a net of concepts. Everything is accidental. As Gildas says, 'Everything is accidental. That is *the* message' (Emphasis Added) (562), 'one must try to be good--just for nothing' (437). That is the only message. The title of the book, in that sense, gives us the story as well as the message of the novel. The use of the definite article 'the' instead of 'a' makes the message single. There is no explanation to the accidental nature of human existence. Mrs May Tether, the American tourist staying in a nearby Inn, is reported to say, 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are thought of in modern philosophy' (329) and Dr Marzillian corrects this quotation taken from Shakespeare's *Hamlet:* 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy' (337).This misquotation is significant in the sense that it applies the helplessness of modern philosophy in the face of accidental reality where there are no deep foundations; human life rests on chaos and accident and all we can try to do is to be good.

Ludens understands the message as he burns all Vallar's philosophical and mathematical notes and drawings, thus saving them from being published by Cambridge University Press (490)--a playful joke on the part of Iris Murdoch. Ludens learns that he has been mistaken many times about Marcus and about Irina. He is a flawed person but at the same time he is good, innocent and loving. He does not leave Marcus alone until the end. Like Charles Arrowby, however, he is suffering from the demon of jealousy, the same 'green-eyed creature' (299). His love for Irina is 'romantic' love; he sees her as a 'dark enchantress, my sovereign lady' (255). His love for her is an extension of his desire to possess Marcus. Irina may at first seem cold and irresponsible towards her father as she disappears immediately after his death leaving all the formalities to Ludens and her lawyer. However, by marrying Lord Claverden, her former lover, Irina chooses reality; for otherwise, Ludens would still continue living in a dream. Marcus has seen Ludens as 'the messenger' (90), which is quite symbolic because a messenger carries a message. Here Ludens carries the message--and hence the title of the story, 'A Message to the Planet'--

from Murdoch to the reader, on the figurative level. The experience or the chain of accidents that Ludens lives unconsciously informs himself, Marcus and hence the reader. The book, although it ends with sadness, gives some hope, because Gildas and Ludens have awakened into this reality. The evening hymn that they sing shows the importance of faith in this ambiguity of human life:

The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended,
The darkness falls at Thy behest.

When the story starts Ludens is in darkness; he has started his pilgrimage at night and towards the end of the novel, which is midsummer, he sees the sun, 'the symbolic hero' (465) in Murdoch's novels and the day, metaphorically speaking. And his pilgrimage for the day is over; however, there is an anticipation for the beginning of a new day. The darkness falls at the very end of the novel preparing the scene for another character of the next book to start a new day of awakening. It is a cycle of ordinary human life.

CHAPTER IV

DEATH IN LIFE

In Murdoch's philosophy death has two opposite meanings. In her philosophy of the Good, death is the detachment from the self-illusory fantasies of the ego; the morally good man should be 'dead' to his/her own self in order to be able to see the other. In *The Sovereignty of Good*, she says :

> Goodness is connected with the acceptance of real death and real chance and real transience and only against the background of this acceptance, which is psychologically so difficult, can we understand the full extent of what virtue is like. the acceptance of death is the acceptance of our own nothingness which is an automatic spur to our concern with what is not ourselves.[1]

The two novels covered here--*The Green Knight* and *Jackson's Dilemma*--approach death in two opposite angels. In the former, Peter Mir comes back from the dead in order to take his revenge. He is symbolic of people who do not want to let go of their selves and 'fall from the tree into death'[2] and live in a state of *bardo*. Jackson, on the other hand, is a totally selfless person, who only exists for the other. Murdoch leaves a mystery around him regarding his age and his past, in fact his whole existence. She quite subtly manages to make him visible while being invisible, i.e. living while dead. It is all a question of life-in-death or death-in-life. Murdoch deals with this theme almost in all her novels. In *Henry and Cato*, for instance, Brendan Caddock, Cato's priest friend and an agent of Good in the book, says to Cato towards the end of the novel before he goes to India:

> Death is what instructs us most of all, and then only when it is present. When it is absent it is totally forgotten. Those who can live with death can live in the truth, only this is almost unendurable. It is not the drama of death that teaches--when you are there facing it there is no drama. That's why it's so hard to write tragedy. Death is the great destroyer of all images and all stories, and human beings will do anything rather than envisage it. Their last resort is to rely on suffering, to try to cheat death by suffering instead. And suffering we know breeds images, it breeds the most beautiful images of all.[3]

---

[1] *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 103.
[2] *Women in Love*, p. 214.
[3] *Henry and Cato*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1976. p. 336.

THE GREEN KNIGHT

The Green Knight (1993) is one of Murdoch's best comedies where she connects reality with the absurd, farce, pantomime, myth and fairy-tale. The absurd and the comic are what, she thinks, connect art to ordinary life. She says,

> The absurdity of art, its funniness, its simplicity, its lucidity connects it with the ordinary life.....comedy has an obvious built-in factor of disunity, a return to the contingent, an appeal to individual experience and common-sense.[4]

The book opens with the usual fairy-tale phrase 'Once upon a time'. 'Once upon a time there were three little girls' who 'lived at the bottom of a well.'[5] Although the language is sometimes quite childish, it is meant to be a fairy tale for adults. And the utterance that immediately follows this, in fact that cuts this sentence, is a realistic matter-of-fact sentence: 'Oh look what he's doing now!' This combination of fantasy and reality, then and now, reminds the reader of his/her entrance into the Murdochland. The narrator does not keep the reader at suspense long as to the opening of the story and he immediately gives the facts to place the story or the myth that is going to be lived in a realistic setting:

> The first speaker was Joan Blacket, the second was Louise Anderson, the one so urgently summoned was a dog, the little girls mentioned were Louise's children, the place was Kensington Gardens, the month was October. (1)

Anthony Curtis, in this novel, quite rightly likens Murdoch to a 'nanny'[6] telling a fairy tale in front of a table full of goodies, like egg sandwiches, crisps, jellies, chocolate biscuits, and so on. The Implied Author, to ensure that the adult reader gets the moral point in the fairy tale, is quite 'friendly, helpful, confiding [and] building up and intimacy with the reader'.[7] There is a sort of secret or indirect communion between him and the reader, indirect because unlike the 18th and 19th century fiction writers who directly address the reader in their novels, in the book although there is no direct address to the reader, like

---

[4] *Metaphysics*, pp. 91-92.
[5] *The Green Knight*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 1. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.
[6] Anthony Curtis, 'Time to party with nanny', *Financial Times*, 11 September 1993, p. 18.
[7] Michéle Roberts, 'Lemon peels and dragons', *The Independent*, 09 October 1993, p. 29.

'Dear reader', this is implied. It is like 'Free Indirect Address/Discourse'. For example, Louise says to Joan that their dog Anax has forgotten his old master, meaning Bellamy James. And the Implied Author cuts in to bring clarification and says,

> The 'old master' referred to, Anax's former owner, whose name was Bellamy James, a friend of Louise's deceased husband, was by no means 'old', but had decided in the middle of life's journey to abandon the world and become some sort of religious person. (1)

The phrase 'by no means' directs us to the voice of the Implied Author, expressing his disagreement. He also gives general information in parenthesis on wars or on glow-worms, which 'are the larvae of a firefly which, lying on earth, glow on summer night with an eerie light' (80). In an interview with John Haffenden, Murdoch says that 'I reveal other people's secrets, not mine, except in the sense that any artist reveals himself to some extent in his work. But it's the secrets of my fictional characters that I'm giving away.'[8] Indeed, it is very obviously done in this novel. For instance, the narrator describes Aleph, 'the "beauty", was pale in complexion, her skin (of course innocent of make-up) faintly glowing....' (12) or Sefton 'had golden brown eyebrows and reddish brown straight hair rather jagged (she cut it herself)...' (13). The remarks made in parenthesis reveal the characters' realities given in side comments. Or Harvey tells Bellamy that once Lucas was very rough with him and he hit Harvey when he was eleven. Bellamy asks what he had done but Harvey says he could not remember. The narrator says immediately, 'But of course Harvey could remember' (75).

The story, which explores darkness as well as light, is mainly based on what happens after Lucas Graffe kills a suspected thief several months before the time of the novel. Typical of Murdoch, the omniscient narrator reveals the reality moment by moment, like an onion. The reader discovers the reality as he peels it. In the very beginning of the novel, the narrator tells the reader about the incident, which is to change the lives of many people in the story. Lucas Graffe, a professor of history, hits the man with his umbrella while he is walking at night in a park. The 'mugger' is dead or is thought to be so and Lucas becomes a sort of 'a popular hero', deserving 'a medal' in the eyes of the public (6, 7). The narrator says:

---

[8] Haffenden, p. 33.

> Lucas, a quiet reclusive academic, a much respected historian, was of course extremely upset by having inadvertently killed a man, even though a bad man. (6)

The impression the reader might normally get is all against the bad mugger; however, the Murdochian reader should by now learn to be patient and not to make any hasty conclusions. On looking back after reading the whole novel, the reader will see the irony of this remark--his being upset and everything because Lucas is a self-centered person. The real story is that Lucas, suffering from the demon of jealousy and hatred him being the adopted child, that night takes his step-brother, Clement to the park to show him some glow-worms[9] and while Clement is looking at them with his head bent, Lucas attempts to hit him with a baseball bat. However, accidentally, a man sees this and tries to prevent Lucas and Lucas hits the man instead with the bat. Lucas tells the court that someone tried to steal his wallet and he had to hit the man with his umbrella. Murdoch here very cleverly gives the reader the danger of the play of words. For instance, Lucas says that he did not say to anybody that the man tried to steal his wallet:

> I think my defence lawyer invented that. All I said was that he seemed to be about to attack me. I said it was possible that he did not intend to do so. The press, the public, and my spotless reputation carried the whole thing along. (90)

The novel is divided into 5 sections, as in a Shakespearean drama. They are called: Ideal Children, Justice, Mercy, Eros, and the last part, 'They Reach the Sea'. The ideal children mentioned in the title of the opening section are Louise's three teenage daughters, Aleph (Alethea), aged 19, who wants to study English in order to become a writer; Sefton (Sophia),aged 18, who likes reading history and finally, Moy (Moira), aged 15, who is preparing for art school. They all live in a sort of happy idyllic scene with their mother, Louise Anderson, 'all-singing all-laughing all-crying' (9) in their safe enchanted home. The reader, if he reads carefully, will see the clues/grains laid in-between the lines about the development of the events. Joan, the wicked witch of the fairy tale story, or as the

---

[9] The glow-worm that unites Luca and Peter, the step brothers in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, here separates, in a way, Lucas, the adopted son, and Clement. Murdoch reverses the scene. In a way, we can say that Murdoch is experimenting on the possible question: What might have happened if one of the brothers like Luca --becoming Lucas in this novel--grow up in jealousy and hatred and competition. He can become capable of murder.

narrator calls her 'a bad girl', for example foresees the oncoming series of events when she says to Louise,

> Those girls are paralysed, they've become fairy-tale damsels, grail-bearers, sleeping princesses inside an enchanted castle. Harvey ought to be the prince who hacks his way through the forest, but he can't be, he's *in* the castle! (11)

Joan wants 'someone to come to break the enchantment, someone from *elsewhere*' (12). Indeed, someone from elsewhere comes and starts the disenchantment, 'the man raised from the dead' whom Lucas killed *accidentally* at the park several months ago (117). Murdoch is in the novel using some of the techniques of The Absurd Drama,[10] i.e. dream and nightmare literature. The man whom everybody have thought to be dead, for instance, is not dead, after all, and comes back alive again as a huge heavy revengeful beast as in Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming'. Murdoch builds a mysterious cloud around him. The first-time reader is led to believe that there is something eerie about him, as he is 'resurrected' (101). The reader, as with the other characters in the novel, cannot quite 'place' or categorize Mir in a certain existence--except maybe in *bardo*, the place between life and death, where the dead people linger in torment. Lucas explains this situation of Mir as something like 'the Buddhist Bardo, or the Christian Limbo', 'a twilit world' where 'the brain may continue to operate in some twilit way, ticking on like a machine, after the body is technically dead' (254). He describes Peter Mir as 'only half alive, a zombie, a ghastly awful dummy, a puppet' (ibid.) coming out of *Spiritus Mundi*.[11] Peter Mir's physical as well as mental description reminds the reader of the 'rough beast' loosed upon the world in the poem. He is broad-shouldered, has a big bulky head with wide nostrils, thick lips, curly brown hair and very large, dark and murky grey eyes under copious eyebrows that

---

[10]Martin Esslin in his introduction to *Absurd Drama* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965) defines Absurd drama as 'a situation which is clearly not taken from real life--not unlike situations most of us have experienced at one time or another in dreams and nightmares' (10). Of course, Murdoch is not very 'absurd', unlike the Absurdists, who create a world that is 'both frightening and illogical'--in a word--absurd; despite every contingency in life, Murdoch does not lose her sense of humour and gentle look towards life and people. In fact, in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* she says that the absurdity of art is 'inimical to authoritarian mystification'. She does not want to connect it with 'the theatre of the absurd'. She says: '"Absurd" here should be understood in a wide sense, and not in a local or esoterically technical way (as in 'theatre of the absurd'). The absurd is the comic, as well as what defeats or teases the intellect' (91).

