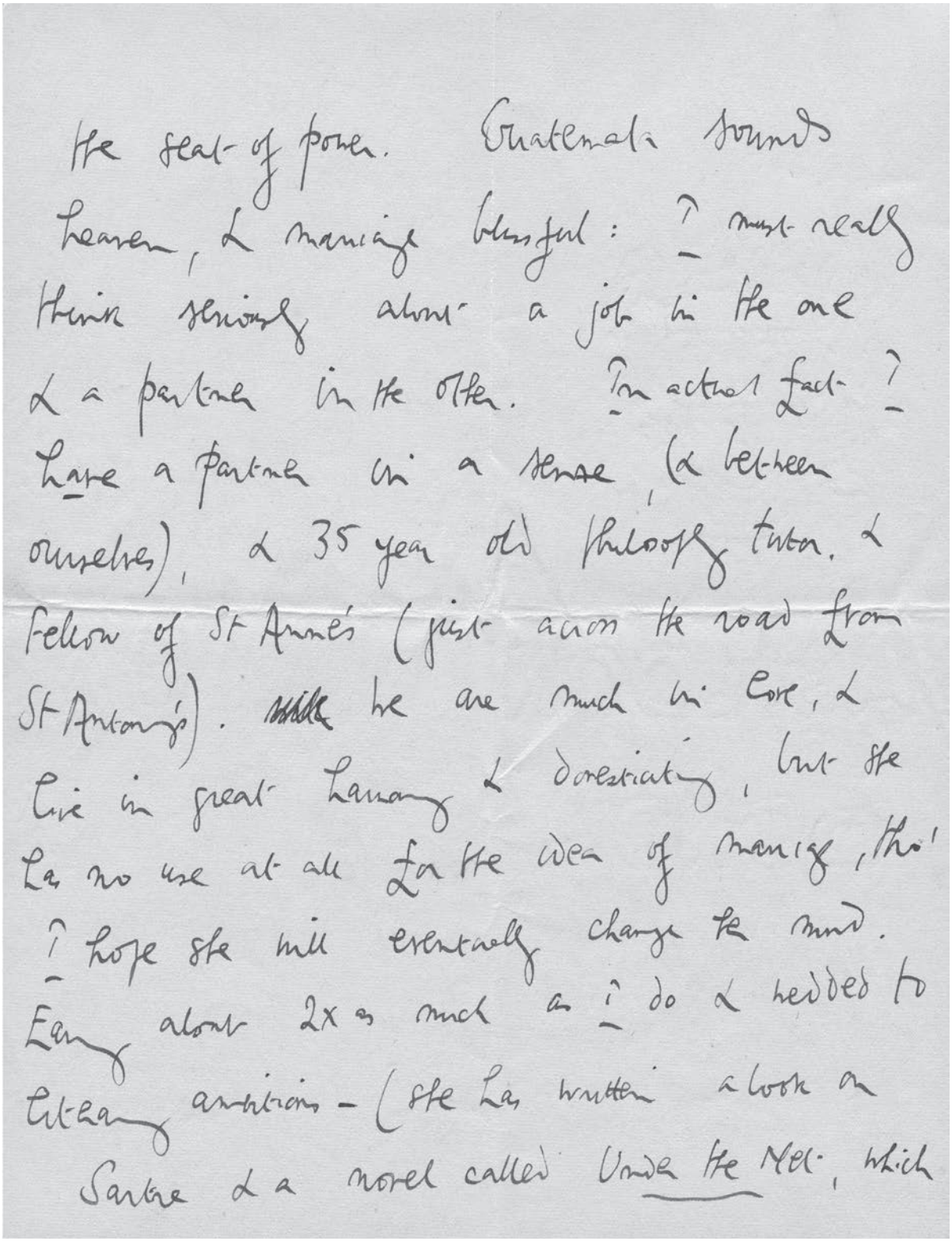
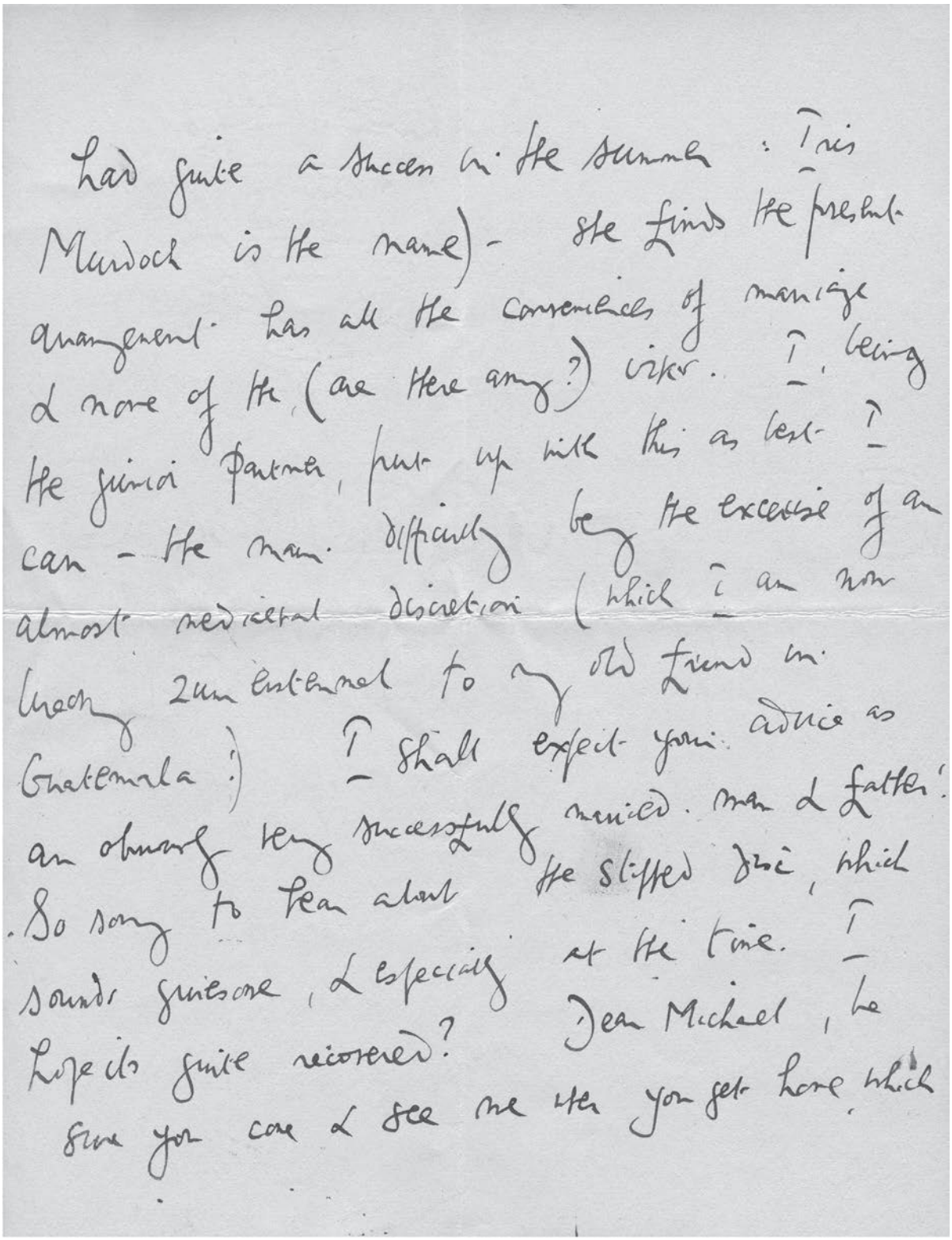
For
Mrs Audhild Bayley



the seat of power. Guatemala sounds heaven, & marriage blissful: ? must really think seriously about a job in the one & a partner in the other. ? In actual fact ? have a partner in a sense, (& between ourselves), a 35 year old philosophy tutor, & fellow of St Anne's (just across the road from St Antony's). We are much in love, & live in great luxury & domesticity, but she has no use at all for the idea of marriage, tho' ? hope she will eventually change her mind. Earns about 2x as much as ? do & nedded to [illegible] ambitions - (she has written a book on Sartre & a novel called Under the Net, which

Letter from John Bayley to Michael Howard dated January 1955 from the Iris Murdoch



had quite a success in the summer: Iris Murdoch is the name) - she finds the present arrangement has all the conveniences of marriage & none of the (are there any?) cares. I, being the junior partner, put up with this as best I can - the main difficulty being the exercise of an almost medical discretion (which I am now much unaccustomed to in my old friend in Guatemala!) I shall expect your advice as an obviously very successful married man & father. So sorry to hear about the stiffed disc, which sounds quite severe, & especially at the time. I hope it's quite recovered? Dear Michael, let me know when you get here, which give you care & see me after you get here which

Archives at Kingston University Special Collections. See page 60 of this issue for transcription.

The Iris Murdoch Review

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We wish to thank Michael Howard for permission to use the photograph of John Bayley for the cover photograph, and the Fryer Library, the University of Queensland Library, for permission to use the photograph of John Bayley on the back cover.

A record of this journal is available from the British Library.

The Iris Murdoch Society

The Iris Murdoch Review

The *Iris Murdoch Review* (Kingston University Press) publishes articles on the life and work of Iris Murdoch and her milieu. The *Review* aims to represent the breadth and eclecticism of contemporary critical approaches to Murdoch, and particularly welcomes new perspectives and contexts of inquiry.

Contents:

John Sees a Stork at Zamorra

Walking among quiet people out of mass
He saw a sudden stork
Fly, from its nest upon a house.
So blue the sky, the bird so white,
For all these people an accustomed sight.
He took his hat off in sheer surprise
And stood and threw his arms out wide
Letting the people pass
Him on either side
Aware of nothing but the stork-arise.

On a black tapestry now
This gesture of joy
So absolutely you.

Iris Murdoch

Editorial Preface

Writing to her American friend, Naomi Lebowitz, in December 1982, after blizzards had hit the UK, Iris Murdoch accounts for her delayed reply:

> I wrote you a LONG letter full of wise saws and elegant jesting, and gave it in open envelope to JB to add his epistle. He then promptly, when dancing in the snow by moonlight, fell and broke his ankle and is in hospital. The letter has, in this crisis, been lost (not in the snow), he says it is in his study on the table but it isn't.[1]

The picture of her husband joyously dancing in the snow by moonlight serves as well as any vignette in Murdoch's novels to give the *essence* of a personality; here is a man who relished uncommon events, who took pleasure in unselfconsciously, often eccentrically, experiencing every moment to the full – and, it should be said, was unfortunately accident prone. Another such telling image has greeted us from the opening page of this volume: writing out of her own moment of awe, Iris Murdoch penned 'John Sees a Stork at Zamorra', now sketching her husband, hat in hand, arms outstretched, gazing in wonder at the stork's flight. Both images distil his ability to *be* in the moment, absorbed into that which is other than himself, and vividly celebrating the power of delight – 'so absolutely you'.

This tribute edition of the *Iris Murdoch Review* is just one of the ways that the life and work of Professor John Bayley is being celebrated in the year of his death. Two close friends, Lord Maurice Saatchi and Ed Victor, organised an earlier celebration at the House of Lords on 1 June 2015. Many old friends and colleagues from Oxford, the literary world and the Iris Murdoch Society joined with John Bayley's widow, Audi, in remembering him with great pleasure and affection. Mrs Bayley movingly recounted the manner of her husband's death: he passed away on 12 January 2015, while with his wife at their home in Lanzarote. There was consolation, she felt, in that he had the death we would all want, dying peacefully in his sleep in his own bed. He had surprised her though, by being uncharacteristically romantic (he never remembered birthdays or anniversaries) and had requested that, when the time came, his ashes should be scattered at Cascob, Peter Conradi's home in Wales, where they were married in the adjacent church in 2001.

Surprise at how much one does not know about John Bayley, we hope, will be one of the functions of this tribute: his great gifts as a literary critic are celebrated by Clive James; tribute to his tutorship is paid by Charles Lock; A.N. Wilson's introduction to Bayley's first novel *In Another Country* (1986 edition) is reprinted here for fresh readership, and is followed by Frances White's critical analyses of all his novels and his life-writing trilogy. Ian Beck gives an account of his collaboration with Bayley on the design for the covers for the novels, and out of the many obituaries that appeared after Professor Bayley's death we have chosen to reprint the one by Valentine Cunningham, which first appeared in the Guardian. Pamela Osborn's assessment of John Bayley as an elegist and the ways that he has now himself been appropriated as a subject for elegy closes these various perspectives. Professor Bayley's own voice speaks out from these pages in his short introduction to *The Power of Delight* (2005), in his letters to his life-long friend Michael Howard, and in the closing poem, 'At the Memorial Service (After Thomas Hardy)'. A bibliography of Professor Bayley's publications completes the volume.

To the personal tributes that appear in the *Liber Amicorum*, I would like to add my own – on behalf of the Iris Murdoch Society, the Iris Murdoch Archive Project and Kingston University. Professor Bayley's help was crucial in acquiring Iris Murdoch's Oxford library for Kingston

[1] Iris Murdoch's letters to Naomi Lebowitz are in the Special Collections, Washington University, St Louis, USA.

University in 2004. After generously putting the library up for sale for £150,000 to raise funds for both a scholarship in his wife's memory at St Anne's College, Oxford and research into Alzheimer's disease, he promptly donated many thousands of pounds to the appeal for Kingston University to buy it. The heavily annotated collection of over 1,000 books has attracted scholars from all over the world and informed much recent Murdoch scholarship.

After the library had been delivered to Kingston University (the original plan being to create a replica of her Oxford study there), I spent the day at Charlbury Road with the university photographer Chris Thomas and our then Head of Learning and Research Support, Jane Savidge. The process of photographing every nook and cranny from all angles took many hours. But John and Audi were kindly hosts, providing pots of tea and Garibaldi biscuits from a kitchen whose cupboards had been painted red and green (to resemble a Gypsy caravan) with painted ivy to provide authentic decoration. John showed us where Iris wrote her books, where she wrote her letters (on a roll top desk that had once belonged to Tolkien), where she gave interviews and where she sat to read – we passed the bedroom where John typed his memoirs as Iris slept beside him. As we viewed her paintings, her icons and other artifacts, never once did the conversation revert to himself. His intent was only one of revealing, through her treasured possessions, something unique about Iris. Financial constraints have derailed the plans for the replica study, but the Murdoch Archives have a fine photographic record of the home in which Iris Murdoch wrote her last novels and of the iconic images that informed her thinking. Professor Bayley's kindness has extended to gifting copyright to all Iris Murdoch letters, regardless of their provenance or whereabouts, to Kingston University. Such a gift has not only helped us to secure hundreds of thousands of pounds in funding, but also greatly hastened the publication of *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* (to be published by Chatto & Windus in the UK in November 2015 and Princeton University Press in the US in early 2016).

In her kindly response to my condolences Mrs Bayley said she was overwhelmed by the obituaries for her husband: 'I think I never realised how famous he was'. This aside must surely best sum up a man so clever yet so unassuming, a man with many talents and great humility. At the end of his poem about the memorial service to Thomas Hardy, with which this volume closes, John Bayley notes that 'A perfect stranger here today/ Already takes his place.' Death of course will eventually distance us from the man who once lived, but the following pages will, we hope, serve to reacquaint us with and preserve the memory of a searing intellect and a gentle, kindly friend.

Anne Rowe
Kingston University, August 2015

John Bayley

Introduction to *The Power of Delight: A Lifetime in Literature: Essays 1962-2002*[1]

The aspirant of literary criticism (perhaps one should use the word in its old continental military sense of the cadet serving and hoping, often vainly, for promotion) has one advantage over the budding poet or promising young novelist. He is not on his own, with his own self-sought measure of originalities. He has not been told by Ezra Pound to 'make it new'; he need not attempt to astonish a Jean Cocteau. An editor has told the aspiring critic what to write about, in how many words, and by when. This can stabilise him, even cheer him up, as he attempts the frightening task of getting words on paper for his first review. He begins to practise his craft in the welcome knowledge of supervision, and with an experienced and more or less well-disposed arbiter just behind him.

But as the young critic grows not only in confidence but in knowledge of his trade's techniques – in knowledge, too, of the scale and scope of the texts he writes about – he will want to put forward a personality of his own, and to show where he stands in relation to colleagues and rivals. This process may be either instinctive or deliberate. Some friends may have told him, 'Whatever you do, don't start writing like X, or with the insufferable self-regard of Y. Be natural,' as if anyone in the world of criticism, or indeed perhaps of art itself, has ever succeeded in being that.

It is good advice all the same, however impossible of fulfilment, and it leads to the important related question of what *line*, in a general way, should the beginning critic propose to take. Is he to lay about him in all directions, becoming numbered with well-known *féroces*, or will he choose to be one of the soft men, who are in practice seldom so kindly and so well-disposed as they seem, even if they are not Chaucer's 'smiler with the knife under the cloak,' or the critic of Pope's *Acquaintance*, who would 'just hint at fault and hesitate dislike.'

In general, as the critic matures, he discovers that he can change his mind, but not his basic attitudes. Those are more instinctive. The great nineteenth-century Russian critic, Vissarian Belinsky, known to writers of the day as 'Furious Vissarian', was steadfast in his belief that the function of writing was to reform ideas, institutions, and the people; but, as Edmund Wilson, a great admirer pointed out, his taste for, and his sense of good writing – Pushkin's most notably – was unerring, and as finely tuned as that of any aesthetic critic, who proclaimed and believed in Art for Art's sake. By the same token, a staunch believer in the political correctness of today may nonetheless relish authors to whom the whole idea of such correctness is or would be a joke, and who believes that it can be the conscious function of much good art – as with the writings of Philip Larkin or Evelyn Waugh, for instance – to be as politically incorrect as possible.

Many of the best critics can be what one of them, the distinguished American Matthew Prince, described as 'dramatists of literary ideas.' And certainly ideologies can never be avoided by the critic. Even when he takes no interest in them, or thinks he does not, he cannot avoid referring to them in relation to the authors he deprecates, or admires, or even loves. Perhaps the best as well as the most comforting advice for the aspirant was given by Dr Johnson, the least likely person to want to lay down any kind of critical system. 'It is a good service one reading man does another when he tells him his own manner of being pleased.' All of us have different ways of being pleased by books – *quot homines, tot sententiae*, as the Romans used to say – and a reader's

[1] John Bayley, *The Power of Delight: A Lifetime in Literature: Essays 1962-2002*, selected by Leo Carey (London: Duckworth, 2005).

life would be very boring if he found himself in agreement with all other readers. Iris Murdoch, once a junior member of the Communist Party, used to amuse one later on in her life by repeating the old rhetorical query that she and her fellow members had once applied to all things, great or small: 'What's the Party Line on this one, comrade?' That attitude is about as far as it can be from Dr Johnson's view of the matter. It gave us a good laugh, whether we were discussing *Dr Zhivago* or wondering whether to buy a more expensive brand of coffee. Must first find out and follow the Party Line.

Wandering through these reviews of fifty years, which have been admirably selected and collated by *New Yorker* editor Leo Carey, I found the most interesting thing for me is the question of whether the piece would make me want to read again the book or author I had once reviewed. Very often I found I did want to; and I began to wonder whether that wasn't, perhaps, the most valuable service a critic could render: not only inspiring a member of the reading public to read the book, but to persuade some of them to read it again. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, is not a book which in my experience many people enjoy the first time. They may feel they *ought* to be enjoying it, because it is generally acknowledged to be a comic masterpiece, and yet they often find themselves irritated or baffled. But if they can bring themselves to read the book again, on some later occasion, they may well feel the genuine and spontaneous delight in wit, pathos, deft and ingenious bawdy, that somehow passed them by the first time. A friend's wife has read *War and Peace* twice with the keenest pleasure, not missing a line, and proposes to read it a third time as soon as the occasion offers. I felt inspired by this to have another go myself, although after once writing on *War and Peace* I had felt I should never be up to tackling it again as a book for pleasure. But when I tried, I found I was reading it in a more relaxed way, and the pleasure was unconscious and in a way less demanding. The greater power of book delight is in its spontaneity, whether we are discovering pleasure or rediscovering it.

There is no point in continuing to talk about my own views and outlooks and methods when these things will of necessity reveal themselves to anyone who is prepared to read some of the pieces that follow. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. As the novelist Anthony Powell observes in the pages of that great epic seen from the standpoint of a writer's life, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, 'a writer writes what he is.' And this is as true of a critic as of a novelist or poet.

Every reviewer knows that of the work he produces over a span of fifty years or more very little will deserve to see the light of day again, and of that little he is in luck if some of it actually does get reprinted. Leo Carey has an excellent nose for the kind of thing that might be hoped to deserve exhumation, and I should like to thank him again for the charitable but judicious eye he has brought to making this selection. I must also thank Bob Weil at W.W. Norton for thinking up the project in the first place and believing that the results might justify it; also for his admirable work on the book as a general editor.

In 1955, when I started teaching English Literature at Oxford University, it was normal for a college Tutor to teach the whole syllabus from Chaucer and earlier, to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Of course he or she did not know it all equally well – gutsy, from the Tutor's point of view at least, but there were some advantages to this method. We got to know the students better, and if we and the students got along well together we shared our knowledge and impressions to equal advantage, over a continuous period. At the same time as I started teaching I also started reviewing, and I found the two activities went well together: teaching literature and writing about it seemed and seem complementary activities.

The pair of them inspired as well sudden flurries of enthusiasm for this or that author, not necessarily one that I was teaching or happened to be writing about. I recall being bowled over by Robert Lowell's poetry, particularly *The Life Studies*, but that seemed as it were a private matter, and it was not until some time later that I wanted to write about him, or teach him, and eventually met the poet himself. But I thought then, and still think, that Lowell's poetry is some of the very best produced anywhere in the century. He and Philip Larkin admired each other's poetry,

and they were both excellent judges.

After I had been teaching and reviewing English literature for some time, I suddenly developed a strong urge to learn enough Russian to read Pushkin. I had read Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev and Chekhov with immense and varied pleasure, and without any great sense that I was missing something important by not being able to read them in the original. But Pushkin was another matter. I felt encouraged by Edmund Wilson's pioneer essay, in which he suggests that Pushkin, of all poets, needs his own words, and quite simple words they always are to make his own extraordinary impact. I found I was delighting in those words even when I barely knew what they meant. It was not like a learning process, but more a sudden thrill of discovery. Later on I wrote a book about him, *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary*, in which I tried to show what the poet was like by relating him to other European and American writers – not necessarily of the same period – in order to bring out both his uniqueness and his own kind of magical accessibility. The power of sheer pleasure in reading and remembering Pushkin's verse is as great as anything one is likely to experience in a lifetime with words. Moreover, the pleasure of reading in translation the great Russian novelists, Russian poets too, is in some mysterious way greatly enhanced by the feeling of Pushkin's presence in the work of his successors, and the knowledge that they had all felt and known that presence so keenly.

One of the pleasures of reviewing comes when the reviewer is asked to take on some author with whom he is most familiar or one whom he has largely forgotten. He learns again, and the lesson he learns, so to speak, may turn out quite a different one. I had fixed ideas in my head from earlier readings of Dickens, Trollope, and Orwell, among many others. Reviewing those authors not only drastically revised those ideas but also made me conscious of a different kind of pleasure in rereading them. The same goes for Hardy and Kipling, two writers to whose novels, poems, and stories I had been deeply attached since childhood, without quite knowing why. Again, the pleasure of reading about them and reviewing them caused me to ponder more deeply why I had loved them and why I still did, although perhaps in different ways and from a different perspective.

Occasionally I have felt that I might have missed or ignored a writer completely if I had not been asked for a review. The pleasure of meeting and enjoying the wonderful work of the Polish-Jewish writer Bruno Schulz, and the haunting poems in German of Paul Celan, is something for which I shall always be deeply grateful. Doing a review brought us together. To have missed Celan in particular would have been to forfeit not only delight in the wonderful strangeness of his verse but also some of the deepest and most painful experiences that any writer of our age has described in art.

Clive James

On John Bayley

Forty years of John Bayley's book reviews have given us a book almost too rich to review. Where to start? Bayley himself at one point conjures the threat of 'reviewer's terror, a well-known complaint like athlete's foot'. Tell me about it, mutters the reviewer's reviewer. There are more than six hundred pages in the book, and after reading it this reviewer finds that he has made almost four hundred notes. Every reviewer knows that, for a thousand word review, a mere ten notes are enough to induce paralysis. So either this is going to be a forty thousand word review, or there will have to be a winnowing. It could start with a mass crossing-out of all the phrases and sentences transcribed merely because they are excellent. Since we don't seem to need William Gerhardie's novels any more, do we really need what Bayley says about Gerhardie's life? 'Like most butterflies, he was far too tough to be broken on a wheel.' But no, it's too good: we do need it. And maybe we need Gerhardie's novels as well, if they could inspire a critic to a sentence as neat as that.

In this respect, if in no other, Bayley resembles the more slavish of the old-time bookmen memorialised by John Gross in *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. Hacking away week after week, they either enjoyed most of what they were force-fed or else they choked on its abundance. George Gissing was only the most famous victim of piecework literary journalism. Others did worse than fail: they succeeded, earning the tiny immortality of termites. For them, delight was compulsory. Bayley's delight is compulsive: a different thing. He revels in everything that has been written well, and he himself writes so well that he adds to the total. Reviewing a writer's biography, he reads, or re-reads, the other books by the biographer, every book by the biographee, and brings in all the other relevant writers he can think of. Talking about a novel, he has not only read all the other novels by the same novelist, he has read all the novels by other novelists that are remotely like this novel. (Sometimes very remotely: the resemblance of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* to *Northanger Abbey* hadn't occurred to me before, and I wonder if it will again.) He sees no end of connections, but the best thing about them is that they are not theoretical.

Apart from his intellectual objections, the main reason Bayley has no time for literary theory is that he is absorbed in literary practice. Praising Fred Kaplan's biography of Dickens, Bayley endorses Kaplan's 'all-around attention,' adding that the understanding of Dickens is 'probably best served [...] not by theories about him but by the facts - all the swarming lot of them.' Among the swarming lot are the facts about how the good Jew Riah got into *Our Mutual Friend*. It was because a deputation of London's Jewish citizens had pointed out that the bad Jew Fagin in *Oliver Twist* had worked mischief in their lives. Kaplan supplied that fact. But Bayley, with a typically resonant epithet, supplies the further relevance. 'Dickens promised like royalty to put the matter right.' The word 'royalty' conveys an insight, based on real events in Dickens's life. Risen to great rank, Dickens had dispensation to bestow. The author's achieved position in the real world, and the other world he created while occupying that position, were in complex interplay. Social duty and artistic impulse didn't always coincide - Riah, a better role model than Fagin, is a far less interesting character - but there is no understanding Dickens without acknowledging the connection. Concern with such a thing puts Bayley back not just beyond Cultural Studies (in which there are no authors, only texts) but beyond the New Criticism (in which the text tells all). The latest and perhaps among the last in a native line of artist-critics that stretches back through V.S. Pritchett, Cyril Connolly and Desmond McCarthy by way of Matthew Arnold to Hazlitt and even further, he exemplifies the old tradition of socio-literary commentary, with all its benefits and dangers. The chief danger is to lapse into the sweet distraction of gossip. But the

chief benefit is so valuable that we would be foolish not to welcome such a lavish demonstration of what it is. The literary past comes alive, sheds all the schemata that have been imposed on it, and teems with contingency, like now. The effect is of a glass-bottomed bucket dipped into the water beside the boat, so that the tourists can suddenly see the living colours and incessant traffic of the reef beneath.

Dickens is a good place to start with Bayley, who is fully familiar with everything Dickens wrote, takes his supreme importance for granted, and can draw on the perceptions of every scholar who has done the same. Humphry House is commended, as is John Carey. (The professor's son, Leo Carey, is the able curator of this book, which must have taken some curating: Bayley, by all reports, was never a man to keep orderly files of anything, least of all his own articles.) Dr Leavis is duly twitted for ever having held the 'unreal' opinion that Dickens, except for *Hard Times*, was a mere entertainer. Leavis revised that opinion later, but it was amazing that he should ever have advanced it. Elsewhere, Bayley is generously ready to concede that the irascible Leavis could say pertinent things, but generosity exceeds itself when Bayley says that 'attitudes have changed a good deal since then.' They have only changed back to what they were before Leavis made his bizarre strictures. Not only was Chesterton, whom Bayley mentions, fully aware of Dickens's true stature, so was Shaw. Bayley doesn't mention Shaw at all in that context, but Shaw mentioned Dickens habitually. Shaw assumed that the readers of his Prefaces would recognise his profuse allusions to the Dickens characters. It could be daunting if you didn't, as I well remember; but there was no mistaking Shaw's love of Dickens, which exceeded even his love of Wagner. Many years later, when I finally got round to reading the capital works of Dickens instead of merely pontificating about them, it was because Shaw's enthusiasm had niggled in my conscience too long. If I had not done so then, Bayley's enthusiasm would make me do it now. The personal theme is worth touching on because one of the things reviewing does, or should do, is to transmit an appreciation, sometimes to the point of sending an ignoramus to the bookshop.

Or even back to Trollope. For those of us to whom Trollope matters but not a lot, Bayley sends the message that he should matter a lot. How did we convince ourselves, after reading half a dozen of Trollope's novels, that the other umpteen could be safely put off until we had overcome the same impression about Balzac? Bayley synthesises the answer from the facts assembled in three different books about Trollope that he is reviewing. Trollope damaged his own reputation by being too honest in his autobiography. The picture he painted of himself, getting up early in the morning to knock off a few new chapters before lunch, gave even those readers who wolfed down his books a chance to belittle him as an artist. Tolstoy adored him and later so did Yeats, but a long roster of eminent readers has never been enough to get him taken seriously. Bayley thinks the very idea of 'seriousness' is a blind alley anyway, but he particularly objects to it when it draws attention away from what he regards as any writer's best tactic, to present an attractive surface while delving deep, to grow a pleasure garden over the mine. In his view, 'serious-minded persons from Dr Johnson to Dr Leavis' were bound to miss the point about Sterne: if he hadn't been a court jester for the *beau monde*, he would never have been able to tell so much truth. The aristos were less shockable than the upcoming bourgeoisie. Bayley takes the same line with the novelist at the apex of all his admirations, Jane Austen: treating matters of life and death in a manner that did not match their solemnity, she proved that 'light is the best foil for the dark.' We could add that Henry James thought he was doing the same thing in *The Awkward Age*: he honestly believed that the style he chose was a babbling brook, even though it strikes us as an invitation to suck up a sand dune through a straw. But before adding our own observations on the point, we had better deal with some of Bayley's. The idea of a seductive context for profundity looks a bit less useful when George Eliot leaves him cold. Once again he has read all of her and all about her. Edmund Wilson, notoriously, reached his harsh judgement about *Middlemarch* without having read it. Bayley knows what he is talking about, but that just makes what he

actually says about her more of a poser. 'The fate of lawgivers and sibyls, in literature if not in life, is to have no lasting influence.'