[11]Yeats means 'a general storehouse of images which have ceased to be a property of any personal spirit' (Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats,* London: Macmillan, 1984, p. 204)

resembles a 'bull-head', a 'beast' like the vast image with a lion body and the head of a man slowly crouching in darkness for its 'second coming'.

Peter Mir wants to re-enact the accident scene, i.e. 'the original event' when Lucas struck Peter violently with a club and nearly deprived him of his life (316). Clement likens the 'second event' to a mystery play. He says, 'They wanted theatre and they would get theatre. It was *his* mystery play and *he* would direct it' (279). We are not allowed into the consciousness of either Lucas or Peter. They are always presented through the eyes of the other characters or through their own words and actions. This is important because when the reader is not allowed into their consciousness s/he cannot form any true judgements about the real characters of these two. That adds to the mystery of the play. The ellipsis or spaces that Murdoch frequently uses also serve to increase the tension and mystery around Mir, 'the man raised form the dead'. When he first makes his appearance at Lucas's house and introduces himself and becomes a part of the story rather than just a 'man in a trilby hat and a green umbrella' (140), he says, 'Well, I was dead, you know, but they revived me' (94). Immediately after that Murdoch cuts the scene and moves to the correspondence between Bellamy and Father Damien while allowing the reader time to brood over the absurdity of the scene.

The 'second event' in the park also takes the form of a farce or a charade, and absurd drama, a dream. Clement, being an actor, makes a very elaborate farcical opening speech thus hypnotising 'everybody' in a trance-like state as if they are all acting parts in a Shakespearean play with him and Bellamy as the helpers of the main characters. In a way, by trying to relive the past, they create a mythical[12] drama, a drama of their suffering, but which becomes grotesque as it tries to put aside the contingent reality. Clement says, 'we have been unwittingly cast as supporters or "seconds", Bellamy to Dr Mir, I to my brother'. And then:

> Silence followed. Bellamy, hypnotised by Clement's words and his magisterial tone, wondered if he were having a dream. Was Clement reading from a paper? No, after all he was an actor, yet really he must be speaking impromptu and from his heart. How splendidly he has taken charge, yes it is like the theater, I would not have believed it possible! (316)

---

[12] About the effect of contingency and reality on myth and fantasy, Iris Murdoch in 'Against Dryness' says that 'Real people are destructive of myth, contingency is destructive of fantasy' (20).

In fact, all through the novel it is suggested that what is happening is like theatre. For instance, Clement tells Bellamy about the re-enactment of the scene between Lucas and Peter and that they, him and Bellamy, have to be there because 'we'll have to *control* it, don't you see, give it some intelligible order, something to keep them going, a beginning, a middle and an end. There must be a termination--' and like theatre it has got to be 'aesthetic' (267). Bellamy likens Peter Mir to a dictator about to be born. The reference to Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming' is quite clear. There the last four lines of the poem describes the rebirth of a dictator out of touch with God:

> That twenty centuries of stony *sleep*
> Were vexed to *nightmare* by a rocking cradle,
> And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
> Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?[13] (Emphasis Added)

Here at 'the second event' Bellamy sees 'a single bright star', referring to the same star that appeared when Christ was born. But the star here signifies Peter's rebirth as a revengeful power figure. What they live is a nightmare drama on this 'evening at the theatre', as Clement calls it later (290). During that event everybody remains silent fearing that as in a fairy tale if somebody utters a word it will start the spell. However, at that moment something farcically supernatural happens; the star becomes large and bright and it starts or seems to start coming nearer and nearer and hits Peter in the head. The fall of the light on Peter is symbolic. Peter's ego is destroyed. Peter escapes the bardo. He remembers his belief in 'God', not a personal God but 'the *other* thing' (297), God as Good. We learn that Peter had been a selfish, greedy person full of envy and jealousy towards others until he started studying Buddhism and decided to change by dying to his awful self and then returning to the world with his 'moral consciousness' rather than 'self-consciousness'. The 'blow'--of the star--, that leads to enlightenment according to the Buddhist belief, also awakens Peter Mir to the existence of good. The second coming as a beast is avoided. Murdoch in that sense in this novel is quite optimistic. Even the baseball bat, which strikes the first evil blow and then seen as sinister, in the end after the second event is purified. It is found accidentally by some Belgian children at the same

---

[13] W. B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming', *The Northorn Anthology-English Literature*, Volume 2, 6th edition, New York: Norton, 1993, pp. 1880-1881.

park whom Clement sees playing with it. He says, 'how very strange to think of that awful weapon now far away in Belgium, the innocent plaything of Belgian children!' (430).

After that evening, the third section called 'Mercy' starts and here there is a lot of sunshine around Peter. The mysterious fog and darkness that has been around him all through the first two sections disappears, such as his larger-than-life physical appearance, his uninhabited uncanny house, and so on. The following day after the incident in the park, where Peter is struck by a burning light and faints, Bellamy goes to see the new-born Peter:

> Peter, dressed in trousers and shirt, his bare feet in slippers, looked younger, his curly bright brown hair which grew so smoothly down the back of his neck, glowing in the sunshine, his dark grey eyes luminous under his copious furry eyebrows. His high forehead was unlined, his smooth plump cheeks glowed like polished apples, his thick well-formed lips were parted, smiling, sometimes trembling with some concealed emotion' (295-296).

The house, which once looked so uncanny, also goes through a transformation: all the windows are open letting in the sunshine and, not unlike the reader, 'it seemed to Bellamy that he had never before seen Peter except in dark places' (296). Bellamy, being after a sign in order to gain the spiritual path, wants to be Peter's servant and thus be healed by Peter--there is a parallel scene between Marcus Vallar seen as a healer by Alfred Ludens and here Bellamy seeing Peter as a healer.

Peter wants to reconcile with Lucas. He does not have any feelings of hatred or revenge towards Lucas any more because 'The light has shine upon them and they are shadows, they are gone. I do not want anything except peace' (300). When he tells Peter's revelation to 'the ladies' in Clifton, Bellamy says that Peter regards his feelings of hatred and revenge as shadows and Harvey says, 'You mean it was all a *dream*? Whose dream was it?' (303) (Emphasis Added). Indeed, whose dream was it? This question also suddenly includes the reader. The reader was also present in the dream so s/he was also dreaming, acting a part in this absurd twilight zone.

A knight usually has a mission to fulfill and Peter Mir, as the Green Knight of the title of the story, has one task to carry out after his recovery as 'a sort of instrument of justice, a kind of errant ambiguous moral force, like some unofficial wandering angel' (431). He tells Lucas that they have both reached 'a great high peak, or plateau, an open space' in their relationship like 'a green field, a pure light, quietness, the sudden absence

of the terrible pains of anger and hatred. But then, *what about you*?' (316-317) The absurd event that follows is later called by Clement--the eye-witness to all the interaction between the two 'magicians'--the 'third event', or Act Three. Peter asks Lucas to take off his shirt and Lucas obeys; it appears that he knows what Peter is intending to do. Peter draws out of the handle of his familiar innocent-looking green umbrella, 'as if by magic,...a long gleaming steel knife' and he thrusts it in between Lucas's ribs (The image is like a knight drawing his sword) leaving a small red smear upon his side. After this last act of ritual, Peter and Lucas reconcile. Peter says, 'Like in a fairy tale, everything is right except for one little thing--' --that is the shedding of some blood and after the blood it is gone (319). This shedding of the blood serves its purpose because reconciliation occurs between the brothers; Lucas forgives Clement for 'all the sufferings which you caused me when we were children' (322). Peter's mission is similar to the Green Knight in the 14th-century Arthurian legend *Gawain and the Green Knight*. The story here, however, since it is a dream enactment of it as the 'drama of the evening', is a bit upside down. For instance, as Clement says, 'Lucas cut off Peter's head, and Peter might have cut off his, but because he was noble and forgiving he only drew a little of Lucas's blood'(431).

After this scene, Peter gives a party/a ball in his house/palace. Clement says to Louise:

> Tonight it's like being in a fairy palace where everything is lit up and beautiful and everything is understood and forgiven and truth is told and love declared - and as you said, there is nothing to hide! Oh don't you feel this, this liberation, something is offered to us, given to us, something we must take and hold in this magic time which brings us together.... (330)

The confiding narrator answers the reader's questions if everybody is invited or not. What is significant is the quotation marks. Does that 'everyone' also include the reader again since s/he also partook in the dream part of the story?:

> Yes, 'everyone' had been invited to Peter's party: the Cliftonians [like from another planet] of course, Lucas, Clement, Bellamy, Harvey, Joan, Tessa, Emil, the Adwardens (but only Jeremy and Connie could come, Rosemary was away touring with Aleph and the boys had returned to their boarding school), the landlord of The Castle, and Cora Brock, who had, as Joan put it, 'Got into the act somehow as usual.' Anax had also been invited, but of course with Bellamy there his presence was impossible. (328)

At the party, a similar scene with *The Message to the Planet* occurs. Peter by touching at Harvey's foot heals it, as Professor Vallar spiritually healed Patrick Fenman, the penniless Irish poet. Peter takes Harvey's swollen foot in both his hands and held it firmly and revives Harvey's injured ankle since the very opening of the novel (338). Murdoch at every opportunity tries to point out to the reader that s/he is watching a drama. For instance, the arrangement of the names on the dinner table also reminds us of the *cast of characters* written in order of importance at plays or films. It is like the order in which they appear on stage to salute the audience. However, because of the missing guests, like Lucas and Tessa, the placement/order of the names changes. Murdoch is consciously doing this as is shown with the word *placement* written in italic. Peter Mir is supposed to be the leading actor in the drama but the other 'peripheral characters' do not want to follow the placement and the order changes. The narrator says:

> There had in fact been some trouble about the *placement.* Peter's first arrangement had placed himself at the head of the table with, in sequence, on his right Louise, Lucas, Cora, Bellamy, Tessa, Jeremy, on his left Joan, Clement, Connie, Emil, Sefton, Harvey, Moy, with Kenneth Rathbone at the end of the table. However, Bellamy, Clement, Louise, Jeremy and Emil had all separately informed Peter that Lucas *never* went to parties. The second arrangement then ran Peter at the head, on his right Louise, Bellamy, Cora, Jeremy, Tessa, Sefton, and his left Joan, Clement, Connie, Emil, Moy, Harvey, and Kenneth at the end. Later still, Peter, after calling some of his more mature friends together, decided that Tessa was not coming. This left Sefton next to Jeremy. This picture was further disturbed by Moy whispering that she wanted to sit next to Sefton. Emil meanwhile, diplomatically or in innocence, expressed the wish to talk to Harvey. So finally, Moy, now thoroughly upset at causing so much trouble, was placed between Jeremy and Sefton. (340-341)

Like the reader, Clement expects another 'nightmarish scenario' to happen at Peter's party which would turn out to be Act Four. The long-expected--by Clement and the reader as well--disruption occurs with the entrance of Sir Edward Fonsett, a psychiatrist, who breaks into the party with his two men to take Peter away back to his institution. We learn that Peter escaped from the institution without permission and almost everyone opposes this act in a farcical way: Bellamy, for instance, locks Dr Fonsett into the library or Kenneth the pub owner threatens the doctor that they would come and get Peter Mir from the clinic. We learn that Peter stayed in Dr Fonsett's clinic after the first accident and Dr Richardson, one of the men who comes with Dr Fonsett, saved his life. However, before his treatment was completed, Peter escaped form the clinic to get his

revenge from Lucas. He did not go to his house lest Dr Fonsett would find him there--that explains why the house looked uninhabited when Bellamy and Clement took him back to his house after the second event at the park when Peter was struck by the lighting. He stayed instead with his old friend Kenneth Rathbone at his pub, The Castle. Things and people get more and more ordinary--in a farcical way--when we learn that Peter Mir was, in fact, a butcher,[14] and not a psychoanalyst or a doctor as he once introduced himself. The reaction to this news is again very farcical: everybody makes exclamations and then people look at each other in silence and then Cora covers her face. As for the mysterious sinister-looking umbrella, it turns out to be Peter's fortieth birthday present from the Butchers' Association which suddenly turns the serious act at Lucas's house, where Peter cut slightly a mark in his ribs with his knife drawn from his umbrella--like and unlike a sword--into something very unromantic and ordinary.

Dr Fonsett is skeptical about the claim made by Peter and the rest of the people about Peter's good health through his sudden remembrance of his religion, i.e. Buddhism, because he says, 'there are deep spiritual matters on this planet. Buddhism is a deep matter and one which cannot be quickly mastered' and after living through so much excitement, Peter Mir is in danger of heading to 'melancholy exhaustion ... perhaps to despair, even to suicide'--like Marcus Vallar (356).Quite rightly, the doctor tells them that what they think they know about Peter Mir is quite superficial as what they all have is various romantic motives and they have elected Peter--like the stone people did with Marcus Vallar--,about whom they know very little, to be their 'guru', an 'avatar', rather than an ordinary mediocre person with his own shortcomings who tries to be good. After this serious speech, Murdoch immediately balances the effect again with some farcical scenes. The doctor is about to take Peter away and everybody is very sad, including the reader for the turn of this event. In order to say a final farewell, Peter Mir invites everybody at the party to the drawing-room but here is this character, Cora, who says she has to go to the loo first, or Mrs Callock--the cook--who is, quite ironically, upset about the 'bread-and-butter pudding' (348) that nobody has eaten.

---

[14] We learn that Peter Mir is a vegetarian and supports ecological causes. He is a member of the Green Party caring for the environment and animals--at the same time, ironically, he is a butcher. There is a joke here, him being a good butcher and a vegetarian and the Green Knight at the same time. Murdoch's humbling irony is at work here again. Peter could also have been a greengrocer--rather than a Green Knight--as he is most of the time, dressed in green, with a green tie, a green umbrella and a sort of green suit.

Everybody at the party thinks that Peter has liberated them by making them believe in the goodness within them. Bellamy at last decides to take his dog back; he writes Moy a letter thanking her for looking after his dog during this period, when he has been 'in retreat--or in eclipse, or in never-never land-- somewhere else anyway!' (375). Anax, Bellamy's collie, also appears in the reader's eye as a real 'character', like Zed, Adam's dog, in *The Philosopher's Pupil.* Considering that the book is a combination of a children's fairy tale and absurd drama and a realistic novel, Anax serves as an animated animal cartoon figure. Murdoch leaves one section in the book for the heartbreaking adventures of Anax, the lost dog in the dark, cold, rainy and unsafe streets of London--like, Anax and the mouse, and Anax and the dangerous cat. Murdoch gives human attributes to Anax, that is, he is presented as having emotions like those of humans. After he escapes from Clifton in search of his real master Bellamy, we are given access into his consciousness[15] and thoughts about what he thinks has been going on around him since his separation from his master and his 'liberation' from 'aliens' which came as a surprise to Anax:

> Anax had, since the terrible moment when he realised that Bellamy was not coming back to Clifton to fetch him home, been obsessed by one great thought, that of escape. He did not whine or claw at doors or do anything foolish which would reveal his intent. He was quiet and exceedingly watchful. He was fond of Moy, he understood her, but could not help sometimes looking at her reproachfully, knowing that she understood him. More remotely he liked Louise, still more remotely Sefton and Aleph. But these people were *aliens*; and the smell of the cat Tibellina still hung about the house, perceived by him alone. He grieved and waited, aware that his kind captors were careful not to let him stray. Sometimes he pretended to be happy, sometimes, quite accidentally, he was happy because for an instant he forgot, and then remembering was a greater grief. He did not reflect upon any reason why he had been deprived of the one he loved and to whom he had given his life. He knew simply that there was no other. He did not believe that his master rejected him or found him unworthy, indeed he could not imagine this. Nor did he imagine that his master might be dead, since Anax could not conceive of death. (182)

Thinking all these innocent thoughts, and definitely gaining the reader's love and sympathy, Anax causes more tears of love and concern for his well-being in the eyes of the reader when he waits for the lights to change from red to green while crossing the

---

[15] Murdoch connects 'pure cognition' or 'perception without reverie' with 'animal attentiveness', because it is 'good conscience', 'only doing what you know' and 'simple truthfulness' (*Metaphysics*, p. 247). With Anax, she illustrates this 'animal attentiveness' very well.

Kensington Church Street. The narrator adopts the language of a small child to render Anax's feelings and the reader this time is looking at events and people through the eyes of a dog. The reunion between Anax and Bellamy is what has been morally expected from Bellamy. In the beginning of the book Bellamy gives Anax to the Andersons because he wants to give up this world and his worldly possessions. He says, 'I want to *surrender* at last to a yearning for holiness which has travelled with me all my life. I want to be, thereby, overcome and *destroyed*. I desire this *death*' (40). However, as father Damien says, his desire for death is a romantic desire rather than a realistic one as what he is looking for is not the death of his self but the boost of his self/ego 'a romancer...hopelessly given over to "self-indulgent fantasy"' (115). This is evident in his misunderstanding of the meaning of death. The idea is not to give up the world but to give up the self/ego, that 'dangerous supplement'. For instance, he should not have given away his dog, who signifies the love and responsibility for the other. This is I think one of the key points that show that Bellamy is on the wrong path towards goodness and truth. He yearns for a sign; he thinks, 'Oh if only I could have a visitation, an angel, a lightning flash, a *sign*' (116)--i.e. he is looking for a sign on another planet, a never-never land rather than his immediate surrounding, for instance his dog Anax.

Almost all the other 'peripheral' characters come back to ordinary life. Tessa Millen, who finds out the truth first by her detective work and brings the doctors to Peter's house, much to the disapproval of 'everybody' decides to become a real doctor and becomes a medical student. Harvey realizes that he loves Sefton and Sefton loves Harvey. Almost all the characters, except Peter, Lucas and Aleph, come to the stage once again when Aleph disappears after the trip with Rosemary, some for their final farewell. Louise says to Clement, 'I feel everything's gone mad. All those people coming in this morning, it was like a crowd scene in a theatre--or else like--they were all coming to look at us, they were *voyeurs*, they were pleased, their eyes were bright' (407). Peter Mir dies quietly and peacefully. In the beginning, he was called 'the man who didn't really die', which explains the difference between the 'real death'--death to one's self--and living in bardo, to be a ghostly dead that exists in a nightmarish dream.

Aleph turns up in America with Lucas, to whom she is going to get married. They love each other absolutely and Lucas is going to work at a university. Suddenly, Lucas also becomes an ordinary person in the reader's eyes giving lectures in New York and

Aleph starting a Ph.D. there. It turns out that Sefton has also been in love with Lucas and she would have gone with Lucas if Lucas had asked her. Louise receives letters of acceptance from universities for Aleph and Sefton. These letters serve as the existence of ordinary time that goes on by itself with no connection from the time 'as slow motion mental home'(408), where 'Time was different, long, heavy, lazy, grey' (427). Indeed, so many things and events happen within a Murdochian novel's time that at the end of the novel when the reader looks back to the beginning s/he realizes the force of the accident that brings with it a lot of changes in the characters' lives. Indeed, Murdoch deliberately makes sure that the reader realizes this by parallel scenes or by making the characters talk at the end and compare and contrast or go to the same places but without the same naivety that they had in the opening. Even the first-time reader is expected to be aware of these changes. This concept of time in the story serves Murdoch's aim very well to present the contingency of time and the human drama squeezed within it which has made ordinary time 'grotesque', 'a *slow* torture' (408). The magic of Murdoch is that a lot of things happen at the same time and when 'everyone' is in the *act* itself, time moves very slowly as if in a 'slow pantomime', which has been on play since

> that unspeakable *first moment.* Then there had been the law case, Lucas's disappearance, the miserable interim, then the *tête-à-tête* with Lucas which had had some meaning which now escaped Clement, then the horror of Peter rising from the dead, then the 'trial' and Peter's conquest of 'the ladies', then the metamorphosis, then the climax, the knife, the blood, the dance. (328)

On looking back, the reader can see that so many things have really happened during a couple of months and they have happened so fast that he loses his sense of time. The beginning of the novel seems so far away now but in reality it is not. Murdoch manages to keep the past, which is the beginning of the novel, in the past and move on to the present. The reader cannot stay in the beginning of the book even if s/he wants to; he is taken in with the speed of the story itself. In other words, the reader also reads the story 'momently', proceeds on with the same time as the time of the story itself. For instance, Emil, the German picture dealer who was mentioned in the beginning of the novel as being on holiday in Greece with his gay friend, comes back to London towards the end of the book and asks Louise what Peter means by asking Clement to take care of his brother Lucas and this takes Louise, as well as the reader back to the immediate past which is

already fading into the distant past. Lousie says, 'of course Emil does not know about it. But what is it? Would it soon begin to seem like a dream--it had somehow the qualities of a dream, where incompatible things seem true'(365). Peter is already vanishing from the ordinary present time, becoming one of those 'ghosts, then pale ghosts, then just names--then nothing' (455).

The final ending of the book can be called a romance because here at the Cliftons we have a happy 'handsome foursome': Clement and Louise and Harvey and Sefton. Clement and Louise get married and at their wedding almost everybody was present, excepting Lucas and Aleph. Joan, Harvey's mother, also surprises everybody, including the reader by getting engaged to Humphrey H. Hook from Texas--originally a Scandinavian. Moy cuts her long hair and loses her paranormal powers. This act is also a sign of her liberation. Moy replaces the stone she has had into the hole of a rock near Bellamy's summer house, thus solving the puzzle of nature. The book ends with Bellamy, Moy and Anax heading back to the summer house by the sea. A very happy idyllic ending, with the smoke coming out of the chimney--the indication of warmth, happiness, love. The *fairy tale* ends happily. As Murdoch says, 'The landscape goes on, [and] ordinary life continues'[16] despite the human dramas--good or bad--lived in it.