Well, *Middlemarch* still has an influence on some of us. Even if all you remember about Casaubon is his Key to All Mythologies, you have remembered a powerful symbol for busy futility, and if you remember that his still-born summa was 'as endless as a scheme for joining the stars', you have equipped yourself with a pretty good line to mutter the next time you make an unassisted attempt to update the software of your lap-top. Those of us who will always need instruction in goodness are bound to go on recalling Dorothea once we have read about her, and to recall also that the story of her example is why the clinching line about the 'unvisited tombs' has its plangent force. Such an impact on a modern reader sounds like a lasting influence to me. What was Bayley expecting her to have a lasting influence on? The Novel? But his preference for talking about all those hundreds of considerable novels in all languages, rather than about that abstraction The Novel, which exists only in the meta-language of theory, is one of the best things about him. So we quarrel with him on behalf of his best self, using his own principles to do so. There are things in this book that can make you fume. What would John Bayley say about them? Wait a second: he wrote them.

In fact, Bayley's fondness for paradox can carry him away. Usually it carries him away in the right direction. It's an unexpected but useful thing to say about Keats that he didn't really want to write some of the poems we most admire. He would have preferred to avoid what was then thought of as 'women's' romance. But, says Bayley, when Keats got his genius fully in line with his intentions, the result was only 'Hyperion'. Keats did better when 'The Eve of St Agnes' trapped him into the kind of emotional turmoil that women wanted to hear about. Bayley is slyly funny about the good Madeline's unlikely fate at the hands of Porphyro the noble voyeur. 'Keats has boxed himself comically in [...] by his insistence that his hero make love, like an incubus, to a sleeping girl, and without waking her up: an undeniably difficult feat, even if the girl were not, as Madeline is, a virgin.' Good on the actualities of sex, Bayley knows that not all of them are physical. He sounds more paradoxical than he is when he defends the 'sex in the head' of John Cowper Powys against D.H. Lawrence's supposedly piercing idea that a romantic longing could only be a deception. In our love lives, it's 'Romance' (Powys's capital letter and Bayley's quotation marks) that carries the real erotic charge, although Lawrence might have been right to think that it's also what does the damage. In another part of the forest, Bayley calls Stendhal's treatise on love abstractionist, and his women characters 'pillow-dreams'. Too much sex in the head, perhaps? But taken either way, this point about the material and spiritual in carnal knowledge is a focal point for argument about almost every novelist we care for. It isn't for Conrad, whom Bayley admires, but it is for Hardy, whom he admires even more, and for Tolstoy, whom he admires with a discovering purity reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's when he read Tolstoy in French translation and wrote the pioneering articles in English about the Russian's greatness. Bayley asks the question about human passion that we can't help turning to our own use. What exactly happened to Anna Karenina and Vronsky? Did they lose a dream when it came true? Quite often we get annoyed with him for forgetting to ask it. Shouldn't he have seen that Casaubon is Dorothea's Karenin? Isn't the agony of Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* a genuine possibility in any man's conscience, and not just a dilemma cooked up by a Catholic apologist who is out to scare us? If Bayley's book, glittering with perceptions, sometimes seems as big as a small universe, this oscillating point about idealism and desire is one of the worm-holes that take you everywhere in it: a scheme that really does join the stars.

Sometimes the angle of approach is so unexpected that it spoils the party, like a waiter who overdoes the fancy footwork and delivers the soup into your lap. Evelyn Waugh, we are told, was short on humour. 'But humour in fiction is about an interest in real people, and Waugh had no such interest.' One is reminded of Stephen Potter's classic ploy for reviewers: if an author is

famous for a particular characteristic, accuse him of not having enough of it. Speaking as one whose spirits can be revived at the mere thought of little Lord Tangent's incremental demise in *Decline and Fall*, I can only say that I think Evelyn Waugh was short of humour the way that Sir Richard Branson is short of confidence. But what, the reader sputters, about the young man who vomits into the room instead of out; and Mrs Stitch's little car going down the lavatory steps; and Apthorpe's thunder box; and [...] the list goes on like moments from Dickens. Isn't Mrs Melrose Ape up there with Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House*? You could deny that Waugh had amiability - his version of *Nicholas Nickleby's* Ninetta Crummles, The Infant Phenomenon, would have been a lot nastier - but to deny him a comic gift sounds like comedy in itself. Such moments from Bayley prove that the knack for paradox should always be set to fire single shots, and never switched to automatic. His indulgence of it, mercifully infrequent, is the only way he ever reminds you of those desperate commentators, omnipresent now in our multiple media outlets, who must always advance an outlandish opinion because they don't write well enough to make a reasonable opinion interesting. Since Bayley writes more than well enough to advance reasonable opinions indefinitely, you sometimes wonder how he could let the Devil get into him. Perhaps, on occasion, even he gets bored.

Or perhaps the Devil gets into Bayley when God gets into art. Bayley much prefers Anthony Powell to Evelyn Waugh. Quoted almost as often as Auden, Powell is treated as a friend throughout the book, and clearly revered as an artist, even when the critic likes some of his novels more than others. (Bayley favours the peace-time volumes of the *Music of Time* sequence over the wartime ones, thus reversing the usual preference: the reader is left to decide whether the reviewer might be saying this because too many people said the opposite.) Bayley correctly points out that Powell's chief concern, unlike Waugh's, was less with the landed gentry than with the higher bohemia and its population of misfits. Powell would never have bothered to revisit Brideshead, even though he lived in a house quite like it, if on a smaller scale. But probably Bayley's main reason for preferring Powell to Waugh is that he prefers humanism to mysticism. He just doesn't think that art and religion make a good match, especially if the religion is an adopted one, as in the case of Waugh - and the case of Graham Greene, by whom he is enthralled even less. Without precisely calling those two eminent Catholic converts perpetrators of a put-up job, he makes it clear that he thinks their religiosity detracts from their scope of vision rather than adding to it. This emphasis on Bayley's part will ring a bell with anyone who thinks that not even Dante was able fully to subject his human comedy to divine judgment, and couldn't have written it if he had. A work of art exists to occupy the whole space between tumultuous reality and the artist's attempt to give it shape, with no supervening providence to nullify the order of what has been achieved. Bayley is at his very best when he is pushing his insistence that the mundane is sublime enough. ('Boots and shoes', 'the detail and the dailiness': the phrases keep on coming.) He is surely right. Art, by making bearable sense of the world, is out after religion's job, which is probably why no religion in its fundamentalist phase has ever liked it. Art is its own ideal state, which is probably why Plato didn't like it either.

Plato wanted the poets thrown out of the ideal Republic. For Bayley, they are the way in, the entrance to the only habitable civil order, which can never be ideal. Poetry comes first and fiction follows. The poetry of Pushkin, as you might expect from a critic who would be well-known if he had written about nothing else, is the key subject of the book's Russian section, whose wealth we should not allow to daunt us just because he can read the language. Speaking about the Russian poets from Pushkin through to Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva and Pasternak, he is equipped to assess them right down to the level of their technique, and he can do the same for those prose stylists who will always present difficulties to a translator because they either inhabit the musicality of their language or else gain in effect by deliberately damping it down: Gogol, Turgenev, Bunin, Chekhov, Babel. Modest about his attainments as a linguist, Bayley would not want us to be

astonished by his capacities with Russian. We should try to agree with him. Though it is a full-time job to speak any language except our own well enough to stay out of gaol, we ought to expect from any critic a reading knowledge of the standard European languages, and Russian would have been one of those if things had gone differently in 1917: it took the Revolution to stem the onrushing force of Russian culture, and even as things turned out, the accumulated achievement up to that time demands by right as close a familiarity as possible. Bayley would be the first to admit that only a native speaker can get to the heart of, say, Gogol, whose babyishly playful verbal inventiveness was at the source of a torrential imagination that not even his most madcap works could fully find room for. (Gogol convinced his mother that he had invented the steam engine: a pertinent fact that Bayley, for once, fails to record.) But the critic reads the language well enough to know whether Gogol's 'primal power of creation' has been well translated or not. So deep a feeling for the historic background, when it comes to assessing post-Revolutionary literature, gives Bayley both an advantage and a drawback. The advantage is that he can get right in amongst the details of the professional jostling that goes on between writers even when the State is bearing down on all of them equally: Pasternak, we learn, was daunted by Mayakovsky's 'zany felicities'. The drawback is that Bayley tends to share, or seem to share, Isaiah Berlin's genial belief that Russian culture, just because it was not entirely stamped out, somehow came through. The power of delight trumps the power of disgust.

Not that Bayley is politically insensitive to the twentieth century European disaster in its awful multiplicity. Nobody has written better about such an immediate victim as Bruno Schulz, or such an eventual victim as Paul Celan; and about an exile such as Witold Gombrowicz he gets into the secret of how a modern Pole could echo Conrad by taking his country's history of dislocation with him into a world of his own. A pity, here, that Bayley's piece is mainly about an English translation of Gombrowicz's pre-war surrealist novel *Ferdydurke*, rather than about the many wonderful volumes of his *Journal* and *Varia* that until recently were still coming out in French year after year. Holed up in Buenos Aires while his lost homeland went to Hell two different ways in succession, Gombrowicz lost interest in The Novel, including his own novels, and even lost interest in any form of art: he wanted a formless art, a genre beyond the genres. He came to think that you could just write, as long as you wrote well enough. It's a view that Bayley himself exemplifies. His essay about another displaced Polish speaker, the Lithuanian Czesław Miłosz, would be my pick for the most thrilling item in the collection, perhaps the best place to start in a book you can start anywhere. He exults at Miłosz's confident readiness to work in all the literary fields, as poet, critic, historian and philosopher. 'By writing in every form, he writes virtually in one: and he instructs in all.'

But poetry is where it starts, even for Miłosz. 'The self in his poetry is not impersonal but effortlessly manifold.' Poetry is language at its closest to the world, and incorporates automatically an acceptance that the things of this world are actually there. For Bayley, Barthes's confident insistence that 'the fact can only exist linguistically, as a term of discourse' is a sign of madness from the one theorist he regards as even half-way sane. He might have quoted T.E. Hulme in rebuttal: 'Philosophy is about people in clothes, not about the soul of man.' Bayley is good about people in clothes. Wordsworth's poems 'are like one's parents' clothes - always out of fashion.' But our critic, an accomplished poet himself when he was young, has the tools of technical analysis to tell you why Wordsworth will always be current, and why Tennyson deservedly became 'a pop star, one of the most successful and famous ever.' Bayley can tell whether his subject poets have the palpable earth for a launch-pad when they lift off for higher realms. That useful emphasis runs out of road only when he gets to John Ashbery. According his own principles, Bayley ought to be powerfully delighted by the later Ashbery's unflagging determination to blend all of America's vernacular tones into 'the natural voice of the contingent present,' a nice way of describing a slow avalanche of verbal hamburger. But scepticism shines through the praise. 'Ashbery in his

own way often *sounds* memorable.' The italics are a deliberate giveaway. Ashbery is out to mean everything by saying anything, and Bayley clearly suspects that the attempt is in danger of adding up to nothing, because there is nothing to keep in your head. Finally Bayley believes that all writing should aim to be remembered. It can't happen, but the possibility should be there. It is there everywhere in this fabulous flea-market of a book, which might have the additional merit of finally putting an end to the tediously recurring contention that book reviews should never be collected. Book reviewers who say that are right about themselves, but couldn't be more wrong about a man like this.

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Charles Lock

John Bayley: a Student's Tribute

As a literary critic John Bayley was indifferent to anything that smacked of cleverness; he showed scant regard for literary theory or any approach to literature that did not take enjoyment as its premise and the enhancement of enjoyment as its purpose. In his first critical book, *The Romantic Survival*, Bayley addressed the conflict in the academic study of literature 'between the serious business of analysing a poem and the frivolous pleasure of reading it' and observed that arguments on either side tend to leave 'out of account the function of criticism that most appealed to Dr Johnson. "It is a good service that one man does to another when he tells him his manner of being pleased".' (p.68) The citation is characteristically imprecise and unattributed – endemic inaccuracy of citation was an unfortunate consequence of too firm a reliance on a prodigious memory – but the principle is declared, and would be maintained for half a century.

Bayley's first book was the novel *In Another Country*, much admired by Elizabeth Bowen, which draws on his military experiences from 1943 to 1947, notably in Germany from 1945. He liked to put it about that marriage to Iris Murdoch had the effect of discouraging his own aspirations as a novelist. Yet, immediately following his retirement in 1992 from the Warton Professorship of English Literature at Oxford, four more novels appeared between 1994 and 1997. Then between 1998 and 2001 he published the three memoirs of his life with Iris which found a readership far beyond the academy, and brought him an unwonted degree of celebrity and controversy. I remember reading an excerpt from *Iris* in a newspaper around Christmas 1997, and wondering at the pathos set in motion by prose of such diffident elegance. It was prose of a kind I had not known Bayley hitherto to be interested in writing – personal, affecting – and if it caused offence to some of Iris's friends, it avoided, precariously, almost breathtakingly, the dangers attendant on words inadequate to their theme.

Bayley's facility as a writer, the limpidity of his prose, the flexibility of its syntax – whatever the genre – might be seen as recompense for the stammer, even revenge upon it. Though he could certainly deploy his involuntary hesitations to strategic effect it was no laughing matter; it could be dreadfully inhibiting in seminars, and seriously disruptive in a lecture. (The first time I saw John Bayley was at his inaugural lecture as Warton Professor, held either in late 1974 or early 1975; on such an occasion the stuttering was not to be stifled and I can remember very little of what was said, so overwhelmingly memorable remains the manner of its saying. I heard enough words only to know that whatever he was offering in the way of lectures or seminars, I would be there.) In his seminars one willed the word forth, but a fierce glare met any auditor who presumed to supply it, however long it had been in the waiting. I suspect that from early childhood he must have written fairly continuously – not jottings but sentences – developing that verbal suppleness that was syntactically inerrant, and a mastery of genres appropriate to any need or occasion. Most of us have to work at writing, and find talking easier; Bayley's prose manifestly delights in its freedom from the constrictions of the tongue.

When *Iris* was published there was some astonishment that a 'full-time carer' should find any moments to write at all. Though perhaps not a compulsive writer, Bayley found it hard to desist; listening to another's lecture, or attending a committee meeting, the writing would start, and it was not notes that he was taking but prose that he was composing. Over five decades John Bayley provided long and sophisticated articles for numerous journals on a vast array of literary topics; it was a formidable, intimidating example for his students, no less so for the pleasure and illumination to be had from their reading. In the years when he was my doctoral supervisor (1978-82) I knew him only as a critic and essayist; looking back now over his life's work of nine critical studies, three collections of essays (with dozens uncollected), five novels

and three memoirs, one is most impressed by the range of modes that Bayley had mastered. Even among the nine critical books there is little sense of repetition for there are marked differences among them: *An Essay on Hardy* is an essay, albeit of a book's length, lacking any titles or chapter-headings, and without introduction, conclusion or index. Being an essay, it offers no alternative but to be read through. (And it remains an outstanding account of Hardy as both novelist and poet.) By contrast, *Pushkin: A Comparative Commentary* is a work that respects the conventions of scholarship. This of all his books is the one that demanded much labour and dedication, for Bayley had acquired Russian through a love for its literature; he had never studied it formally. Yet even when closely reading Pushkin's Russian texts, Bayley's English is imperturbably lucid.

It is as a master of diverse genres that Bayley's work as a whole is best appreciated, not only as a writer, but as a student of literary genres. The attraction that Russian literature held for him is not primarily about Russia, its history or politics or metaphysics, but inheres in the problems of genre that it presents: Pushkin called *Eugene Onegin* a 'novel in verse' while Tolstoy insisted that *War and Peace* was not a novel. All John Bayley's critical inquiries might be said to address the problems posed by those two works; their presence is salient in everything he wrote. In *The Romantic Survival* he addresses the fate of modern poetry in an age whose critical attitudes and procedures are largely determined by the novel; *The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality* offers detailed accounts of works by Chaucer, Shakespeare and Henry James, investigating how love is represented in different genres. He wrote studies of Russian writers, *Tolstoy and the Novel* and *Pushkin*, before analysing, in *An Essay on Hardy*, the one writer in English highly regarded as both poet and novelist. *The Uses of Division: Unity and Disharmony in Literature* is much concerned with Kipling and the interference or overlap of poetry and the short story; *Shakespeare and Tragedy*, *The Short Story: Henry James to Elizabeth Bowen* and *Housman's Poems* all develop intricate arguments about the nature and purpose of genres, and identify the interest of a literary work in some sort of confusion or misfitting of genres.

In another climate, less hostile to 'theory', these might have constituted an important contribution. Instead they tended to be dismissed as the work of a not always cheerful old fogey who had no wish to engage in current debates. John Bayley was among the last of the amateur critics, in a line from his tutor at New College, Lord David Cecil. He was some years younger than Frank Kermode who can be reckoned among the first of those who saw the study of English Literature as a profession, with standards and institutions that needed to be built and maintained. Bayley had very little sense of institution and virtually none of profession. He fitted into a college as though it were all he had ever known of life in England, as indeed it was: apart from Eton and Oxford there had been India and conscription. On his appointment as Professor in 1974 he moved from New College to St Catherine's; where New College hides its life within gothic nooks and mullioned windows, the external wall of Arne Jacobsen's college is, from ceiling to floor, entirely glass, so the clutter in Bayley's office on the first floor was plainly visible to every passer-by. He did not mind this at all.

With the St Catherine's tutor in English language, Dennis Horgan, Bayley would regularly hold a seminar on the language of poetry. Horgan was a kindly scholar of considerable philological learning who (as A. D. Horgan) published books on Old English poetry, and one on Samuel Johnson and language. Bayley was not at his best in lecturing, and was, as a teacher, most at ease in tutorials and in the exchange and repartee of a shared seminar. Bayley would read and enthuse and comment on the week's chosen poem, and then turn: 'T-t-tell me, Dennis, am I c-completely on the wrong track?' 'Well, John, not entirely – but you ought to consider…' Horgan seemed to have the *OED* by heart, and would explain how a word crucial to Bayley's comments had had a rather different sense in the seventeenth century, or had taken a different stress, thus changing the metre; and so with points of idiom and syntax. As an undergraduate I was somewhat bewildered to observe that, while we were all required to study the English language as well as its literature, the Professor of English Literature seemed to have so much still to learn from a tutor in English

Language. When a year or two later (c. 1977) Jonathan Culler arranged an astonishing museum-piece of a joint seminar featuring Roman Jakobson and I. A. Richards – they had taught together at Harvard in the 1940s – I realised what was missing in Oxford English. Its resistance to literary theory continued to perplex, and it would be a matter of irritation and distress to more than one of his students that the banner of that resistance was often waved by Bayley. In this he seemed to deny that there might be *jouissance* in such ways of reading, or that there could be limits to the Johnsonian pleasure in learning the manner of another's being pleased: a cheerful openness was surrendered to a forbidding pugnaciousness that was quite without conviction.

Another colleague with whom Bayley would share a seminar was my undergraduate tutor at Keble, Stephen Wall; their topic was the novel, often including some of the Russians in English translation. Again I felt that, despite their indifference to theory, it was those seminars that had primed me to respond to Bakhtin, whom I discovered soon after I had left Oxford. Jakobson and Bakhtin became the dominant figures in my own thinking about literature. Beyond these somewhat occluded theoretical debts, it was the range of Bayley's reading – and no less importantly, of his enthusiasms – that encouraged thinking outside of a single tradition, and led his students towards comparative literature and literary theory. Bayley was very seldom seen as part of either; the sadness was that his polemics denied his work the attention of those best fitted to appreciate it. In terms of comparative literature it would be hard to find many books produced in Britain in the past fifty years to stand against Bayley's *Pushkin*, or any so properly comparative in its approach and cosmopolitan in its allusions. How many literary critics in Britain in 1957 were reading Hart Crane or Mayakovsky? Both are discussed, and compared, in the opening pages of *The Romantic Survival*.

Bayley's thinking is most explicitly open to theoretical development in *The Uses of Division: Unity and Disharmony in Literature*. This argues that the critic's task is not to find and represent the intelligent design that the writer had in mind, but to identify what has escaped the writer's attention and thus given the work its aesthetic autonomy. The argument is developed further in an important study that labels itself somewhat restrictively as a treatment of Housman's poems. Who would suspect that one of the finest critical discussions of Paul Celan is to be found in that book? (Happily, this one has an index.) In a review in the *Listener* (6 May 1976), Frank Kermode had pointed out that *The Uses of Division* was not so far from Roland Barthes' *S/Z*, nor incompatible with other theorists of the time. When, away from Oxford, I discovered Paul de Man it seemed uncannily fitting that his two books, *Blindness and Insight* (1971) and *Allegories of Reading* (1979), had been published either side of *Uses of Division*. Bayley's criticism was all about the forms of aesthetic coherence to which intention may be blind, and in retrospect he can be said to exemplify the phenomenon he had so illuminated.

My second teaching post after leaving Oxford was at the University of Toronto; there I readily took to literary theory and felt that I had moved on from Oxford and its self-imposed constraints. At Victoria College one day in 1983 I found myself sitting next to a colleague more than forty years my senior whose eminence I had not supposed subject to such quotidian needs as could be satisfied by lunch. Not only intimidating to the young, Northrop Frye was himself somewhat reserved. I had myself recently overcome a prejudice against Frye inculcated at Oxford: a *structuralist*, a *theorist*, a manipulative critic who distorts every work to fit his system; thus we were warned off Frye, and not only him. So our conversation at lunch was somewhat stilted until Frye asked me about the subject of my doctoral work (John Cowper Powys); who then, he wondered, could have been my supervisor? At the mention of John Bayley, Frye's face lit up and animation entered his voice: 'Now there's a critic! How very fortunate you are.' That remains a lesson, not because I had ever counted myself less than fortunate in this respect, but in learning that appreciation and gratitude might defy the stereotypes of academic rivalry and ideological difference: that those truly dedicated to literature can respect each other regardless of what they do with it.

A.N. Wilson

Introduction to *In Another Country*[1]

When, as an undergraduate at Oxford, I once found myself sitting beside the novelist Elizabeth Bowen at dinner, it was inevitable that we should talk of novels. She had a most distinguished and personalised stammer, which caused her voice to seize up suddenly on key words. We were placed at the very table where, forty years previously, Virginia Woolf had sat as the guest of Warden Fisher. ('Virginia found her bedroom in the Lodgings so cold that she used to pick the rug off the floor and throw it on her …' 'Bed', I tactlessly helped her.) When we had exhausted my callow reflections on *The Waves*, Elizabeth Bowen began to talk of Jane Austen, whom she had recently re-read, in preparation for attending one of John Bayley's classes. There had been a class that morning, and she was bubbling over with the brilliance with which John Bayley had spoken of (I think) *Persuasion*. There were so many things in the book which she had never *seen*, and though she did not agree with all the lecturer's paradoxical insights, she had the heady sense, which she had never thought to recapture, of reading the novel for the first time.

Elizabeth Bowen was by then a powdery old *grande dame*, within a few years of her death, and I was an ingenuous youth of nineteen. What for her was the rarest of treats was for me a weekly diet, since John Bayley was my tutor. He is a brilliant teacher, and, as the world knows, a critic with the most delicate knack of seeing inside a book, understanding the way it works, illuminating what the author was up to. Just as we were about to part, she asked me rather abruptly, 'Have you read John's novel?' 'No'. 'Well, it's very …' 'Good?' I clumsily prompted her again. 'It's quite brilliant', she said sharply as if I had contradicted her. 'It is a great pity that he has never written any more'.

I knew that John Bayley had written a novel, but my failure to read it was deliberate. As a tutor, he had the gentlest way, not only of revealing the excellencies of great writers, but also of pointing out the glaring defects of bad ones. Taste is something one *learns*. When one is young, one admires a lot of bad art, and it is part of a teacher's job, not to spoil one's enjoyment of it, but to make one see that it is bad. Had I gone to Cambridge and been taught by F.R. Leavis, I would doubtless have avoided a thousand opportunities of second-rate enjoyment because of the great man's anathema. John was never like that. He would enter into one's enjoyment of a bad book – and probably share it – but somewhere towards the end of the conversation, there would come the deflating laugh and the comment – 'But actually – no good!'

That was why I had never read *In Another Country*. What would happen if it turned out to be 'actually – no good!'? I admire John Bayley's critical books – *The Romantic Survival*, *Characters of Love* and *Tolstoy and the Novel* – this side idolatry, and I did not want the idol to be tarnished. Nevertheless, with such a *nihil obstat* as Elizabeth Bowen's, I made my way to the Bodleian Library the next day and read the novel in, of all unsuitable places, the Upper Reading Room.

As an aspirant novelist myself, I already had my own acid test for whether a book was 'any good' – and that was whether reading it awoke in me feelings of envy. Did it make me wish that *I* could write something as good? By the end of the first chapter, I was green with envy, and by the time I had missed lunch and read the book all through the day, I realised that I had found one of those books which – quite regardless of its author – would be a friend for life.

What made me envious was that it was so effortlessly stylish. Its humour, and its *touchingness* were so lightly worn, the eccentricity of its attitudes so cunningly concealed. Such qualities were much in evidence: 'Held in common in this comradely fashion, boredom ceased to be a negative

[1] Editor's Note: John Bayley, *In Another Country* first published by Constable, 1955, reprinted by Oxford University Press, Twentieth Century Classics Series, with an introduction by A.N. Wilson, 1986.

thing, and acquired a positive, almost a voluptuous character'; or, 'Life was all before him – but that was just the trouble'; or, 'under the stress of upset, some natures show an instinctive delicacy, curling and withdrawing like tendrils in wounded retirement, while others are shaken like jellies into vulgarity'. The big things in the book – Heather's death, or Ann Gordon's seduction in the pinewoods of metroland – are handled with a perfect lightness, as brilliant as Oliver's sudden (and completely convincing) ability to be a dab hand at making lemon meringue pie. The comedy is underplayed, but not *ludicrously* underplayed. For all its brilliance, the book always remains within the firm old confines of the comic tradition: I like the moment when, at the dance, Oliver watches the powerful Duncan stalking confidently towards his next trophy:

> 'Isn't she pretty?' said Jill Brent, craning unenviously over her partner's shoulder at the couple in the middle. 'And I must say, he's a good looker. Trust Ann to pick up the best man around. No offence intended, of course,' she reassured Oliver with her cheerful smile, and taking him more firmly in hand; so far their progress had been a little hesitant.
>
> 'And none taken,' he assured her gallantly. 'Duncan is rather handsome I suppose.'

Subsequent readings of the novel, while in no way diminishing my delight in these incidentals, has increased my admiration for the story and its general theme and effects. Like all good novels it has dated only in ways which emphasise its continued pungency and freshness. Appearing in 1955, ten years after the war ended, and a good many years before I arrived in Oxford, it went at once into a second edition. Then it went underground, so to speak, into 'another country'. But of course, the 'other country' of the title is occupied Germany immediately after the second world war. Oliver Childers, our young hero, is a lieutenant in a small British Intelligence Unit operating in the Ruhr, who has got involved with a local girl – Liese. Though he knows that it is forbidden for British officers to mix with Germans, his clandestine evenings with the Linkmanns have a sort of innocence about them (even though it is a wary, knowing innocence, Oliver being something rather more than that clodhopping innocent abroad of classic English comedy). Innocence is something, too, which he unaskingly attributes to Liese and her brother Herman:

> However precarious and ill-founded it might be, the appearance of innocence was something to be grateful for. It should not be questioned. Oliver could talk seriously about sex with Liese and Herman – no conversational holds of that kind were barred – and yet, it would, he knew, be indefensibly gross even to hint at the existence of concentration camps or the slaughter of the Jews.

It is innocence which gets Oliver into trouble and which – who knows – seems in the end to redeem him. His counterpart in the unit, indeed his friend, is Duncan Holt, a very different kettle of fish – ambitious, ruthless, thrusting, and unscrupulous. The differences between Oliver and himself are not as extreme as those between Othello and Iago, but, painted with the finest sable brush, there emerges the most alarming picture of Duncan Holt as the rising man. With his self-confident manner, his love of fast cars and fast women, he seems like an anticipation of the young executive in Betjeman's poem who owned a slimline briefcase and drove the firm's Cortina.