---

[16] *Metaphysics*, p. 87.

JACKSON'S DILEMMA

Jackson's Dilemma is Iris Murdoch's 26th novel. It is also the last novel that Murdoch[17] has written so far. As such it gains further significance in its 'value' as the last book in the series of her novels of the Good. Quite unlike her later novels which have been very long with intricate plots, *Jackson's Dilemma* is very short--just 250 pages long--and the plot is relatively simple, which has taken her habitual reader and many critics by surprise. According to Julie Myerson,[18] the book 'lacks sufficient internal movement or believable explanation to render the characters or the dilemmas sympathetic' and 'reads like the work of a 13-year-old schoolgirl who doesn't get out enough, or else like a cruel parody of Iris Murdoch', says Hugo Barnacle.[19] But why has Murdoch written such a concise, undeveloped and, in a way, sentimental novel especially after all those previous long novels with so many characters with complex relations? Is this, as Hugo Barnacle says, really 'a cruel parody of Iris Murdoch' or another way of surprising the reader, defeating their expectations, but this time not only from the characters but also from the author herself? If the latter, which is what I shall be arguing in the following pages, then we have a tongue-in-cheek Murdoch, who attempts--quite successfully, if one may say so--to awaken her habitual reader with this sudden contrast.

Jackson's Dilemma has a very simple story. It is about the events that follow when Edward Lannion, the owner of a big house in Notting Hill in London and Hatting Hall in Lipcot, is jilted by Marian Berran, the daughter of Benet Barnell's Canadian friend. Before the chaos begins in the story, the events go very fast, so fast that we find that within a space of just two paragraphs at the very beginning of the story, Edward and Marian 'fall in love' with each other and by the end of the second paragraph we learn that they are getting married the next day. After Marian disappears without any trace, Benet's circle of friends start turning on 'the misery-go-round', as Hugo Barnacle calls it, while trying to form a kind of order and meaning in their lives to survive the feelings of

---

[17]Sadly, within one year after the publication of the book, Murdoch has started suffering from writer's block and 'I think this is a very bad one', says Murdoch in her interview with Joanna Coles ('Duet in Perfect Harmony'. *The Guardian.* 21.09.1996. p. 1 and 3.), so much so that she fears she may never write again.
[264] Julie Myerson, 'Our revels are unending'. *The Independent on Sunday Review.* 08.10.1995. p.37.
[19] Hugo Barnacle, 'Stuck on the misery-go-round'. *The Independent Weekend Section.* 07.10.1995. p.5. Hereafter cited as Barnacle.

resentment, anger, hatred, guilt, loss of pride or remorse that are all evoked by this desertion. 'In fact', says the narrator, 'for each of them, it was an agonising shock, from which it would take them a long time to recover' because 'each pain was deep. They talked of hopes, but really without hopes. And in each of them there were very private sorrows, losses, regrets, and disappointments, even feelings of shame.'[20] Until Chapter 5, the tension and moral suspense is built (both for the other characters as well as the reader) over the mysterious disappearance of Marian; is she 'dead, drowned, kidnapped, mad with misery, mad with terror' (59)? Benet feels responsible for the disaster because he has been encouraging the marriage between Edward and Marian. He is staying at the other grand house called Penndean next to Edward's country house Hatting Hall. In fact, most of the characters in the novel are coming from a rich gentry, living in huge grand houses in London decorated with paintings by Goya, Turner, Van Gogh, or big houses in the country, or in France, going on world tours by ship, having big ranches, riding horses, driving Jaguars or Rovers. Benet is a former civil servant, over 40 years old, writing a book on Heidegger, whom Derrida calls 'the last metaphysician'[21] ending the philosophical period which the Greeks began. The Murdochian reader is by now familiar with the irony behind such characters who spend their time puzzling over and trying to decipher the works of 'philosophers' and write 'a *magnum opus.*'[22] Indeed, what Benet is doing is 'a huge ambiguous project' (13). Through Benet, Murdoch is repeating her views about Heidegger that she has talked about in her major philosophical book *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Like Murdoch herself, Benet likes Heidegger's views in his major work *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) and detests later Heidegger, his views about Being and Dasein, not to mention

> his misuse of the Pre-Socratic Greeks, his betrayal of his early religious picture of man opening the door to Being, his transformation of Being into a cruel ruthless fate, his appropriation of poor innocent Hölderlin, his poeticisation of philosophy, discarding truth, goodness, freedom, love, the individual, everything which the philosopher ought to explain and defend. (13)

---

[20] *Jackson's Dilemma*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 32. Hereafter all quotations from the book will be cited within the text.
[21] *Metaphysics*, p. 158.
[22] Lorna Sage. 'Among entities'. *Times Literary Supplement.* 29.09.1995. p. 25.

Heidegger is generally considered the founder of Existentialism because his philosophy is concerned with the question of the meaning of 'Being'. He differentiates between a being and Being. For him, 'there is an infinite range of such beings--atoms, mountains, trees, stars, animals'[23] and so on . In contrast, man is the ontological Being because he can think or 'has some understanding of and some responsibility for who he is' which makes him 'stand out'[24] (ex-sist) from the rest of the beings. As we know Murdoch was once an existentialist, following some of the views of Sartre. However, later Heidegger's concept of 'existence' is different from its traditional sense; it is strictly restricted, explains Macquarrie, 'to the kind of Being that belongs to *Dasein*, the human existent' who has responsibility for other beings and can shape them to some extent as compared to other beings who have fixed 'essences.'[25] *Dasein* literally means 'Being-there' or 'Being-in-the-world', which proves, according to Heidegger, man's ontological existence in the world. As such, Man looks at other beings not as something contingent and there but either as something merely 'present-at-hand', that is just 'something lying around, something we have come across in the world' or 'ready-to-hand', that is 'an item within the Domain of the *Dasein*'s practical concerns,'[26] serving the satisfaction of Man as Being. According to Murdoch, late Heidegger, like Nietzche, is 'demonic'[27] because seeing everything other than Being as 'ready-to-hand' in relation to human concerns means 'the loss of ordinary everyday truth'[28] and morality, the loss of love and the contingency as opposed to 'imaginary freedom and self-regarding "authenticity",'[29] which means that 'the existent takes hold of the direction of his own life'--i.e. trying to impose his own self-made forms in life--as opposed to 'inauthenticity', which is another word for determinism--i.e. patterns imposed on the life of the existent by the external factors. This is what Murdoch considers as an enemy to the Good or to 'being-good-in-the-world': to perceive the other not as a separate inaccessible individuality, including stones, mountains, flowers, animals, the door knob, wrinkled paper, kettle handle, a smudge on the wall, and so on. In the modern

---

[23] John Macquarrie, *Martin Heidegger*, London: Lutterworth Press, 1968, p. 6. Hereafter cited as Macquarrie.
[24] Macquarrie, p. 8.
[25] Ibid., p. 12-13.
[26] Ibid., p. 16.
[27] *Metaphysics,* p. 456.
[28] *Ibid.,* p. 490.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 377.

technological age Heidegger's philosophy has a 'technical' or 'technological' task, which removes value and ordinary everyday morality. Murdoch says,

> Heidegger's book *What is Metaphysics?* is partly concerned with showing how the general idea of value (morals) is a superficial phenomenon. Behind this new 'revaluation of all values' by Heidegger and Derrida lies the (metaphysical) concept of a vast superhuman area of control: Heidegger's later concept of Being, and Derrida's theory of Language.[30]

Murdoch is also against later Heidegger's treatment of 'language'. Early Heidegger in *Being and Time* sees language as referring, expressing and communicating. However, in later Heidegger, rather than man expressing himself 'his own being-in-the-world' in language we are told that 'language itself speaks', not man. As a result, instead of 'a careful sober lucidity and a quiet truthful clarified reflection which has characterised great philosophical writing since Plato' we have Heidegger's 'poeticised philosophy'[31]--i.e. the metaphoric use of language.

After this brief digression, to go back to Benet, while trying to interpret Heidegger's philosophy, Benet sees other beings in 'the darkness' or through 'a dark spider's web, the web of his mind' (47). On one occasion, for instance, after speculating on what he has written on Heidegger which Benet himself finds totally incomprehensible, Benet goes out into the garden and listens to 'the sounds, which he had failed to hear when he was so strangely struggling with that mysterious demon [meaning Heidegger]. The sweet sounds of the garden birds, the geese flying overhead uttering their strange tragic gabble' (14). Each time Benet goes over his notes on Heidegger, he wonders how he understands what he writes down. 'What on earth does he mean, thought Benet, or what do I mean?' (47). While sitting right in front of a wide-open window and trying to look 'deep deep in Heidegger's soul', Benet does not see the alive things happening right in front of his eyes--such as a hovering hawk. Murdoch, if we remember, gives a similar image in *The Sovereignty of Good* about a hovering kestrel that makes the spectator forget about his/her hurt pride or any other dangerous feelings. Benet believes that Uncle Tim, Timaeus, the elder brother of Benet's father who travelled and worked as an engineer in India, could 'hold up a light for me in the dark' (ibid.). Uncle Tim is one of

---

[30] *Metaphysics,* p. 190.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 267.

Murdoch's figures of good who represents 'death' to one's self, hence moral goodness among Benet's circle of friends and relatives. Tim believes that 'lack of identity', i.e. to say 'I am nothing' (11), is 'a gift, an intimation of deep truth' (10). This selfless mystical condition, Tim argues, is usually achieved after many years of intense meditation' (11). So is the Indian Rope Trick.[32] We learn that Tim could perform this difficult trick, even though Benet and his father took Tim's Indian adventures as a joke. Uncle Tim is described by everybody in the book as a 'spiritual' person and as soon as he sees Jackson, he senses Jackson's moral goodness and wisdom intuitively and then makes Benet take Jackson as his butler, 'a moral guardian' both in his life and in the lives of the others around him. According to Uncle Tim, the man 'is an expert--he needn't stay ages and ages, only a few days perhaps a week if--' (87). Uncle Tim seems to have felt the on-coming chaotic events in the lives of the characters who will need Jackson's help after his death. The narrator says, 'Indeed everyone (except Benet) liked and trusted Jackson', including the reader himself (87). When Uncle Tim takes to bed, Jackson stays all the time with him: 'Jackson was now indispensable, an excellent nurse, much respected by the doctor who at last explained instructions to Jackson not Benet' (88). In chapter 3, the reader learns about the hero of the title of the book. This chapter is called 'The Past' and it tells about 'the Jackson legend', how and where Benet met Jackson and accepted him as his 'servant'. After coming from a party drunk in January, Benet is trying to open his door. Jackson suddenly appears behind him and helps him open the door. Benet wants to give him money but Jackson does not accept this indicating this by *touching* Benet's hand which makes Benet feel 'overwhelmed with a great tidal wave of emotion' (72). In Murdoch, as we know, the sense of touch is 'a gesture of love' (79). Benet fighting with his conscience decides to walk down the river in order to see the man again. He sees Jackson on a couple of different occasions who offers Benet his services but Benet, scared of the outcome of this emotional relationship that will require his loss of self and identity feels doubtful whether to accept Jackson or not. However, he cannot resist Uncle Tim's insistence.

---

[32]A. S. Byatt in his article 'Identity crises' likens the novel to an Indian Rope Trick, 'in which all the people are intent on going up the rope into an invisible world where they have no selves and therefore there is no story and no novel' (*Sunday Times*, 01 October 1995, p. 7/13). This is quite similar to Wittgenstein's ladder, which is used to go up the mountain of abstract concepts to a vast opening in the sun where people have no selves .