The frame of the book's plot hangs on the disastrous consequences of Oliver and Duncan's friendship. It is not that Oliver can't see *through* Duncan. He can see through him all right, and he is intimidated by him, but he is powerless to do much in his own defence. Oliver's German friends are not completely innocent, nor have his surreptitious visits to the appropriately named Schadowstrasse gone unnoticed among his fellow-officers. Duncan's calculating Machiavellian tricks misfire, and he ends up on a charge. But in spite of the court martial, we know in some way

or another that Duncan is going to triumph and, once back in civvy street, that it will be he, and not Oliver, who will flourish in the advertising agency. Likewise the fact that Duncan's behaviour with the Colonel's daughter, which leads to her being drowned in the Rhine, only enhances (in a way which is so sinister that it almost recalls Webster) his success, once back in England, with the Colonel's niece. It was in another country, and the wench died young. One might think that Duncan is going to get his 'just deserts' – though in this book, one realises very fast that life offers no such things. Equally one might suppose that the scales will fall from Oliver's eyes. Perhaps he will come to hate Duncan for being, in some ways, more in control of things than he is. Or, like Nick Jenkins vis-à-vis Widmerpool in Anthony Powell's great sequence, come to decide that the aims his enemy strives for are contemptible, even risible. But none of this quite happens with Oliver, which is what makes him such an attractive and mysterious bloke, and what makes the book, by the same token, ripple with frissons of moral ambiguity. Oliver isn't particularly troubled by Duncan's villainy. He is prepared to put all behind him, if needs be, the whole 'friendship' itself. He is happy, when back in his parents' house, to think that he will never see Duncan again. But although Duncan's reappearance leads to Oliver being stood up by Ann Gordon and, in a way, causes him to lose his job, Oliver is not defeated. He has his own strange little inner resources. Even in the last scene, when he faints, and is brought round by Liese, he is not in fact a weakling. He, quite as much as Duncan, is capable of getting his own way; but unlike Duncan, he is subtle enough to see that apparent weakness is just as useful, for those who 'live by the will' as vulgar shows of strength.

There was only one thing wrong with *In Another Country*; and that was, that it was not in print. Even the London Library does not possess a copy, and it was only after years of searching that I found a first edition in a shop in Sackville Street. I can think of no modern novel which more deserved reprinting. Readers who come to it for the first time today, thirty-two years after it was published, and over forty years after the time in which it is set, will find it rich in period detail: 'The Brigadier did not talk about either cricket or Kierkegaard but about the Beveridge Report, the possibility of a National Theatre, and the renting system of flats in the London area'. The stiff egg whites stand up 'like a quiff of well-oiled hair'. Everyone smokes cigarettes, and a cigarette box is automatically handed round at dinner. The young men have demob suits, and petrol – a crucial fact in the plot – is rationed.

Most striking of all to the modern EEC reader is the contrast between post-war Germany and England.[2] Germany (whither Oliver is bound at the end of the story?) – 'the ruined towns, the lakes, the hillsides and swart fir plantations, even the farmers with their ox-carts and tattered grey-green clothes' – is viewed with an impressive absence of melodrama. But behind the surfaces of things, there are unspoken memories:

> Liese's mind travelled back to the rigours of her early girlhood, rigours once cheerfully accepted and even enjoyed for their own sake. The parades of the BDM, for which she had so carefully folded and pressed her black shirt, her red sash and white blouses; the eyes and the loud voice of her cousin in the Luftwaffe, whose belt and dagger-scabbard she had adoringly polished; she remembered these. And she remembered her cousin's friend, the boy from Dortmund, who had made love to her so strenuously before going back to his squadron on the eastern front.

The novel deals with people, not with ideas. But what seems so politically astute about it, read at this distance in time, is the way that we sense that the army of occupation, in spite of being nominally victorious, is in fact doomed. For the crooked Stein and the absurd Helman, or their

[2] Editor's note: the EEC is the European Economic Community (1957-1993); it was the precursor of the European Union (EU).

like, there stretch ahead – as we now see – the Common Market and the 'strong' Deutschmark. These, in fact, are the men who are going to get on in the world. And although the novelist does nothing so portentous as to predict as much, we can see that he intuits it.

England, by contrast, when Oliver gets back to it with such relief, is the cheerfully obsolescent milieu of Betjeman and Barbara Pym.

> In the autumn dusk outside, the houses of the home counties suburb – unspoilt country but a good business distance from London – would be settling down for the night. Family men were returning like his father, perhaps to no whisky, and to more exacting families. He peered out at the lights, up on the hill where these new people his mother's letter talked about were; down in the valley were the well-spaced houses, receding through beech copses and rowan hedges towards the town. In the front garden he could just make out the hedge of budding conifers, little pixie hats whose smooth plumage lay in layers – a bird unpreened.

Lovers of Barbara Pym will particularly savour the scenes of Oliver's home life, which are among the most successful in the book: 'His sister Barbara was home for a week from her job as a secretary to a kennel agency in Gloucestershire', and the glimpses of his father, drooping with a glass of whisky over the *Listener*, or of his mother 'who, with tweed cuffs turned back, was shredding beef for rissoles'. The book shares with Barbara Pym a loving feeling of how much these things are to be valued, the sense of their indefinable absurdity in no way diminishing their value. Betjeman's lady in Westminster Abbey has had her prayers answered, with her lines

> Think of all this country stands for,
> Books from Boots, and country lanes.
> Free speech, free passes, class distinction,
> Democracy and proper drains.

Where it entirely lacks the whimsy on whose cheerfully camp edge both Pym and Betjeman were so happy to linger and draw their inspiration, is in its sense of the English hardness. How often, both in his school-like sense that he has broken the army regulations in Germany, and in his wistful attitudes towards getting a job (as in his painfully shy approach to social life), Oliver is shrewdly aware that being English is only comic and reassuring if you agree to play it by the rules. If the tale has a moral, it is in Oliver's vision that 'what was done in another country is not sealed off: the muddles that were made lived after them'. Muddle, unlike sin, can not be blotted out. It can only be tactfully glossed over with more muddle.

The novel, then, is nothing so dire as a sociological or political study of Germany and England at the end of the war. If it has a parallel in modern literature, it might be in Larkin's poem about his spell in Northern Ireland, 'The Importance of Elsewhere':

> Living in Ireland, since it was not home,
> Strangeness made sense …
>
> Living in England has no such excuse:
> These are my customs and establishments
> It would be much more serious to refuse.
> Here no elsewhere underwrites my existence.

Germany, the 'elsewhere' of the novel, is subtly and humorously contrasted with the familiarities of England. Although Liese is a down-to-earth, and at times almost a comic figure, observed with close sympathy, she is also a *Princesse Lointaine*, the unreachable and romantic denizen of

another country. The heart of the novel, which gives it a depth and originality all its own, lies in its explorations of the ways in which we live in two worlds, that of everyday reality, and that of 'elsewhere'. Sometimes, as happens to Oliver, we hardly know which is which: at the end of the novel the two worlds seem to be changing places, with results which are left to be guessed at. Transformed in Harrods (as I take Dempster's to be) Liese is no longer a girl of elsewhere but very much one of this world, with all its humdrum duties and responsibilities. As the novel ends Oliver seems touchingly, and self-deludingly, to accept these, as if they still seemed to him – in love with Liese as he is – part of the life and customs of another country.

It is this which makes the final scene of the novel so powerful. When, in the setting of the posh London department store, Oliver meets Liese, he has a sort of faint. In the dream which races through his head at this moment, the English are all fierce, accusatory figures – policemen, or the Colonel wanting to put him on a charge. The friendly family Morris has turned into an ambulance. They're coming to take him away. With Liese, holding his hand tightly, and pressing eau-de-Cologne (and for once the provenance is important) to his nostrils, he sees the chance of getting away not just from England, but from what Arnold Bennett called 'the exquisite burden of life'. When she suggests their going back to Germany together, 'The prospect, absurdly inviting, swung open like the door of the cinema on a cold afternoon.'

One of the most sympathetic minor characters in the book is Colonel MacTavish who (without Oliver realizing it) sees some of the same truths about life. The prospect of his wife and daughter coming out to Germany to join him fills him with gloom even though he knows nothing of the disaster which lies in store.

> 'I don't know what I should do without you, dear' was not a domestic formula he was in the habit of using, but he felt its power – had felt it rather – on the battlefield no less than in the cantonments. But out here in Germany it had inexplicably ceased to be true. He did know just what he would do without them: existence wifeless and daughterless would be by no means difficult – indeed the lamentable fact was that he would find it hard to give up his indolent solitude.

The quietly trivial nature of MacTavish's inner life is one of the most satisfying features of the military scenes in this book. Tolstoy would have admired it, just as he would have admired, in the marvellously ridiculous and embarrassing game of badminton, the way that the Colonel, qua Intelligence Officer, has his suspicions aroused by Herman's familiarity with Oliver, and would like to get to the bottom of the *Hexenwerke* business; but, equally strongly, as a diffident Scot who comes from the same sort of background as Oliver himself, he hopes for the whole business to be settled without fuss. 'Probably nothing more would be said, and the Colonel, complimenting him still further on his play in the latter half of the game, was still unnaturally, almost dreadfully nice.'

All the characters in the novel give us, as the Colonel does, the feeling that they are simply there for their own sakes, and being allowed by their author to be *themselves*, even when that self – as with the majority of Jane Austen's characters, not just Miss Bates – is reassuringly boring. Like Dicky Moffat ('As for Dicky, he was a quiet, easily put-upon lieutenant who had been in a solicitor's office before the war and was now looking tranquilly forward to being there again'). We never feel that these people are here because their author wants to make a point at their expense; to demonstrate his wit, for instance, by making them jump through the hoops of his ideas – perhaps about the class system, war and peace, or international relations. On the contrary, the novel's sympathies and felicities derive from an author who has patiently and contentedly soaked himself up in them – warily and observantly, but never (except perhaps occasionally in the mockery of Herman's idiomatic English!) with the intrusion of *self*.

This generosity of approach towards human nature, which all the best novels have, is something which we ought to be able to take for granted. Perhaps in 1955, when *In Another Country* was first published, you would have thought so too. Not a bit of it. For the next fifteen or twenty years, the simple notion that plays and novels concern themselves primarily with human character appeared to have been thrown completely out. And the assaults came from all sides. There were the absurd classifiers, who wanted to lump together novels as different in tone and purpose as *Room at the Top, Lucky Jim* and *Hurry on Down* (all as readable today as when first published) as manifestation of Angry Young Men. Behind all this, very often, there was a bogus political stance, suggesting that works of art about certain regions or classes were more 'valid' than others. So, on the London stage, the intelligent and well-wrought plays of Terence Rattigan and Noel Coward made their last bow, and Pinter and his imitators came in. The novel, by now infiltrated with the tastes, on the one hand of illiterate televisionaries, on the other by the disciples of Dr Leavis who though that art stopped short with D.H. Lawrence, found itself gravitating away from its traditional areas of concern: away from the dining-room into the bedroom. Small wonder that one of the most distinctive comic geniuses of her generation, Barbara Pym, should have found herself not merely eclipsed, but unpublished. The demand was all for sex, politics, kitchen sinks, commitment, analysis – just about anything, in short, except people. By the time Malcolm Bradbury published his delightful academic comedy *Eating People is Wrong*, the novel-reading public had almost forgotten what people tasted like.

This is not to make the ridiculous assertion that playwrights and novelists lost interest in people during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. The idiocy came largely from the pundits, the critics and the arbiters of taste; individuals who are seldom either sane or interesting. At least in England, at the beginning of this period, they were content to be moralisers of one sort or another, whether from a political or a more moralistic standpoint. One cannot say that they did no harm, for there were generations of schoolteachers, Cambridge-taught, who were sent all over England with the mission of teaching children to sneer. But even if they had cut the Great Tradition down to a tiny handful of English novelists, and had nothing to say about Richardson, Fielding, Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray, Arnold Bennet, Virginia Woolf, etc., etc., they did at least believe themselves to be interested in books; even, to believe that books should be on the side of 'life'. Not so their successors in the English departments of Universities in England and America, where literature itself gradually came to be replaced by the various critical pseudo-sciences which were originally associated with Yale and Paris, but which are now ubiquitous. The rest of us who continued to speak the English language, were quietly shut out by the experts. We continued to read books. They only wanted to deconstruct texts. We liked novels; at first it seemed as though they liked 'fictions', but after a while, it was by no means clear what they liked, or whether liking came into it. Literature itself ceased to be of much interest since the critical game was so absorbingly difficult that it left little time for reading.

In the end, this has had the effect of separating general readers from professional critics almost altogether, and the effect of that has been a good one. Since the critics have stopped bothering about art, art has been able to get on with its own life unimpeded. This has not meant the end of all 'experimental' literature, but it has allowed, to a much larger extent than anyone would have predicted fifteen years ago, a *return*. A return to traditional forms in poetry, a return to popularity of many novelists who ten years ago seemed totally *outré*. A return to the main areas of concern that art has always had, and will, in spite of critics, always have.

To mention John Bayley's name again after this peppery aside will prompt the reader to suppose that I am going to pay him the dubious compliment of saying that he is a middle-brow like myself. Nothing could be further from the truth. If such things could be measured, I would think that he is the cleverest man in England, with the most agile facility to master the 'difficult' (whether it is the critical stances of Derrida, Todorov, Lacan et al or the workings of an aero-

plane, on both of which he is rather an expert). But his glory as a critic – both in his books and in his journalism – is that he has never allowed his cleverness to obscure the warmth and humanism with which he read literature and illumines it for others. 'About the world there is nothing to say', he remarks in his Shakespeare book, 'but there is everything to say about our relationship to it.' As a critic, John Bayley has never lost his capacity for communicating delight, nor his eye for detail. He has never been tempted by the magisterial pose. The great Shakespearean critics of the past have either been those big enough, arrogant enough – like Dr Johnson – to *assess* the plays, or those – like Coleridge or Wilson Knight – who have adopted the role of hierophants at a shrine. John Bayley, when he speaks and writes about Shakespeare, is so familiarly attuned to Shakespeare's language, and so brilliantly comprehending of the plays' essential characteristics, that he helps us, like the Bard himself, to 'see into the life of things'. 'Mystery means mastery, in the sense that a craft or profession is mastered'. I remember his once saying to me words to the effect that the best things in novels were not the great effects which the author had *striven* for, but the chuntering reality of felt life in the utterance and thoughts of the characters: the sense a novel can give you, almost more than any other art form, of life going on, a sense which John Bayley continually finds in the characters of Shakespeare.

By a similar token, his own skill as a critic derives from this contentedness to achieve effect and make points backhandedly; to be confident enough in his reader's intelligence to believe that the truth will emerge when one is burbling, quite as much as when one is shouting. The gentleness of this approach enables him to 'get on with' an extraordinary range of authors. He has written the best things on Pushkin and Tolstoy; in essays, or asides in lectures, he has shed light on authors as different as Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, Pasternak, Beckett and Balzac. Quite reassuringly, one by no means feels that he likes them all, let alone likes them all equally. But he always finds, not just the right few words to encapsulate their quiddity, but also the much more nebulous thing of what they have got right about *la condition humaine*.

Those who know him chiefly as a critic will turn to *In Another Country* with the fascination of seeking the poacher before he became a gamekeeper. Here is Bayley with his gloves off. But, in fact the novel is all of a piece with the criticism, not only in its subtle combination of geniality and sharpness ('Oliver never questioned his own sensitivity: like ears or a nose it was a piece of equipment to be taken for granted') but also in the charming way in which its tolerance is of an active, if oblique kind. I think particularly of the wonderful scene when Oliver's parents have his future employer to dinner: Mr Gordon, who runs the advertising agency.