Right from the first time Benet sees Jackson until he learns his only name, Jackson is referred to as 'the man'--which is a trap for the reader because the reader anticipates something portentous to happen concerning him. Both Benet and the reader find it difficult to 'place' him. As we remember, in Murdoch, such grotesque figures generally act to show the contingency and incomprehensibility of the other. Jackson is the only character in the Murdochian world of fiction who has remained a total mystery, but not a sinister one, for the characters as well as the reader. Nobody knows anything about his past though we know that he has got a secret. The name Jackson can mean the son of Jack, in the sense that Jack 'typifying the common man,'[33] 'each and every person' as in the phrase 'every man jack'[34] or it can also mean 'jack-of-all-trades,'[35] as Jackson calls himself (122). Jackson is an electrician, a gardener, a detective, a cook, a maker of things, a mender of things, a man of all trades. He once even performed the duties of a priest (134). He can sing--towards the end of the novel we learn that Jackson and Priscilla Conti (Priscilla was a professional singer) sang together and her comment was, not surprisingly, 'A wonderful voice' (246). In Chapter 6 the mystery around Jackson is partly disclosed because Murdoch does not want the reader to romanticise the mysteriousness of Jackson. After all, he is the hero of the title as well as the backstage hero of the story but like Peter Mir in *The Green Knight* who turns out to be a very famous butcher--a very nice twist in Murdoch's humour--Jackson is literally a 'servant' by his own free will. In chapter 6 we are given access to Jackson's consciousness and we realise that he is an ordinary clumsy contingent person with limitations of his own--hence we have his dilemma mentioned in the title of the story. Jackson acts as a messenger: he brings the love message from Cantor, Marian's secret Australian lover, to Marian--which forms his dilemma. He tells Marian that she did the right thing not to have got married to Edward against her will and reason, since she does not love him. Jackson's dilemma, as far as the plot goes, is '*Shall or shall I not show her that piece of paper?'*, the paper that Cantor wrote to Marian expressing his

---

[33] *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 9th ed., Oxford: Clarendon, 1995.

[34] A. S. Byatt in 'Identity crises' describes Jackson's name as 'the son of Man or of every-man-jack' (p. 7/13).

[35] It is quite a meaningful coincidence that Iris Murdoch uses the same phrase to define a good teacher of literature. In *Metaphysics*, she says, 'A good teacher of literature (and of good literary critic) not only understands poetry (which not many people do) and other literary forms, but is a historian, a linguist, a connoisseur of other arts, and a sophisticated student of human nature. He is in the best sense a jack of all trades' (207). Is Murdoch here making a subtle connection between Jackson and herself, as somebody who is a 'jack-of-all-trades'?

love for her (147). However, on the figurative level, Jackson being 'each and every person', the title of the novel refers to the ethical dilemmas of the whole humanity here represented by Jackson, the fight between goodness, love and reason. In that respect, what does it mean, then, that he has got a lot of names (and ages) that place a great burden upon him? Is he the 'every man'? How many identities has he had so far that fits for many different occasions? When he says of his age that he is 43, does he in fact mean '43 lifetimes'[36], at least? Is he an 'angel'? A 'supernatural being in the form of a homeless person who materialises one night on Benet's London doorstep...?'[37] Or is Murdoch playing again with the reader's and the characters' expectations or desire to have magic and supernatural events and people in their ordinary lives that can save them? There are more questions than answers in the contingent life. Jackson wants to be a messenger working for a king or a scientist but then he changes his mind. What is holy and good is to carry the message--which is the message of love-- to the ordinary man. Marian is feeling hysteria, self-hatred, remorse, pain, guilt and desperation. Jackson tells her that 'none of it is real. People have experienced far more terrible things and recovered from them' (149). Jackson, quite cleverly, has seen that Cantor has been suffering from the love he has for Marian, but Edward's pain is related more to the loss of his pride by being rejected thus so publicly. As Anna Dunarven says of him, 'Jackson has second sight' (195). Indeed, he realises that Bran is not Anna's son by her dead husband, Lewen, but by Edward himself--Bran possibly shows him the old photographs of Edward and Anna together which Anna has been hiding in the loft (ibid.). Murdoch loves surprising her readers by such unexpected reversal of relationships among her characters which aim to show the contingency of life. Jackson gives Marian Cantor's message. His advice to Marian is to 'go where love is' because Cantor's message of love is 'a truthful message'. Murdoch's last book is quite optimistic even with so much sadness--Uncle Tim's death, Edward's brother's death, Tuan's lost aunt who remained in Germany during the Holocaust. As Jackson says people should 'believe' and 'have hope' and 'go where love is' (152). Jackson takes Marian to Cantor's flat, though with some hesitation: 'Another job accomplished. Or was it? Would she come running back? Or would she simply run away and get lost again?' (153). However, all ends well as in a Shakespearean comedy. Cantor

---

[36] Barnacle, p.5.
[37] Ibid., p. 5.

calls him 'a hero' , 'a magician' as he has helped them rescue themselves from despair. Owen Silbery, the painter, calls him ' a ringed bird' (122). Jackson thinks, 'An apt name. Where were the other names now? Yes, he carried a weight, a burden placed upon him by *them*. He had dreamed of something precious, a message carried to an emperor--or to a great scientist. No, not that, but holiness' (122). Jackson also has a lot of ages to offer to people who ask his age. When Marian asks him his age at Tara, Jackson gets startled and then wonders 'which of his ages he should most tactfully offer' and he says he is 43 (148). Mildred, at Benet's party for the young couples, looks at Jackson--who comes back to stay with Benet this time as Benet's 'friend' and 'adviser' after a brief separation period--and says, 'when he went away it was for another incarnation, he belongs with people who go on and on living, perhaps it is Tibet or somewhere else, how old is he, a hundred years, a thousand years, they come like guardian angels, they are guardian angels' (227).

As usual, Murdoch uses a realistic setting to base her grotesque and farcical story. The story mainly passes in the familiar streets and houses of London, generally Murdoch's main place of residence in her fiction, and the historically quite old village, Lipcot. The church of the town dates back to the fourteenth century. It has seen two wars and there are two memorials commemorating the village victims of the two wars, 45 in the First World War, including even a relative of Edward's, and just 4 in the Second World War. Edward's family house Hatting Hall also dates back to Cromwell's time when Cromwell's troops destroyed both some parts of the church and Hatting Hall; they attempted to set fire to it. The sceptical reader can go and check this as 'Marks of the fire could still be found in places upon the frontal bricks' (40). However in between this reality, Murdoch again inserts elements of the absurd and the farce and the fairy tale. The story moves slowly with some secretly placed absurd scenes that remind the reader of dreams. One of these absurd scenes takes place between Jackson and Cantor's landlady in London. Jackson dials Cantor's London flat number and the conversation goes as follows:

> Silence. Then a woman's voice. Marian's? No, certainly not Marian's. 'Hello.'
> Jackson, who had not carefully thought out what he was to say, said, 'Is he there? I've got a message for him, or for her.'
> 'Oh he's gone,' the rather pleasant woman's voice replied. 'He left us rather suddenly.'
> 'Oh, and about her?'

'I don't know they went away together, he came back alone and stayed a bit, then he took up all his things and left- '
'Please excuse me, but could you tell me to whom I am speaking - '
'I'm so sorry, I'm Mrs Bell, I am from the flat downstairs, I've got the key of the upstairs flat and-- '
'Could you tell me where he is now, do you know?'
'Oh yes, he left me an address and telephone number, but-well, he asked me not to tell it to people - may I ask who you are?
'I am his brother.' (123)

Because Jackson does not know the name of the person that Marian was with, he refers to 'the man' with the pronoun 'he' all the time and this makes the conversation sound quite absurd. There are also farcical scenes in the novel; characters acting with exaggerated behaviour, running up and down. When Jackson leaves Benet's house for good after Benet sends him away (he finds him drunk and asleep on a sofa with the house in a mess), Jackson goes to Owen's house. While he is there in the kitchen, Mildred comes. The scene looks like a drawing-room comedy. Owen immediately pushes her up to the drawing room and closes the door behind him and rushes down the stairs to tell Jackson who it is and to keep quiet; and then while seeing Mildred off, Benet comes and this time Owen pushes Mildred out and pulls Benet in and again up to the drawing room and again rushes down to the kitchen to tell Jackson that it is Benet. The scene that ensues is like a part from a comedy play where a player is hidden inside a cupboard or under a bed or behind a sofa listening to a conversation about him and the spectator is laughing at one of the speakers who is leading the innocent and unknowing one on. Owen pretends that he does not know anything about the whereabouts of Jackson; he says, 'I doubt if we shall see him again' while he and the reader know very well that Jackson is just a couple of stairs down sitting in his kitchen. To aggravate Benet's pain and regret for what he has written in his letter, Owen says, to the laughter of the spectator/reader, 'I expect we shall never know ... he may have died of grief, killed himself, thrown himself under a train or something' or 'starved himself in some miserable hole in loneliness and sorrow'(188). Benet feels terrible after this and says that he will never recover from what he has done to Jackson.

Murdoch, in almost all of her novels, tries to present parallel scenes between past and present. Towards the end, Benet remembers how he first met Jackson and the stages in their friendship:

> Where was Jackson now? Benet recalled how and where he had first met Jackson. He recalled the stages of their, so strange, acquaintance. Jackson near the bridge, following him to his house, the voice behind him saying, 'May I help you?' At that moment their eyes had met. Benet remembered those eyes. Then how Jackson had actually *touched his hand*, indicating that he did not want any money, now was that what it meant? Had it indicated some much larger possibility, some *signal* offered to Benet in vain? (177-178)

This contrast makes the reader compare and contrast the development in the characters' lives and reminds him/her of the passing of time unnoticed and contingent, with no special regard for people and events. When Benet remembers *those* days, it sounds so long ago, yet everything has all happened within the space of very few pages. This is one of Murdoch's ingenuities.

Like all Murdoch's books with third person narrators, this book has an omniscient narrator, who is not distant from the events and the people in the story. He seems to know all of these people very well. He says that the villagers want to come to the church on the wedding day even though the wedding is cancelled because they are sure that there will be some scenes. And the narrator says, 'They were *in fact* right, since Benet had been unable to reach all the invited guests by telephone. He had, *for instance*, not been able to warn Anna Dunarven' (31). The narrator is confirming that the villagers have a good point in assuming to witness some family scenes due to the jilting of the bride because there will be some people coming to the church, for instance Anna Dunarven--the narrator reminds the reader--under the impression of attending a marriage. The narrator also gives side-comments to the reader. Rosalind walks from Penndean to Hatting Hall over a wooden bridge: 'After the river, she had left Benet's territory, and entered Edward's territory' and he adds in parenthesis 'They still feuded about the bridge' (39). The narrator also has access into the consciousness of the characters, being an omniscient narrator. As such, we have many focalisers; the narrator moves in and out of the consciousness of one character after another. Murdoch is again using the camera-eye technique: Chapter 12 opens with Rosalind and Tuan, each lying side by side and thinking about their lives ahead. Rosalind , in a flash of lightning, sees '[s]o many strange things had brought them together, so many divine accidents' (235), starting from Marian appearing at Tuan's house and Tuan calling her. Tuan, on the other hand, is thinking about his studies and whether Benet will leave his house to Rosalind or to Marian or to Jackson. The camera then moves to the other couple in bed, Edward and Anna. Anna is thinking about how Bran discovered

about Edward and the events that followed, his throwing a stone at Edward's window at the very opening of the novel; Edward is thinking about Randall, his drowned brother, then about Bran and about Lewen, asking for forgiveness. 'Meanwhile, at the Sea Kings, Mildred was sitting upon Owen's bed' while Owen was pouring some whisky into his glass (237).