> He had just been telling them very entertainingly about the tribulation of a certain famous firm which has tried to do its advertising itself.
>
> *'Don't offer pot luck, offer Prosteak* – that was the best they could do in the way of a slogan if you please! You see what's wrong, Mrs Childers? To us the fault's absolutely glaring, of course?'
>
> 'Well, it certainly doesn't sound very euphonius.'
>
> Mr Gordon's large blue eyes approved the word and the speaker. Mrs Gordon's hands moved watchfully among the knives and forks.
>
> 'Exactly! What a mouthful to say. Besides' – (he tactfully went on to give the real reason – 'the psychology's all wrong. It implies that the product (which was actually a rather good sort of steak substitute) – is an emergency thing, something temporary to fill the gap. Instead of existing in its own right – an amenity you will always want to have.'

Mr Gordon does not contradict Mrs Childers. He heartily agrees with her, and then tactfully goes on to the real reason why the firm's advertising ideas have been all wrong. It is a very recognizably John Bayley moment. Some readers of *In Another Country* will be wondering why he did not make more of Liese's past, not from a sexual, but a political point of view; or wish

that he had spelt out in more detail why Herman found it safer to go to South America. Others again will think it curious that the England which the Childers family inhabits seems mildly inconvenienced by petrol rationing, and the fact that you have to give more time off in the evenings these days to women who 'help' in the house. But there is little here about housing shortages, or the Labour landslide in the 'khaki' election. Such readers will join the ranks of those who think *Emma* an inconsiderable novel because it does not analyse the causes of the Napoleonic wars. The comparison is actually slightly unfair, and it would be truer to say that there is as much political awareness in this novel as in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays. What the novel celebrates is *ordinariness*; privacy, aloneness, the quiet little routines of a favourite walk or skills in the kitchen, family fondness and – in the end – love. Liese, whose Mae Westish question at the very opening sentence of the story sets the tone of much of the muddle on which the story hangs, finally gets her man. Or, I assume she does. Not all the wenches in that other country died. Ordinariness (the meat on which the novel, as a form, feeds) is precisely what all the bad critics of the last thirty years have not wanted. For more melodramatic reasons, it was not what the warmongers wanted, either, in 1939-45. Now that you can't get 'books from Boots' any more, and country lanes and democracy seem to be going the same way as 'proper drains', there is every reason to savour an intelligence as extraordinary as John Bayley's, and a novel as good as his. Reading it yet again for the purposes of writing this introduction, it leaves me even greener with envy than it did eighteen years ago. Elizabeth Bowen was right to say that 'it is a great pity that he has never written any more'. But … there is yet time.

Frances White

Fact or Fiction? John Bayley's Memoirs and Novels

Iris, the first volume of John Bayley's trilogy of memoirs/autobiography (the best descriptive term for these books will be discussed later) was read by two main audiences: those interested in Iris Murdoch as novelist or philosopher, and those interested in Alzheimer's, including researchers in, or fellow-sufferers from, this disease which so radically affects not only the subject/patient but also those who care for them.[1] The book was acclaimed by the latter as an illuminatingly honest account that proved a help and inspiration to many. The former group was more divided in response, between those glad to read more about Murdoch once bereft of her flow of novels and philosophical works, and those who felt that Bayley had exploited his wife's sad condition and abused her right to privacy.

Did *anyone* read it because they were interested in *John Bayley*? His presence in his own writing was taken as very secondary to that of his more famous wife, yet he as much as she, and the marriage between them – the whole which is greater than the sum of its parts – is also the subject of the book. The second volume, *Iris and the Friends*, made this tripartite subject more evident, his pre-Iris memories assuming a far larger space than before, and the third, *Widower's House*, whilst still firmly concerned with Murdoch, her death and their life together, is almost entirely about Bayley himself.[2] Murdoch's tragic illness and death caused her life to become a matter of public knowledge, which was perhaps inevitable. What was not inevitable is that it should have illuminated and publicised the 'Life and Times' of her husband, previously well known only amongst academics, specialists in the 'Eng. Lit. business' (Iris, p.52), and a certain social circle in Oxford. His name is now familiar to many who have never read one of his wife's novels let alone any of his own previous writing, and within his own lifetime he was portrayed on film by Hugh Bonneville and Jim Broadbent, a relatively unusual experience, certainly for a retired, and apparently retiring, Oxford don.

This essay first considers these books from a dual perspective – interest in the author himself, and interest in the response they have evoked – before drawing Bayley's novels into an overarching discussion of truth and lies, fact and fiction, and the whole question of the nature of memoir/biography writing and its place in his *oeuvre* as a whole. Bayley is very aware indeed, both of what he is doing in his autobiographical writing and of its inescapable falsification. This is a meditation on memory, fantasy, and their uses, and also an exposition of them in-being, in-process. He describes what it is *like* to fantasise better than any other writer – better even than Murdoch herself. His fiction is not in the same league as hers, as he acknowledges himself, because it is rooted more in fantasy than in imagination, but his truthfulness and accuracy in describing the in/out of fantasy/reality in the mind, and its necessity for mental health as a controlled consoling psychodrama, is unequalled.

The apparent artlessness of *Iris* is underpinned by an adroitly crafted structure. While the gently confiding 'talking voice' appears to meander on, a process of selection and patterned repetition is shaping Bayley's narrative. Rivers and swimming, the appearance of a kingfisher and of the lady on the bicycle, weave in and out of the text. Past and present interlink. The beginning of the reason for writing the book, Murdoch's contraction of Alzheimer's, does not arise until over eighty per cent of the way through, and then just as 'a slight qualm' (p.146); yet it is omnipresent

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[1] John Bayley, *Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch* (London: Duckworth, 1998).

[2] John Bayley, *Iris and the Friends: A Year of Memories* (London: Duckworth, 1999), *Widower's House* (London: Duckworth, 2001).

from the start. Commentary on Murdoch's novels, their value and the methods of their creation; art criticism; astute perceptions; sensitive observations; the overspill of a lifetime of omnivorously catholic reading, and gems of arcane knowledge stud the story. The narrative is a plaited strand of thoughts and memories: Bayley explores the dynamic of his marriage to Murdoch, the progressive stages of her illness, and his own emotional life in response to it. These link smoothly from one thing to another in 'a droll freedom of association' (*Iris and the Friends* p.11). Bayley's honesty is transparent, and his self-knowledge insightful: he knows he is selecting and he knows one can do no other.

The owl functions in the second volume like the kingfisher in the first; the rivers continue to flow through the narrative and Belial, Milton's intellectual demon who becomes Bayley's 'familiar', forms another linking, patterning device. The structure of *Iris and the Friends* is as carefully controlled, though differently – in *Iris* nothing 'happens'; in this book Murdoch dies, which makes for change, and for a sense of climax. But again this is no simple linear narrative but a complex and sophisticated interweaving, gaining in pace and impact towards the end of the second part, with the final section forming a 'Coda' after Murdoch's death. She has been dead from the beginning of the book – the opening words announce (with disbelief) that 'it's all over' (p.9). Yet she is present throughout, asleep beside the narrator (and the reader) as Bayley's careful use of the present tense keeps returning us to the 'now' of the past. With him, we are centred in the bed, in the marriage. With his, our minds wander Belial-fashion over other times, other places, in and out of memory and fantasy, not always easily distinguishable for him or for us. 'That childhood idyll' (p.65) is stressed but subverted by the evident lack of parental affection and his own isolation. Similarly, we traverse his war memories, and earlier loves, Hannelore and Mary – he dreams of fair but unhappy women.

Overtly Proustian aide-memoires are employed by Bayley as another patterning device. The vest-catching-on-the chair motif in *Iris and the Friends* links back to another underwear motif in *Iris* (the faded waist-slip 'stiff with powdery traces of dry mud' [p.11] which Bayley kept since their first swim together) and forms a poignant closure to the second volume. Unable now to share his inner life with his beloved wife, he is instead sharing it with the reader. As in the first volume, a wealth of critical knowledge of English literature illuminates and parallels his musings. There are pointers towards his own fiction as well as Murdoch's, and a significant critique of her as a novelist is scattered casually through the pages.

Widower's House marks a distinct change of tone from the previous books. It is sharp and waspish, querulous, even petulant at times. However hard it was to live with her Alzheimer's, while Murdoch was still with him, Bayley maintained a serenity of centredness; without her, the centre cannot hold and disintegration threatens. The jagged narrative of his first year of widowerhood mirrors this state. Fantasy no longer offers a healthy escape from unbearable reality; it comes, as he has said himself, almost to engulf reality. But *Widower's House* is also still a clear, clever, structured, patterned, controlled account – more so than its initial reviewers, patently mesmerised by the vision of an elderly don vamped by Margot and Mella, were able to perceive. There are two elements here, held in tense conjunction by a mind uncommonly able to observe itself with detachment even as it grievously suffers. Bayley displays the tragedy of loss, the appalling pain of grief, whilst exploring the comedy and absurdity of the human condition of which he is part. This unusual linking of a serious study in bereavement with a comedy of misunderstanding (of self as much as of others) has lead to puzzled bemusement. One does not expect a tale of heartbreak to be juxtaposed and intertwined with elements of bedroom farce. Yet, as no one has shown more clearly than Murdoch in her novels, the terrible and the comic co-exist, both are integral, often simultaneously, to human experience and behaviour. We are too absurd for the dignity of pure tragedy, too important just to be laughed at.

The first element lies in the mimesis of grief offered by *Widower's House* with its repetitions and its need to tell of Murdoch's last days and death over and over – a common symptom of bereavement, which gives this third volume continuity with the second. It exhibits as well as describes Bayley's emotional disintegration: self-dislike in this unaccustomed persona of widower, mixed feelings, confused desires and loss of sharp recall of the lost beloved – all strong features of bereavement, never better caught in words. The 'Widower's House' is a consciously literary image, despite his disclaimer of familiarity with Bernard Shaw's play of similar title. (The other acknowledged literary precursor is Laurence Sterne's Uncle Toby – surely a clear indication that Bayley is aware of humour in his own sorrowful position?) The house functions as a device to explore the trap of and need for escape from grief, which works well as such and requires a fictional physical running-away scene. This in turn requires something/someone to run *from* – a correlative of the invisible presence of grief itself – hence the legendary monster, the Gryphon, in the bathetic guise of waif-like Mella.

Even before Bayley's admission that Margot and Mella are composite ideas, embodying the pressures he experienced during this traumatic time, it is surely evident from a literary standpoint that these are created characters: his portrayal of them is close to that of the characters in his novels and nothing like his accounts of real people he has known: Lord David Cecil for example. The difficulty here lies in a slippage of genres – the memoir genre is presumed to be concerned with matters of fact, erroneously so. Just as Bayley the critic is clearly in evidence throughout this trilogy, so Bayley the novelist manifests himself strongly in this last book. However, lacking any clear indication of his presence, it is not surprising that many readers have evinced reproachful disbelief.

It is fruitless and beside the point to make any definitive attempt to disentangle fact from fiction in *Widower's House*. The book needs to be read and understood in a different way. That said, the derision that was levelled at the notion of septuagenarian sexuality seems to deserve some rebuttal. Sex is not a matter of youth and beauty, as many characters in Murdoch's novels exemplify – I think of Tamar and Duncan in *The Book and the Brotherhood* as one of the myriad possible examples.[3] Sex can be offered as a form of comfort or consolation, or employed as a means of claiming a person as one's own, a proprietary act. Widows are commonly known to be offered inappropriate physical sympathy or 'taken advantage of' in their grief – why not widowers likewise? Bayley's account of his experiences is not as psychologically implausible as has been suggested by many reviewers.

Most interesting in *Widower's House* are the shifts in consciousness which occur when the suffering of 'caring' and seeing Murdoch grow progressively more ill is superseded by the suffering of losing her and being alone. The consolation of fantasy, so predominant in *Iris and the Friends*, grows flat and stale, and gives way to consolation derived from words (*Widower's House*, p.119). Memory, so long a source of pleasure and comfort, is now 'like a cancer' (*Widower's House*, p.185). The ingenious devices of the mind that have developed as mechanisms for coping with one form of mental strain are not transferable to another. Fantasy and memory may be 'friends' of an Alzheimer's carer or 'Poujin' – so much nicer a word (*Iris and the Friends*, p.240) – but they are no friends to grief or to 'the gap caring leaves when it stops' (*Iris and the Friends*, p.279). New coping mechanisms have to be discovered or created, and this third volume gives hope for the possibility that they can be. Bayley's honesty through both memoir and fantasy offers light and comfort in the darkness of bereavement as well as in the darkness of living with Alzheimer's.

The fame of Bayley's *Iris* trilogy has not spread to his purely fictional writing, which appears to be practically unknown. Yet his novels cast light on his memoir writing. When Bayley first met Murdoch they were both writing their first (published) novels. *Under the Net* achieved instant

[3] Iris Murdoch, *The Book and the Brotherhood* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987).

acclaim in 1954 and set Murdoch's long career as a novelist in motion; *In Another Country* received little recognition in 1955 and Bayley left fictional writing to his wife for the next four decades, devoting his own energies to teaching and criticism.[4] Whether her success discouraged him from continuing as a novelist is a moot point, but as her creative activity ceased (Jackson's *Dilemma* appeared in 1995),[5] his own creativity increased with a sudden florescence of four novels in four successive years before he moved into the writing of memoirs. More time became available to him with retirement from teaching in 1992, though his critical and journalistic output continued at a prodigious rate. More significantly perhaps, caring for Murdoch as her illness progressed caused him to be 'held in suspended animation', a condition fruitful to the fantasising which he describes in his memoirs and which he harnessed as material for these late novels. Their genesis is described in *Iris* when he pointed out an unusual-looking person to his wife, wondering if it would 'alchemise [...] into one of her plots', only to have the baton passed back to him with 'Why don't *you* write a story about her' (p.140). Thus began *Alice*.[6]

In Another Country is a conventional novel, telling a straightforward story loosely based on Bayley's army experiences and first romance, Hannelore becoming Liese Linkmann. A.N. Wilson's assessment of the book in 1986 as 'effortlessly stylish', 'politically astute', dealing with people and celebrating ordinariness, proved a vain attempt to galvanise new interest in this neglected novel that had been praised by Elizabeth Bowen.[7] Wilson's review concludes, 'Elizabeth Bowen was right to say that "it is a great pity that he has never written any more". But ... there is yet time.'[8] There was indeed yet time: forty years later Bayley returned to writing fiction.

Wilson's perceptive observation that *In Another Country* 'ripple[s] with frissons of moral ambiguity' (p.ix) applies equally to the later novels, and Bayley's characteristic concerns are sustained in these works. The feather-light comic touch with which Bayley constructs the detached ironic tone of his fictional narration belies a subtle ethical sense which Wilson identifies thus in the first novel: 'If the tale has a moral, it is in Oliver's vision that "what was done in another country is not sealed off: the muddles that were made lived after them." Muddle, unlike sin, can not be blotted out' (p.xii). This is the point at which Bayley's moral vision comes closest to Murdoch's (he does not share her sense of the sovereignty of good or of life as a pilgrimage towards it). The essence of many of Murdoch's novels is the impossibility of leaving the past behind, and muddle is a central concept in her fiction. 'There are no spare unrecorded encapsulated moments in which we can behave "anyhow" and then expect to resume life where we left off', as Murdoch observes in *The Black Prince*, and she expands this thought to 'human wickedness is [....] the product of a semi-deliberate inattention, a sort of swooning relationship to time'.[9] Wilson furthermore finds 'the heart' of the first novel 'lies in its exploration of the ways we live in two worlds, that of everyday reality and that of "elsewhere"' (p.xiii). This sense of parallel worlds is overtly and ludically developed in the novels of the nineties.