Jackson's Dilemma, despite some sad scenes, is full of light, sun, happy unions, comedy and laughter. In that sense, the book, being Murdoch's last book written so far, gains a further significance. All through her fiction, Murdoch has been talking about the Good, how people should try to come out of their selves and try to reach it, if not see it, even a glimpse of it because she knows that it is difficult for man to achieve the absolute Good; however, the defeat will be a *fairly honourable* defeat. In her previous books the endings have all been partly very sad, with exhaustion and solitary main characters, and partly some happy unions. Here, however, we have almost all the characters paired off happily ever after, except Jackson, who accepts to stay with Benet at Tara but he says he cannot 'guarantee that I will stay here or anywhere permanently' (245). Marian and Cantor get married and settle in Australia and are expecting a baby; so are Rosalind and Tuan, who get married and settle in Edinburgh, where Tuan turns out to have a paper company. Edward and Anna Dunarven also get married and are happy with Bran. Benet is also happy with all these happy unions and Jackson staying with him. Through Jackson Murdoch is asking herself the questions that critics and her readers have been asking her directly or indirectly about her writing recurrently about the Good. Jackson at the end of the book says to himself:

> Have I simply come to the end of my tasks? I wish I could say - 'I have only to wait.' How much did Uncle Tim understand, I wonder. Or, how much now will I understand. My powers have left me, will they return--have I simply misunderstood? (248)

Behind Jackson's questioning of his tasks, we can hear Murdoch asking herself the same questions and wondering if she has achieved what she initially aimed for and where she is heading. In these utterings, one can sense her intuitive awareness of her going to suffer from writer's block soon after this novel. She questions herself if she has managed her aim

so far and is this the last novel: 'Have I simply come to the end of my tasks?' she seems to ask herself. Of course, this is a double-sided question. It is directed towards the reader. Because the answer to the question is the reader who has been reading Murdoch's 'Novels of the Good' for *43* years now, since 1954 with *Under the Net*. Is it a coincidence then that Jackson is 43 years old and nearing the end of his task? Is Murdoch here trying to give us a message that she has tried to give to her readers repeatedly and insistently in her fiction and non-fiction in ordinary everyday language, which she uses to express and communicate the real life values rather than make language 'strange'? And with the rhetorical question 'Have I simply misunderstood?', Murdoch appeals to the knowledge of her own 'faithful'--in both of its senses--readers. The real question she is asking is 'Has the reader ever seen a glimpse of the light?'

CONCLUSION

THE END OF THE GAME?

> Literature ... has taken over some of the tasks formerly performed by philosophy. Through literature we can re-discover a sense of the density of our lives. Literature can arm us against consolation and fantasy and can help us recover from the ailments of romantics. If it can be said to have a task, now, that surely is its task. But if it is to perform it, prose must recover its former glory, eloquence, and discourse must return. I would connect eloquence with the attempt to speak the truth.[1]

says Murdoch in 'Against Dryness' about the moral obligation of the artist to portray truth in art. Like the artist, the reader for Murdoch should also be a truth seeker of morals. This develops his/her moral responsibility both in art and via art in his/her everyday life because 'appreciating a work of art' is the same as 'knowing another person.'[2] That is why in her novels she tries to present us with the vast interesting collection of characters other than ourselves. Reading such novels requires discipline, attention, imagination, love and a respect for the other. And all of these is a 'struggle for freedom,'[3] freedom from one's own ego. In these words are contained her moral teaching because the loss of the ego is the knowledge of the other and that is virtue. In that sense, her novels seem unfinished and repetitive because to understand other people is a love that never comes to an end--an endless love. In that sense, like George Eliot, we can also call Murdoch a 'serial writer'. That is, while George Eliot published her novels serially in chapters, Murdoch publishes her novels serially under the umbrella title 'the Good Novels', as one might call them. And in this connection, her serial readers become the 'Good Readers'. These novels have recurring patterns, scenes, characters which, apart from showing the recognition of Murdoch of the sameness of the human condition, they also appeal to the reading habits and consciousness of the hasty and forgetful reader who is used to being paralysed by the sentimental, consolatory traditional novels. In a way, this repetition serves as a sort of mnemonic to awaken the long-lived habitual consciousness of her reader and to keep its

---

[1] 'Against Dryness', p. 20.
[2] 'The Darkness of Practical Reason', *Encounter*, Volume 27, No. 1, July 1966, p. 50.
[3] *Metaphysics*, p. 270.

continuity, connecting past and present by clear or indirect cross-references. We observe the same method of repetition in Wittgenstein, too. His philosophical books are full of recurring ideas on philosophy, its objects and scope as well as its relation to language. This is part of 'philosophising' in its moral sense because as Murdoch says, 'Philosophy [and art] is partly a matter of finding appropriate places in which to say the obvious'[4] even if that means repeating oneself. In Murdochian philosophy of the Good, this serial writing gains a further significance as, for Murdoch, continuous moral effort and patience is a sign of virtue. Good art celebrates the contingency, incomprehensibility and inexhaustibility of the other. This contingency cannot be stated in one novel only. To be effective, it has to be shown from different moral points of view. This is what separates good art from bad art, which 'make us feel that we have arrived; we are home. We feel that we are already wise and good.'[5] Murdoch argues that because we are naturally selfish, our efforts are bound to end in moral failure, but this is an 'honourable defeat'. In a simple sense, this situation resembles to Derrida's idea of 'arriving at not arriving.'[6] There is no arriving in Murdoch because there is 'no time off from the demand of good.'[7] In that sense, the Murdochian reader remains 'an apprentice to good' for good. S/He starts his/her pilgrimage to the awareness of the contingent present by using a 'ladder'--like a Wittgensteinian ladder--whose footholds, in a way , form the resting places for his/her balance in her novels and in everyday life. And when the reader finishes reading the text, by which time s/he has also climbed up the ladder, s/he can now get a better view of the world around him/her. Similarly, Murdoch' s serial novels, which can be called 'a ladder of good novels' can also be likened to a ladder for the good reader to climb on his/her moral journey to goodness. And each novel is one foothold that gives the reader a sense of space and light. Instead of blinding the reader with a sudden shock of the vision of the sun, Murdoch prepares the reader book after book, each of which symbolises a momentary glimpse of the sun, 'a light that *shows* the world, this world, as it really is.'[8]

Because we learn morality in contexts rather than as 'detached thought', which is what the modern philosophers are doing now, Murdoch presents her philosophical precepts--which are attention, perception, reverence, tolerance, love, freedom, truth,

---

[4] *Metaphysics*, p. 183.
[5] Ibid., p. 13.
[6] Derek Attridge, ed. *Jacques Derrida:Acts of Literature,* New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 210.
[7] *Metaphysics*, p. 482.
[8] *Acastos*, p. 107.

contingency, and so on--through her novels of character which invite the reader to wonder at the 'great surprising variety of the world.'[9] Because she is a realist writer in the English tradition, we can say that the main approach to ethics in her novels is through the plot. We are, in other words, faced with plot and character in her fiction where facts stop and morals begin. Her novels are always a reminder to the reader of the contingency of life and our limitations. It is this open-textured nature of her novels that gives the Murdochian reader the moral pleasure to read her novels. As we have seen in the foregoing chapters, contingency underlies and undermines everything in her novels. The characters go through a moral struggle and some of them emerge from the cave but there is no sense of victory in Murdoch. They just get a momentary glimpse of reality and then ordinary life starts again. In the meantime, the reader, however, learns not to close the object and make it into a limited whole because characters are unfinished as real people, 'full of blankness and jumble.'[10] As T. J. Rice says in 'The Reader's Flight from the Enchanter', one of the 'enchanters that the reader must flee is his own "obsessive ego" ... [that tries to] shrink reality into a single pattern.'[11] Murdoch in that sense defeats the 'horizon of expectations' of the reader because as Wolfgang Iser also argues 'expectations may lead to the production of illusion' because whenever 'consistent reading suggests itself ... illusion takes over.'[12]

There is a philosophical game going on between the reader and the writer, a sort of 'chess game', as many critics have called it, that requires the willing and serious attention and patience of the reader. This game is against the reader's impatience, his/her desire and tendency to reveal and solve the plot. In other words, in her novels there is:

> a series of confrontations, predetermined and irrevocable, yet tantalizing in the preposterous variety of possible combinations, with victory often suddenly reversed and the end a sudden quirkish move in which the author decides she has played long enough. Accident, in the sense of an affront to any philosophical pattern, has appeared only in her now obligatory obeisance of events to mysterious portents, supernatural happenings--and even these, the author has implied, are merely moves in the game, but played, according to rules we are not expected to understand, by some invisible players who determine human fates.[13]

---

[9] *The Sovereignty of Good,* p. 66.
[10] *Metaphysics*, p. 97.
[11] Tucker, p. 75.
[12] *The Act of Reading*, p. 124.
[13] P. G. Wodehouse, 'I'll move mine if you move yours', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 October 1971, p. 1305.

To clear the air, in the Murdochian world of fiction the reader starts his/her pilgrimage from 'under the net'--as her very first novel is entitled--and becomes a pupil and a 'good apprentice' if s/he continues reading the series with attention. S/He is a pilgrim and will remain a pilgrim because the mystery of life is endless. Accordingly, we can call her each novel as a beam of light, all of which form together the sun itself as the moral guide to the reader.

Indeed, her pen-name 'Iris'[14] alone gives her moral philosophy away. The word 'iris' means the iris of the eye that provides the vision with the help of the light from the sun. And in the language of flowers its meaning is 'the message'. So the 'iris in the sun' is the message to the reader. And the message in Iris Murdoch is that the contemplation of art and nature with love cures distorted vision in contingent everyday reality. This moral point of her novels and philosophy can be summarised as 'The more one sees, the more one knows. The more one knows, the less one understands.' What she does is not to give us a new way of seeing, feeling and understanding the creation but to regain or to remember our old good real way of perceiving the present. The puzzle/game of Murdoch is to reverse the order of the poem by Robert Browning called 'A Death in the Desert', which goes:

"What Does, What Knows, What Is;

three souls, one man."[15]

And turn it into :'Who Sees, What Knows, Which Is Not'.

'Oh well,' says Dame Iris Murdoch, after her tragic illness, 'I'm no longer in the game, I'm afraid.'[16] Is this the end of the game, then since Iris Murdoch will not be able to continue writing her 'Good Novels' any more? Will this also make the reader feel at the end of the game? Although '[w]e want to make a move to a conclusion, our conclusion,'[17] says Murdoch, we have to remember that 'we all, not only can but have to, experience and deal with a transcendent reality, the resistant otherness of other persons, other things,

---

[14] Iris Murdoch's real name is Iris Jean Murdoch. Her choice of 'Iris' as her pen-name, in a way, serves to symbolise her aim in her writing.
[15] *The Poems of Robert Browning*, p. 641.
[16] Christine Doyle, 'It's rather like falling from stair to stair in a series of bumps', *The Daily Telegraph*, 04 February 1997, p. 16.
[17] *Metaphysics*, p. 105.

history, the natural world, the cosmos, and this involves perpetual effort ... Most of this effort is moral effort.'[18]

[18] *Metaphysics,* p. 268.

To Be Continued by the Reader....

PRIMARY TEXTS

Murdoch, Iris. "The Novelist as Metaphysician." *The Listener*. Volume 43. No. 1103. 16 March 1950. pp. 473-476.

-------, "The Existential Hero." *The Listener*. Volume 43. No. 1104. 23 March 1950. pp. 523-24.

-------, 'Nostalgia for the Particular.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.* Volume 52. 1951-52. pp. 243-260.

-------, *Sartre-Romantic Rationalist*. London: Penguin. 1953.

-------, "Symposium: Vision and Choice in Morality." *Aristotelian Society.* Supplementary Volume 30. 1956. pp. 32-58.

-------, "Let Them Philosophise." *Spectator*. 14 December 1956. p. 873.

-------, "Hegel in Modern Dress." *The New Statesman and Nation*. Volume 53. No: 1367. 25 May 1957. pp. 675-676.

-------, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited." *Yale Review*. Volume 49. December 1960. pp. 247-71.

-------, "Against Dryness." *Encounter*. Volume 16. No. 1. January 1961. pp. 16-20.

-------, "The Darkness of Practical Reason." *Encounter*. Volume 27. No. 1. July 1966. pp. 46-50.

-------, *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1970.

-------, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1977.

-------, *Acastos-Two Platonic Dialogues*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1986.

-------, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London: Penguin. 1993.

IRIS MURDOCH'S NOVELS:

------, *Under the Net*. London: Penguin. 1960.

------, *The Flight from the Enchanter*. London: Penguin. 1962.

------, *The Sandcastle*. London: Penguin. 1960.

------, *The Bell*. London: Penguin. 1962.

------, *A Severed Head*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1961.

------, *An Unofficial Rose*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1966.

------, *The Unicorn*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1963.

-------, *The Italian Girl*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1964.

------, *The Red and the Green*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1965.

------, *The Time of the Angels*. Middlesex: Penguin. 1968.

------, *The Nice and the Good*. London: Penguin. 1969.

------, *Bruno's Dream*. London: World Books. 1970.

------, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1970.

------, *An Accidental Man*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1971.

------, *The Black Prince*. London: Penguin. 1975.

------, *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1974.

------, *A Word Child*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1975.

------, *Henry and Cato*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1976.

------, *The Sea, The Sea*. London: Penguin. 1980.

------, *Nuns and Soldiers*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1980.

------, *The Philosopher's Pupil*. London: Penguin. 1984.

------, *The Good Apprentice*. London: Penguin. 1986.

------, *The Book and the Brotherhood*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1987.

------, *The Message to the Planet*. London: Penguin. 1990.

------, *The Green Knight*. London: Penguin. 1994.

------, *Jackson's Dilemma*. London: Penguin. 1994.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abrahams-Curiel, Diana, trans. *Living Zen.* Robert Linnsen. London: George Allen and Unwin. 1958.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms.* Forth Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. 1971.

Acheson, James, ed. *The British and Irish Novels Since 1960.* London: Macmillan. 1991.

Alexander, Flora. *Contemporary Women Novelists.* London: Edward Arnold. 1989.

Appleyard, Brian. *Becoming a Reader.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1990

--------, "Paradox of All the Virtues." *The Times Saturday Review.* 3 October 1992. pp. 4-6.
--------, "Trading Death against Dignity." *Sunday Times.* 09 February 1997. p. 5/2.

Attridge, Derek, ed. *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature.* New York: Routledge. 1992.

Baldanza, Frank. "Iris Murdoch and the Theory of Personality." *Criticism.* Volume 7. No: 2. Spring 1965. pp. 176-189.

---------, *Iris Murdoch.* New York: Twayne Publishers. 1974.

Barnacle, Hugo. 'Stuck on the misery-go-round'. *The Independent Weekend Section.* 07 October 1995. p. 5.

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan or The Boy Who would not Grow up.* London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1928.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida.* London: Vintage. 1993.

Bass, Alan, trans. *Positions: Jacques Derrida.* London: Athlone Press. 1981.

Bayley, John. *The Characters of Love.* London: Constable. 1960. (Rep. 1962)

Bellamy, Michael O. "An Interview with Iris Murdoch." *Contemporary Literature.* Volume 18. 1977. pp. 129-140.

Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory. Key Critical Concepts.* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1995.

Benson, Larry D. *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP. 1965.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin Books. 1972.

Bergonzi, Bernard. *The Situation of the Novel*. London: Macmillan. 1970.

Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. London: Macmillan. 1991.

Bigsby, Christopher and Heide Ziegler, eds. *The Radical Imagination and the Liberal Tradition: Interviews with English and American Novelists*. London: Junction Books. 1982.

Blackburn, Simon. 'The Good and the Great'. *Times Literary Supplement*. 23 October 1992. p. 3.

Blofeld, John, trans. *The Zen Teaching of Hui Hai: On Sudden Illumination*. London: Rider. 1969.

Blum, Lawrence A. *Moral Perception and Particularity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1994.

Bochenski, J. M. *Philosophy*. Dordrecht (Holland): D. Reidel Publishing Company. 1962.

Boland, Eavan. 'Dark Star of Unreason'. *The Observer Review*. 12 September 1993. p. 52

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: Chicago UP. 1961.

Bove, Cheryl K. *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. 1993.

Bowie, G. Lee, Meredith W. Michaels and Robert C. Solomon. *Twenty Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1988.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1973.

Bromwich, David. "Why Authors Don't Give Us Their Own Worlds." *Salmagundi*. No: 80. Fall 1988. pp. 127-143.

Bryden, Ronald. "Talking to Iris Murdoch." *The Listener*. 4 April 1968. pp. 433-434.

Byatt, A. S. *Degrees of Freedom. The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*. London: Vintage. 1994.

------, 'Identity crises'. *Sunday Times*. 01 October 1995. p. 7/13.

Clemen, Wolfgang. *Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: Collected Essays.* Liverpool: Liverpool UP. 1979.

Cohan, Steven. "From Subtext to Dream Text: The Brutal Egoism of Iris Murdoch's Male Narrators." *Women and Literature.* Volume II. 1982. pp. 222-242.

Colley, Mary. "Iris Murdoch: The Good Novelist." *Contemporary Review.* Volume 261 (1523). December 1992. pp. 319-22.

Conradi, Peter. 'Useful Fictions: Iris Murdoch.' *Critical Quarterly.* Autumn, 1981. pp. 63-69.

-------, *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist.* Hampshire: Macmillan. 1989. (Rep. 1990).

-------, "Husband is Entitled to Speak for Wife." *Sunday Times.* 02 March 1997. p. 5/8.

Critchley, Simon. *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas.* Oxford: Blackwell. 1992.

Culler, Jonathan. *Structuralist Poetics.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1975.

----------, *Barthes.* London: Fontana Paperbacks. 1983.

Curtis, Anthony. 'Time to party with nanny.' *Financial Times.* 11 September 1993. p. 18.

Cusk, Rachel. 'Redemption from the past.' *The Times.* 12 October 1995. p. 38.

Daleski, H. M. *The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence.* London: Faber and Faber. 1965.

Danto, Arthur C. *What Philosophy Is: A Guide to the Elements.* Middlesex: Penguin. 1968.

Devitt, Michael. *Realism and Truth.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1984.

Dickinson, G. Lowes. *The Meaning of Good: A Dialogue.* London: J. M. Dent and Sons. 1921.

Dipple, Elizabeth. *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit.* London: Methuen. 1982.

Downing, Angela. "Recursive Premodifications as a Literary Device in Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, the Sea.*" *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* (RCEI). Spain. 10 April 1985. pp. 65-80.

Doyle, Christine. "It's rather like falling slowly from stair to stair in a series of bumps." *The Daily Telegraph.* 04 February 1997. p. 16.

Eco, Umberto. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts.* Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1979.

--------, *The Open Work.* Trans. Anna Cancogni. London: Hutchinson Radius. 1989.

-------, *The Limits of Interpretation.* Bloomington: Indiana UP. 1990.

Edel, Leon. *The Modern Psychological Novel.* Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith. 1972.

Eliot, George. *Essays and Leaves from a Note-book.* Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons. 1884.

Emmet, E. R. *Learning to Philosophise.* London: Longmans. 1964.

Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones. A Foundling.* Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics. 1992.

Fish, Stanley. 'Why No One's Afraid of Wolgang Iser?' *Diacritics.* Volume 11. March 1981. pp. 02-13.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel.* London: Edward Arnold. 1961.

Freund, Elizabeth. *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism.* London: Methuen. 1987.

Friedlander, Paul. *Plato: An Introduction.* Hans Meyerhoff, trans. Princeton: Bollingen Series Lix. 1973.

Frost, Bill. "Husband confirms Iris Murdoch, 77, has Alzheimer disease." *The Times.* 05 February 1997. p. 8.

Furbank, P. N. 'Between past and present.' *Times Literary Supplement.* 22 May 1981. p. 563.

Gasché, Rodolphe. *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection.* Massachusetts: Harvard UP. 1986.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic.* New Haven: Yale UP. 1979.

-----, *No Man's Land I- The War of the Words.* New Haven: Yale UP. 1988.

Glendinning, Victoria. "We're off to see the Wizard again." *The Times.* Thursday, 16 September 1993. p. 36.

Green, Martin. *The English Novel in the Twentieth Century (The Doom of Empire).* London: Routledge. 1984.

Grothjahn, Martin. *Beyond Laughter: Humour and the Subconscious*. New York: McGraw Hill. 1966.

Haffenden, John. "John Haffenden talks to Iris Murdoch." *Literary Review*. Volume 48. April 1983. pp. 31-35.

Harari, Josue V. *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*. London: Methuen. 1980.

Hardy, Barbara. *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form*. London: University of London/The Athlone Press. 1963.

Hartnack, Justus. *Immanuel Kant: An Explanation of his Theory of Knowledge and Moral Philosophy*. New Jersey: Humanities Press. 1974.

Harvey, W. J. *Character and the Novel*. London: Chatto and Windus. 1965.

Hocking, William Ernest. *Types of Philosophy*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1939.

Hodgson, Godfrey. 'A view over England, seen from above.' *The Independent*. 24 October 1992. p. 26.

Holland, Norman N. 'Unity Identity Text Self'. *PMLA*. Volume 90. 1975. pp. 813-22.

-------, *Holland's Guide to Psychoanalytic Psychology and Literature-and-Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford UP. 1990.

Howells, Christina. *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1988.

Hudson, W. D. *A Century of Moral Philosophy*. Guildford: Lutterworth Press. 1980.

Hughes, G. E. H. "Narrative Secrets and Reader Coercion: Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil*." *Hiroshima Studies in English Language and Literature*. Volume 32. 1987. pp. 1-16.

Hughes-Hallett, Lucy. 'Resurrection shuffle.' *Sunday Times*. 19 September 1993. p. 6/13.

Humm, Maggie, ed. and intro. *Feminism: A Reader*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1992.

Humphreys, Christmas. *Zen Buddhism*. London: George Allen and Unwin. 1976.

Innis, Robert E., trans. *The Central Texts of Ludwig Wittgenstein.* Gerd Brand. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1979.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett.* Baltimore: John Hopkins. 1974.

-------, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1978.

Jeffares, A. Norman. *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats.* London: Macmillan. 1984.

Johnson, Daniel. "Making Sense of Metaphysics." *The Times.* 10 October 1992. p.12.

Johnson, Deborah. *Iris Murdoch.* Sussex: Harvester. 1987.

Jones, D. A. N. "Arms against absurdity." *Times Literary Supplement.* 24 November 1976. p. 1198.

Jones, Peter. *Philosophy and the Novel.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1975.

Kermode, Frank. "The House of Fiction: Interviews with Seven English Novelists." *Partisan Review.* Volume 30. No. 1. Spring 1963. pp. 61-65.

Kellaway, Kate. 'Jackson's Dilemma.' *The Observer Review Section.* 01 October 1995. p. 16.

Kittredge, George Lyman. *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith. 1960.

Knoepflmacher, U. C.. *George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism.* Berkeley: University of California Press. 1968.

Koller, John M. *Oriental Philosophies.* London: Macmillan. 1985.

Kott, Jan. *Shakespeare: Our Contemporary.* London: Routledge. 1994.