In these late works Bayley eschews conventional realism for post-modern melodrama, a curious and idiosyncratic mêlée in which James Bond meets Barbara Pym as dramas of drug and arms dealers and humble tasks of washing-up are deliciously juxtaposed. *Alice* and the two following novels, *The Queer Captain* and *George's Lair*, form a trilogy with the linking figures of Ginnie Thornton and the Grey brothers, Alexander, Bobby and Peter appearing in all of them (the three

[4] Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954); John Bayley, *In Another Country* first published by Constable, 1955, reprinted by Oxford University Press, Twentieth Century Classics Series, with an introduction by A.N. Wilson, 1986.

[5] Iris Murdoch, *Jackson's Dilemma* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995).

[6] John Bayley, *Alice* (London: Duckworth, 1994).

[7] For a fuller, perceptive reading of *In Another Country* see A.N. Wilson's Introduction, reprinted in this volume.

[8] John Bayley, *In Another Country*, Introduction by A.N. Wilson, p.xxi.

[9] Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), pp.125 & 189.

brothers irresistibly bringing to mind both the three Bayley brothers and the brothers Karamazov).[10] *George's Lair* closes where *Alice* opens, with Ginnie alone, and the trilogy could perhaps be seen as a belated *Bildungsroman* with her as the central character. *The Red Hat* stands alone as an ultra-modern self-reflexive novel in which the Barbara Pym quotidian element has vanished; there are possible terrorists but no-one washes up.[11] None of these novels have received serious critical attention, although the last, when published in America as Bayley's fictional 'début', attracted some notice, most of it unfavourable. Readers, familiar with the Iris trilogy, were hoping for more of the same and were disconcerted by the utter difference of Bayley writing as novelist from Bayley writing as memoirist. What light, then, does the former shed on the latter? Three strands can usefully be picked out: the high degree of self-awareness that Bayley brings to both forms of writing, his sense of himself, and an alternative glimpse of his life with Murdoch.

All the novels of the nineties are manifestly concerned with the nature of story-telling. In *Alice* Bayley deliberately sets up the genres of the 'old-fashioned novel' (p.12) and 'a story in a woman's magazine' (p.16) and then subverts them. He pits fantasy against truth, consciously exploring the links between them: 'How strange were people's motives and desires! But stranger still the stories that they told themselves, and then tried, perhaps unconsciously, to find a real-life equivalent' (p.111). Following on from this thought of Ginnie's, Peter Grey in *The Queer Captain* makes Caroline Hatchcombe his 'real-life' imprisoned maiden in a tower, before becoming bored with the game he is playing with 'real' 'toys' (much play is made with the nature of virtual reality in this second novel). And in *The Red Hat* Nancy's story and the truth of what happens to Nancy have become inextricable, becoming what Roland calls ambiguously 'the true story of her own story' (p.147). Fact versus fiction, 'truth' (or the nearest approximation we can get to it) versus lies, and the very wide grey area that separates and unites these apparent opposites are the underlying theme of all these novels. As Ginnie's inadvertent bon mot points up 'lying is [Alice's] own form of sincerity' (*Alice*, p.126); perhaps it is Bayley's too? Writing fiction – story-telling – telling stories – lying: whereabouts on this continuous line does any particular piece of writing fall? Yet it is arguably from fiction that we learn the greatest truths about human nature and human experience – the paradox seems built into the very heart of creative writing.

Bayley's persona in the *Iris* trilogy is a specifically chosen and created one, so skilfully done that the reader is tempted to take it for the 'real thing' – this *is* John Bayley speaking. As Protean as his wife (*Iris*, pp.40-41), and his own fictional characters (*The Red Hat*, p.144), Bayley assumes different shapes in each of his forms of writing.[12] A sharp sense of self-awareness in the form of sly self-parody (one is reminded of the Murdoch who created Arnold Baffin in *The Black Prince* and the ending of *The Philosopher's Pupil*)[13] is displayed in *The Queer Captain*, in which Bayley splits himself between his characters. He can be seen in Dr 'Johnny' Bowser, the Oxford don who knows the popularity of 'this academic gossip stuff', writes 'charming but openly sentimental reminiscences of his childhood' (*The Queer Captain*, p.77), thinks he must 'choose [...] between being famous but absurd, or respected but disregarded' (p.80) and is 'positively post-modern' (p.103). He is also present in the innocent Barbara Pym heroine, Ginnie, with her incorrigible fantasies that do no one any harm (p.113):

> naturally truthful herself [...] [she] made no distinction in her own mind between the true and the false. They were separate worlds, and each could be, and was, equally authentic [...] [S]he knew that what she read, or made up, was as true as what happened to her. She believed in all three. (p.112)

[10] John Bayley, *The Queer Captain* (London: Duckworth,1995); John Bayley, *George's Lair* (London: Duckworth, 1996).

[11] John Bayley, *The Red Hat* (London: Duckworth, 1997).

[12] As critic, John Bayley takes on yet further shapes beyond the scope of this essay: see Clive James's assessment of his critical achievement in this volume.

[13] Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983).

(This passage needs bearing in mind whilst reading *Widower's House*.) Other Bayley characteristics are evinced by the 'Captain' himself, who sees at last 'with appalling clarity, how fatally he had mixed up truth with his own fantasy, instead of keeping them safely apart' (p.160), who is 'always acting' (p.124) and 'liked to daydream while he was cooking' (p.125). Finally, the remark made about Mr Misconti, that 'he was well aware that listeners would be more, and not less, impressed if he presented his own considerable activities [...] with a touch of ridicule' (p.174), could equally apply to the Bayley who, as critics have noted, plays down his own considerable achievements as soldier and scholar in his narration of the *Iris* books. Similarly, in *The Red Hat* Roland shares attributes with his creator: 'Teachers of English are all the same', he says, 'we instinctively translate the little we know of life into the much more that we know of literature' (*The Red Hat*, p.175). He later describes himself as 'always timid and cautious, a typical English academic', possibly even – 'disgusting contemporary term' – 'naff' (p.178). This is not Bayley's self-assessment, this is Bayley's amused acknowledgement that this is how others may be inclined to view him – he knows himself to be very much more, very much other, and very much mysteriously irreducible than this. He proves as elusive and hard to pin down as Murdoch herself.

Nancy Deverell in *The Red Hat* is a story-teller. She narrates the first section of the novel, and is then pursued by Roland who is as much in love with her story as with her self. Elements of their relationship echo Bayley's memoirs of his marriage with Murdoch: 'We chattered away [...] together like a pair of magpies [....] It was the happiest sensation. I knew we should soon start talking again, communing together [....] She would be laughing, chuckling into my face, breaking off to be companionably abstracted for a moment' (*The Red Hat*, pp.143-4). Roland loves Nancy's story-telling ability, and later worries about her apparent loss of it: 'I wondered what on earth was going on now in that head of hers, which had created so many inventions' he says (p.164), and more poignantly: 'I was touched by the vacant melancholy of her appearance [....] She looked like someone who is killing time while waiting to go. Did I mean that she was no longer bothering – for that was the impression she made – to invent her stories, and so to live them?' (p.156). Such words could well describe the Murdoch of the memoirs, yet even out of context it is plain that these sentences do not come from the *Iris* books, the *tone* is wrong – this is the voice of a *different narrator*. However, there may be ways in which Nancy is Iris, Iris is Nancy and this last novel offers the informed reader much insight into what it was like inside his head for Bayley as he watched the bright, vivacious spinner of stories, with whom he had lived for so long and in whose inventive gifts and habits he took such delight, becoming extinguished as the Alzheimer's inexorably claimed more and more of her once exceptional brain.

This fictional insight illuminates a problematic aspect of Bayley's deliberately self-deprecating 'faux naïf pose' in his memoirs, even as it suggests that as much 'truth' may be found in his fiction as 'fabulation' may be found in his non-fiction. Reading Bayley's novels alongside the memoirs, we see this ferociously clever mind at play, and the narratorial role is not the whimsical one selected for the memoirs (wisely, as it contributes to their wide-spread appeal), but a more active, self-reflexive, highly literary one, no more the 'real' voice of John Bayley than is the voice of the Iris trilogy, but another of this writer's many voices. It is clear that reading Bayley's writing as a whole problematises any easy categorisation of his work

To date, Bayley's likeness has reached the National Portrait Gallery only in a photograph of him together with Murdoch, not as a figure of national importance/pride in his own right. This seems indicative both of his position in the general public view of their partnership with regard to the relative fame of each writer, and also of the value variously and unequally accorded by society to the roles of novelists and critics. More troubling still is Bayley's inclusion as a contributor to a book called *Living with a Writer* in which families of well-known writers were asked to share

the impact made on them by the writer's mode of existence.[14] Such relegation of Bayley to one who lived *with* a writer ignores the essential fact that he too, every bit as much as Murdoch, albeit less famously, *was* a writer. He, no less than she, was a 'word child', and the motto for both could have been *Scribo, ergo sum*. This essay bespeaks a determination to celebrate and accord full worth to John Bayley's work. This most remarkable of twentieth century literary partnerships should be clearly seen as a marriage of equals, each partner encouraging and enabling the other to achieve their artistic and intellectual potential. Without Murdoch we would not have Bayley's remarkable moving memoirs of her – without him we might well not have had her highly prized novels. They form a synergic duo.

An earlier version of this essay was published in the *Iris Murdoch News Letter*, 18, 2005.

[14] Dale Salwak, ed., *Living with a Writer* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Ian Beck

John Bayley, Novelist and Art Director

Sometime in the early 1990s my brother-in-law, the painter Edward Stone, paid one of his regular weekly visits to his mother Janet's house in Harnham Road, Salisbury, for supper. Iris Murdoch and John Bayley were staying at the house, as they often did. Edward reported to us after the visit that he was worried about Iris. She seemed very distracted and had apparently forgotten who he was. He had known Iris very well since he had been a teenager in the early 1960s. This was the first hint that any of us had that Iris was unwell with dementia.

A long while after this incident I had a call from Colin Haycraft at Duckworth: 'John Bayley wonders if you would be interested in illustrating the jacket for a new novel he has just written. It's called *Alice*. If you are, then I'll post off a typescript to you. Have a read and see what you come up with. John has some ideas too.' I had read John's earlier novel *In Another Country* (1955) and enjoyed it. I was surprised at the sudden announcement of a new novel. He had given no hint that he was working on one. I was of course delighted to be asked to design the cover.

I had known 'the Bayleys', Iris and John, since I married Emma Stone in 1977. Iris had arrived at our wedding in a characteristic 'rig' as my mother-in-law Janet would have called it. The rig consisted of a safari style belted cotton dress, a straw sun hat bound with a trailing red white and blue ribbon and a fetching pair of matching red white and blue striped Royal Jubilee stockings. John was always interested in what you were reading; I expressed my enthusiasm for *The Master and Magarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov which I had recently read, 'you didn't fff-find it ffff-frightfully bb-bogus, dear Ian', he said, 'Too much of all that Pppp-pontius Pilate business. You should read *A Country Doctor's Nnnn-notebook* much more llll-like it'. Hard to convey the rhythm and use of his stutter. A copy of the *Doctor's Notebook* duly arrived from John a few days later in the post.

John had expressed enthusiasm for my illustrations before, especially for my picture books such as *Lost in the Snow* and later on, when Iris was very ill, my version of Edward Lear's *The Owl and The Pussy-Cat*, which he said Iris liked him to share with her over and over.

I read through the typescript of *Alice* and made notes. Certain images stood out. The settings, especially of Venice in winter, a smart overcoat, a goddess emerging from the sea and a length of vivid lime green material to be used for a wedding dress. I tried to build a simple coherent image from them. The advantage with this book was that I had both the front and back of the jacket to play with. I represented the goddess by using Botticelli's image of Venus on her shell. I draped half of my version in not only a purple bikini but the lime green wedding dress. I surrounded the images front and back with arches based on Venetian gothic, rendered as pocked and weathered cream coloured stone which allowed the lettering to be read clearly. On the reverse I showed the overcoat on a hanger suspended in a wintry Venetian sky over a canal complete with striped poles, its quilted lining showing as described, 'dimpled like the upholstery in an old first-class railway carriage'.

I submitted a very detailed colour rough drawing to Nicky Badman, the art director at Duckworths. I also designed the title lettering. Nicky was soon in touch and I got the go ahead to create the final version, which I did. All the covers were drawn in watercolour on paper with either pen or pencil line work and body colour.

I have correspondence from John regarding the cover illustration for *Alice*: 'Dear Ian, Absolutely delighted with picture! Just what I hoped, & you simplified & pulled together my woolly concept *perfectly*. I love the ½ & ½ bikini and green'. Through an oversight, the publishers left my name off the cover crediting me as designer/illustrator. After it was published, I had an immediate card from John:

> Dear Ian, I was *Horrified* when I took it in that you weren't on the cover of *Alice*, and that cover, your cover, is the best thing about it. I rang Duckworths at once to see if anything could be done about it. They were terribly apologetic and said they would put it right if there was a re-printing.

He was very exercised about it and, after the launch party in Oxford where he had been quizzed several times on who had designed the cover, he sent a further letter:

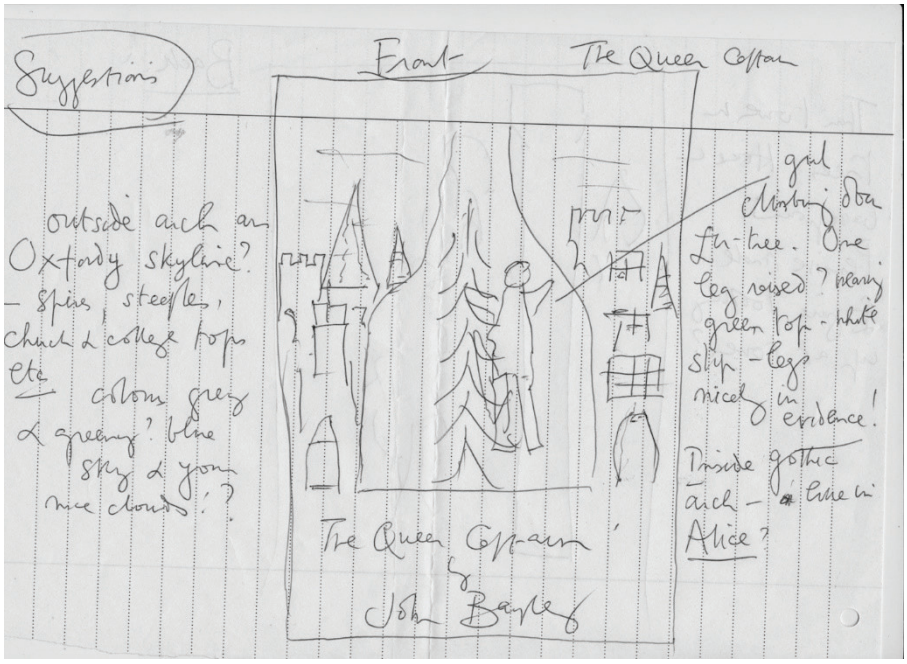
> … the cover was really marvellous, who did it? I blew your trumpet hard with the authors and a publisher or 2 & Colin (Haycraft) will say did the same.