Lawrence, A. Blum. *Moral Perception and Particularity.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1994.

Lawrence, D. H. *Women in Love.* London: Penguin. 1988.

Lerner, Laurence. *The Truth-Tellers: Jane Austen, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence.* London: Chatto and Windus. 1967.

"Letting others be." *TLS.* 23 February 1973. p.197.

Lindsay, A. D., trans. *Republic.* Plato. London: J. M. Dent. 1976.

Lodge, David, ed. *Modern Criticism and Theory. A Reader*. London: Longman. 1988.

------, ed. *20th Century Literary Criticism.* Essex: Longman. 1972.

------, *The Modes of Modern Writing*. London: Edward Arnold. 1977.

Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction.* London: Jonathan Cape. 1963.

Mackay, Shena. 'When Shena met Iris.' (Interview) *The Independent Magazine.* 11 September 1993. p. 41.

Macquarrie, John. *Martin Heidegger*. London: Lutterworth Press. 1968.

Magee, Bryan. "Philosophy and Literature: Dialogue with Iris Murdoch." *Men of Ideas. Some Creators of Contemporary Philosophy*. London: BBC. 1978.

Marget, Madeline. "The Water is Deep: Iris Murdoch's Utterly Demanding Present." *Commonweal.* Volume 118 (2). 14 June 1991. pp. 399-402.

Martin, Graham. "Iris Murdoch and the Symbolist Novel." *The British Journal of Aesthetics.* Volume 5. 1965. pp. 296-300.

Massie, Allan. 'Death on the shelf: Have English novelists lost the plot?' *The Daily Telegraph* (*Weekend*). 16 October 1993. pp. 13-19.

May, Keith M. *Characters of Women in Narrative Fiction.* London: Macmillan. 1981.

Medcalf, Stephen. "Towards Respect for Reality". *Times Literary Supplement*. 27 September 1985. pp. 1047-1048.

Meyers, Jeffrey. "An Interview with Iris Murdoch." *Denver Quarterly*. Volume 26 (1). Summer 1991. pp. 102-111.

Michael, John. 'Fish Shticks: Rhetorical Questions in Stanley Fish's Doing What Comes Naturally'. *Diacritics*. Volume 20. No. 2. Summer 1990. pp. 54-73.

Miller, J. Hillis. *Theory now and then.* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1991.

Miller, Jane. *Women Writing about Men.* London: Virago. 1986.

Modern Fiction Studies. 'Iris Murdoch' Special Issue. 1969. 15:3.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics*. London: Routledge. 1985.

Monk, Ray. "Morality for Goodness's Sake." *The Independent*. 24 October 1992. p. 26.

Moss, Howard. *The Magic Lantern of Marcel Proust.* London: Faber & Faber. 1963.

Muir, Kenneth. *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence.* Liverpool: Liverpool UP. 1979.

Murfin, Ross C., ed. *Heart of Darkness: Joseph Conrad. A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 1989.

Myerson, Julie. 'Our revels are unending.' *The Independent on Sunday Review.* 08 October 1995. p. 37.

Nagel, Thomas. *What does it All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford UP. 1987.

Newman, Karen. *Shakespeare Rhetoric of Comic Character.* New York: Methuen. 1985.

Norton Anthology-English Literature. 6th ed. Volume 2. New York: Norton. 1993.

O'Connor, Patricia J. "Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist." *New Comparison-A Journal of Comparative and General and Literary Studies.* 8 Autumn 1989. pp. 164-176.

O' Connor, William Van. *The New University Witts and the End of Modernism.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP. 1963.

Paton, H. J. *The Categorical Imperative: A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy.* London: Hutchinson University Library. 1946.

Philips, Diana. "The Challenge of the Past: Iris Murdoch and the Legacy of the Great Nineteen-Century Novelists." *Caliban.* Volume 27. 1990. pp. 73-81.

Pinney, Thomas, ed. *Essays of George Eliot.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1963.

Plato. *Theaetetus.* Robin A. H. Waterfield, trans. Middlesex: Penguin. 1987.

Pollard, Arthur, ed. *Thackeray: Vanity Fair.* London: Macmillan. 1978.

Porlock, Harvey. 'Critical List.' *Sunday Times.* 22 October 1995. p. 7/2.

Prince, Gerald. *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative.* Berlin: Mouton Publishers. 1982.

Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur. *On the Art of Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1920.

Raban, Jonathan. *The Technique of Modern Fiction.* London: Edward Arnold. 1968.

Ramanathan, Suguna. *Iris Murdoch: Figures of Good.* Hampshire: Macmillan. 1990.

Raphael, Frederic. "Too good to be true." *The Sunday Times.* 25 October 1992. p. 64.

Rawlins, Jack P. *Thackeray's Novels: A Fiction That is True.* Berkeley: California UP. 1974.

"Re-run for the Enchanter." *TLS.* 29 January 1970. p. 101.

Richards, I. A. *Complementarities--Uncollected essays.* John Paul Russo, ed. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. 1976.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics.* London: Routledge. 1983.

Ritter, Constantin. *The Essence of Plato's Philosophy.* London: George Allen and Unwin. 1933.

Roberts, Michele. 'Lemon peel and dragons.' *The Independent.* 09 October 1993. p. 29.

Romberg, Bertil. *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-person Novel.* Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell. 1962.

Roxman, Susanna. "Contingency and the Image of the Net in Iris Murdoch, Novelist and Philosopher." *Edda* (Scandinavian Journal of Literary Research). Volume 2 1983. pp. 65-70.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy.* Oxford: Oxford UP. 1974.

Rylance, Rick. Ed. *Debating Texts: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Literary Theory and Method.* Milton Keynes: Open UP. 1987.

Rynin, David, trans. *Problems of Ethics: Moritz Schlick.* New York: Dover Publications. 1962.

Sage, Lorna. "The pursuit of imperfection." *Critical Quarterly.* Volume 19. No. 2. Summer 1977. pp. 61-87.

------, 'Among entities.' *Times Literary Supplement.* 29 September 1995. p. 25.

Schaeffer, Neil. 'Irony'. *Centennial Review.* Volume 19. No. 3. 1975. pp. 178-86.

Scholes, Robert. *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction.* New Haven: Yale UP. 1974.

----------, *Semiotics and Interpretation.* New Haven: Yale UP. 1982.

Schowalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing.* London: Virago. 1978.

Scruton, Roger. "Through fictions to reality." *Times Literary Supplement.* 25 November 1977. p. 1382.

Selden, Raman. *Practising Theory and Reading Literature.* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1989.

Sellers, Susan, ed. *Writing Differances-Readings from the Seminar of Helene Cixous.* Milton Keynes: Open UP. 1988.

Seymor-Smith, Martin. *Who's Who in Twentieth Century Literature.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 1976.

Shigematsu, Soiku. *A Zen Forest: Sayings of the Masters.* Tokyo: Weatherhill. 1981.

Shippey, Tom. 'In a magic circle.' *Times Literary Supplement.* 10 September 1993. p. 20.

Simon, Richard Keller. *The Labyrinth of the Comic: Theory and Practice from Fielding to Freud.* Florida: Florida UP. 1985.

Skilton, David. *The English Novel: Defoe to Victorians.* Newton Abbot: David and Charles. 1977.

Slawinski, Januzs. "Reading and Readers in the Literary Historical Process." *New Literary History.* Volume 19. No: 3. Spring 1988. pp. 521-539.

Sontag, Susan, ed. *A Barthes Reader.* London: Jonathan Cape. 1982.

Sparshott, F. E. *An Enquiry into Goodness.* Toronto: Toronto UP. 1958.

"Spiders and Flies." *Times Literary Supplement.* 16 January 1969. p. 53.

Stanhope, Henry. "Entangled in the Murdoch net." *The Times.* 17 January 1991. p. 20.

Stenius, Erik. *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Critical Exposition of Its Main Lines of Thought.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1960.

Stierle, Karlheinz. "Interpretations of Responsibility and Responsibilities of Interpretation." *New Literary History.* Volume 27. No. 4. Autumn 1994. pp. 853-866.

Stock, Brian. "The Self and Literary Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages." *New Literary History.* Volume 27. No: 4. Autumn 1994. pp. 839-852.

Strawson, Galen. 'Flighty enchanters.' *The Independent on Sunday-The Sunday Review.* 12 September 1993. p. 30.

Sturrock, John. "Reading Iris Murdoch." *Salmagundi.* No: 80. Fall 1988. pp. 144-160.

----------, ed. *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida.* Oxford: Oxford UP. 1979.

Styan, J. L. *The Dark Comedy: The Development of Modern Comic Tragedy.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1968.

Suleiman, Susan R. and Inge Crossman, eds. *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation.* New Jersey: Princeton UP. 1980.

Sullivan, Zohreh T. "Iris Murdoch and the Enchantment of Untruth." *Essays on the Contemporary British Novel.* Hedwig Bock and Albert Wertheim, eds. Munchen: Max Heber Verlag. 1986.

Suzuki, D. T., Erich Fromm and Richard De Martino. *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis.* London: Souenir Press. 1960.

Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro. *Essays in Zen Buddhism.* London: Rider. 1970.

Taylor, D. J. 'Snake in the sun.' *The Guardian.* (Section 2) 13 October 1995. p. 6.

Taylor, Richard, ed. *Introductory Readings in Metaphysics.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall. 1978.

Teichman, Jenny and Katherine Evans. *Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1991.

The Poems of Robert Browning. London: Oxford UP. 1928.

Thompson, P. W. "Iris Murdoch's Honest Puppetry-The Characters of Bruno's Dream." *Critical Quarterly.* Volume 2. No. 3. Autumn 1969. pp. 277-283.

Todd, Richard. *Iris Murdoch: Shakespearean Interest.* London: Vision. 1979.

Tomlin, E. W. F. *The Approach to Metaphysics.* London: Kegan Paul. 1974.

Tompkins, Jane P., ed. *Reader-Response Criticism From Formalism to Post-Structuralism.* Baltimore: John-Hopkins UP. 1980.

Trapido, Barbara. 'On the shelf.' *Sunday Time.* 14 August 1994. p. 7/7.

Tucker, Lindsey, ed. *Critical Essays on Iris Murdoch.* New York: G. K. Hall. 1992.

"Under Iris Murdoch's net." *Economist.* Volume 328. 25 September 1993. pp. 129-30.

Vinson, James, ed. *Contemporary Novelists.* London: St. James. 1972.

Wall, Stephen. "The grammar of guilt." *Times Literary Supplement.* 18 April 1975. p. 416.

Warminski, Andrzej. "Response." *Diacritics.* Volume 17. No. 4. Winter 1987. pp. 46-48.

Watts, Alan W. *The Way of Zen.* London: Thames and Hudson. 1957.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction.* London: Routledge. 1988.

-----, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern.* London: Routledge. 1989.

Webster, Richard. 'Structuralist Theology and the Emperor's Clothes'. *Literary Review.* No: 24. 5 September-18 September 1980. London.

Weiss, Frederick G. Ed. *Hegel: The Essential Writing.* New York: Harper and Row. 1974.

Wilson, W. Daniel. "Readers in Texts." *PMLA.* Volume 96. No. 5. October 1981. pp. 848-860.

Witemeyer, Hugh. *George Eliot and the Visual Arts.* New Haven: Yale UP. 1979.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner. 1922.

--------, *Zettel.* Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1967.

--------, *Philosophical Investigations.* Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1968.

Wodehouse, P. G. "I'll move mine if you move yours." *TLS.* 22 October 1971. p. 1305.

Wolff, Robert Paul. *About Philosophy.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 1989.

Wood, Allen W. *Kant's Moral Religion.* Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell UP. 1970.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own--Three Guineas.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 1993.