Another letter from Mas St Jerome, France, on the subject of the non-attribution of the *Alice* cover:

> My dear Ian, It was kind of you to write, what a busy man you are! I long to hear more about the book you have just finished! But I don't want to disturb you. By the way the reviewer (of *Alice*) in the *Spectator*, Jane Gardam, mentions Rex Whistler and commented on the fact that it was uncredited.

He had ended the card after the launch party by saying, 'I do so hope you will do the next one'.

This was the first I had heard that there was to be a next one. This was *The Queer Captain* (Duckworth 1995). This time in advance John provided his own rough drawing as a suggestion with copious annotations:



The Queer Captain

Suggestions
Front outside arch an Oxford skyline? Spire, steeples, church and college tops etc colours grey and green? Blue sky and your nice clouds?
Girl climbing on a fir tree. One leg raised? Wearing green top – white slip – legs nicely in *evidence*!
Inside gothic arch – like in *Alice*?

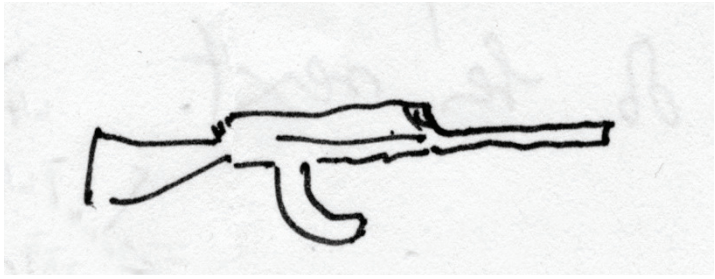
I submitted a rough drawing to Nicky Badman at Duckworths. It was a simplified version of his concept omitting the spires and complications of skylines in favour of the figure of the girl in the tree. This was duly accepted. I think there may have been a 'phone call or two from John later about the cover rough, refining details and suggesting that the girl's stockings should be laddered or torn as in the text. I have no further written notes or comments from John about *The Queer Captain* cover.

George's Lair (Duckworth 1996) was the third and last of the covers I made for John. Again he had suggestions to make at the start of the process:

> My Dear Ian, Lots of greetings and deep admiration for *Owl & Pussycat* & for my *Alice* and *Queer Captain* which never cease to be admired no matter what people think of the words! No 3 is now complete & scheduled for late summer. Nicky Badman at Duckworth hopes I'll send you a copy & suggestions & here it is – sorry copy is a bit tatty. I'm sure you'll do something splendid I always love your details. So does Iris who sends love to you both and hopes you'll do her next XXX (no reply please).

A letter was attached to the manuscript with the suggestions and a small drawing:

> *Idea for picture*
> *George's Lair*
> A cellar with George and Marthe looking at a Kalashnikov. She (a bit but not too obviously middle aged!) in shirt and slip. He in shirt sleeves (dark shirt?) he has dark hair she has brown hair and he should look much younger. They are kneeling?
> Upper part
> Fir trees and bits of battered red brick *etc* blue sky.
> Lower part
> The cellar. Dark with lamp. The two figures face to face over the gun (drawn Fig 2) roughly like this but it could be at an angle pointing upwards?



I decided, and Nicky Badman agreed, that this was far too complicated an image for the jacket. I submitted a black and white rough drawing of a much simpler image more in keeping with those on the other two books. A letter arrived from John:

> My Dear Ian, Your *George's Lair* picture (just seen the black and white rough from Nicky Badman) is superb absolutely it – wonderful! How right you were not to do the cellar and guns – too fussy as I now see, & how brilliant of you to think of Martha & bit by cedar tree (hope she's got on stockings & the reg[ulation] flesh coloured I suppose with respectable Martha & hint of suspender perhaps!? I shall much look forward to seeing the colour copy.

Later the publishers made postcards of the covers.

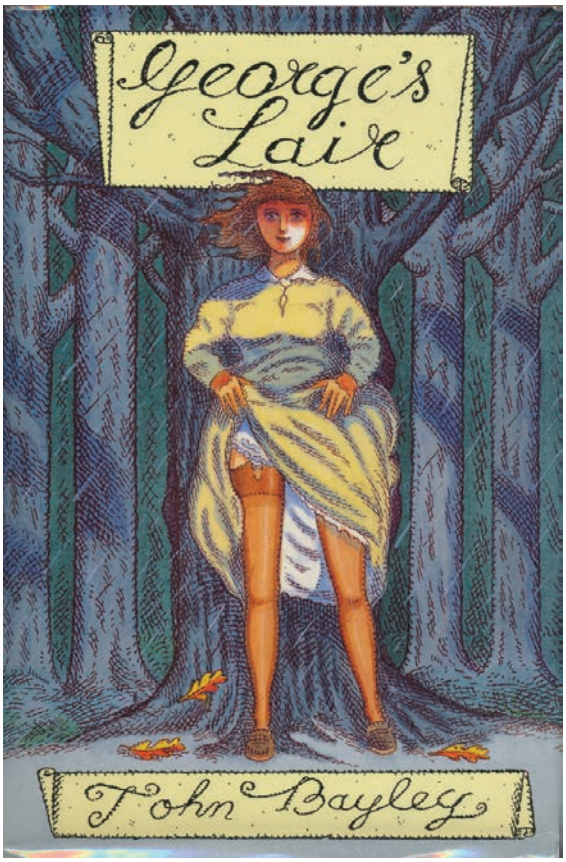
> My Dear Ian, You will be hearing from Nicky Badman at Duckworths about the thought of having post-cards made of the *Alice* and *Queer Captain* covers – they are so good – it will give a bit of publicity. I hope you will agree.

Which of course I did. I still have a very few of them left after all this time.

John was forever praising and encouraging. One of the last letters he sent about the covers was from an overheard conversation which he reported to me:

> Dear Ian, I simply can't resist reporting this overheard conversation to you. You're not going to believe it, but every word is true.
> Scene Blackwells. A modest but fairly conspicuous display of *Queer Captains*.
> He (a rather languid but cultured looking youth) 'that's a good cover. Reminds me of Balthus'.
> She (looking) 'Oh I do like that. But its nicer than Balthus. I don't really like Balthus'.
> He (looking inside) 'Well it's by a man called Ian Beck, it says'.
> She (enthusiastically) 'Well it'd be worth it for the cover'.
> He 'Not at 15 quid it wouldn't'.
> (Collapse of stout author's hope. They stroll off together)
> Well there you are dear Ian, it's something!
> Much Love to you and Emma and from Iris.

Reading John's later accounts of looking after Iris it became clear that part of the pleasure he had in writing these later novels was the escape they offered. They almost have the quality of a game set in a toy world. He was playful by nature and I like to think that he really was pleased with the work I made for his late flowering fiction.



Top left: front cover of *Alice*. Top right: back cover of *Alice*.
Bottom left: front cover of *The Queer Captain*. Bottom right: front cover of *George's Lair*.

Valentine Cunningham

Obituary of John Bayley

John Bayley, who has died aged 89, was an astute and influential literary critic. He was the first holder of the Warton chair in English literature at Oxford University, and one of the best-loved and most inspiring of Oxford's teachers.

He was also a minor novelist, whose works were eclipsed by the great roster of outstanding novels written by his first wife, Iris Murdoch. Later in life he achieved unexpected fame after the first in his trilogy of memoirs about life with Murdoch, *Iris: A Memoir* (1998), became a bestseller and was made into a film, *Iris* (2001), starring Kate Winslet, Judi Dench and Jim Broadbent.

He married Murdoch, then a philosophy fellow at St Anne's College, Oxford, in 1956. Bayley was an English tutor at New College at the time. Her second novel, *The Flight from the Enchanter*, appeared the same year, setting her well on her way to being England's most distinguished post-war female novelist. This pair of young, donnish authors cut a dash in Oxford – one enhanced by her flashy green motor car. But it was to academic literary criticism that Bayley turned. His writing from then until after his retirement from the Warton chair in 1992 would build his reputation as a great theorist of fiction.

The couple shared an interest in the moral purposes of fiction, the idea of the novel as teacher of the 'otherness of the other person', an inculcator of goodness and love. This aesthetic-moral vision was at the core of their lifelong devotion to each other – buttressed rather than otherwise by a heady liberalism allowing her a sequence of relationships on the side (never, of course, with anybody less than the most distinguished of European intellectuals).

While she filled her novels full of the sexual complexities she enjoyed, he produced a series of critical studies, beginning with the classic theorising of *The Characters of Love* (1960), going on to exemplary studies of *Tolstoy* (1966), *Pushkin* (1971), *Hardy* (1978) and *The Short Story* (1988).

For Bayley, as for Murdoch, the great exponent of fiction's trade in goodness and the morality of persons was Shakespeare, and his many encounters with Shakespeare are among the best there have been. His *Shakespeare and Tragedy* (1981) still stimulates students.

Bayley's first critical book, *The Romantic Survival* (1957), set out his influential take on the nature of poetic reality. It opens with Kipling's hostility to those equating poetry with Golden Age nostalgias and aloofness from what happens 'here and now, in the factory, and the grey atmosphere of modern England'. For Bayley, poetry would be in the best sense banal, as banal as Kipling, as common and vulgar as Keats – as he put it in a lecture for the British Academy in 1962.

He was unrivalled in his appreciation for the way the authors he loved were entangled in 'the banality of the here and now'. He loved the detail in a novel – how aeroplanes worked, what a pocket battleship was, what Kipling meant by a 'cheap Beheea sugar-crusher', where to buy a good cloth cap. He also relished a critical fight, particularly with the structuralist and poststructuralist fashions of the 1970s and 80s. (Some of his best encounters with the proponents of postmodern theory are collected in *The Order of Battle at Trafalgar*, 1987.)

His sturdy interest in common readers was at odds with his own background, and the mannerisms and get-up he adopted, which were those of an eccentric English gent (the ruined kit from second-hand shops that only the truly affluent can get away with sporting). On their many British Council trips abroad, the professor and his novelist wife performed a literary double act that was often misread as a whimsical throwback to early imperialist times.

Bayley always enjoyed casting himself in the role of the holy fool, dumped bemusedly amid the dangerous courses of the world. In his first novel, *In Another Country* (1955), about British intelligence officers in and around occupied Cologne getting into trouble by general rule-breaking and piss-taking, he appeared as the soldierly innocent abroad, the officer with the stutter

producing chaos on the parade ground. The stutter remained usefully on call all his life, helping greatly in his dedication to an appearance of agreeable buffoonery. Under that mask a far steelier person could pursue his own way.

Born in Lahore, India, Bayley was the son of a major in the Grenadier Guards, F.J. Bayley: a child of the Raj who would all his life celebrate the peculiar greatness of the Raj's greatest writer, Rudyard Kipling. Unlike Kipling, he flourished in the English private-school system. At Eton, where he became an Oppidan Scholar, he came on immensely as a young historian and litterateur. Before leaving school in 1943 he was awarded a clutch of prizes. He also won a scholarship to read history at New College, Oxford but, the second world war then being in full swing, he went straight into his father's regiment, serving until 1947.

When he at last entered New College that year, it was to read not history but English, under the tutelage of Lord David Cecil – who was well up Bayley's gentlemanly street. They became great friends and eventually colleagues. Bayley's Oxford studies were even more glitteringly successful than his school ones. In 1950 he was awarded a first, and also won the Chancellor's English Essay Prize, and the coveted Newdigate Prize for poetry. Bayley never finished anything so mundane as a thesis – much too Germanic, American or, worse, scientific for the Oxford humanities in that era. In 1951 he received a postgraduate scholarship to Magdalen College, was briefly associated with the new St Antony's College for graduate students, and in 1954 was elected English fellow at New College.

By this time, Cecil had risen to be Goldsmith's professor of English at Oxford, and the poet (and one-time prisoner of war) John Buxton had arrived to replace him as tutor. With Bayley in support, they would make English studies at New College a formidable thing. The classes in the reading of poetry that Bayley offered for years with Cecil – that stutter well to the fore – became legendary, as well as being an apt allegory of the old Oxford English school's combination of critical agility with the principle of employing gentlemen of letters wherever possible. He was made a fellow of the British Academy in 1990 and appointed CBE in 1999.

In Oxford, Bayley's dilettantish behaviour could be irritating, both as an examiner (losing scripts) and lecturer (advertising remote rooms, moving rooms, postponing meetings, changing topic without notice). Nor was his heart in the routines of faculty administration expected of him after his appointment to the Warton chair in 1974. He was a terrible member of committees like the botched one on syllabus reform, and in 1994 was criticised for his wayward chairing of the Booker prize panel.

Much of this game was forgivable and forgiven. It would have been churlish to hold his peccadilloes and weakness against the great critic who could really enthuse the young about literature. His enthusiasms were contagious. He made literature matter.

It might be hoped that literature's lessons in human endurance would help get him through the sad years during which he tenderly looked after his wife as she sank deeper in the self-blankings of Alzheimer's disease, which set in in the mid-1990s. He cooked up the schoolboy tuck the pair lived on at home, the baked beans and fishcakes, in their chaotic north Oxford kitchen, in which the mouldering tins accumulated and the disintegrating plastic bag really came into its own as storage device.

Bayley's old-laggish retirement pieces in the *Evening Standard* surprised no one. Though his speedy marriage after Murdoch's death in 1999 to their old friend Audhild (Audi) Villers certainly did. (And how rapidly she spruced up both him and the house – almost beyond recognition.) What's more, the trilogy of sexually beans-spilling narratives he then produced, granting himself centre-stage in the Murdoch drama, shocked many of their friends as indecorous and ungracious.

Bayley lived down the castigation, though, and lived happily and gratefully with Audi for the last 15 years or so of his life. She survives him.

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Pamela Osborn

Elegies for an Elegist: Mourning and John Bayley

'On a black tapestry now
This gesture of joy
So absolutely you.'[1]

A consequence of John Bayley's death, and one which he would not have foreseen, is that one of the most revered elegists of the late 20th and 21st centuries has himself become the subject of elegy. Bayley's part in transforming the way we write about death and dying at the beginning of the 21st century should not be underestimated. His unflinching portrait in three volumes of memoir of caring for Iris Murdoch as she slowly disappeared from his life has been credited with ejecting 'death from its fearful hiding place, exposing it to full view'.[2] This work was ground-breaking in terms of providing a sustained and specific account of the trajectory of Alzheimer's disease. The fluctuation in Bayley's attachment to Murdoch described in the first two volumes of his trilogy also reveals what is as yet scarcely-documented complexity in the experience of mourning and anticipatory mourning.[3] Bayley's detailed and confessional description of his shifting attachment to Murdoch demonstrates how the literature of grief and mourning provides documentary evidence that catalogues the irregularities and intricacies of mourning more effectively than the mere theoretical study of it. Bayley's journal-esque narrative is immediate and visceral, exposing rather than defining the peaks and troughs of grief and recovery, and claiming a place for writing at the centre of the process: 'I don't care what I do write or say about [Iris] or about anything else', he writes,

> I know I am worshipping her no matter what I say. But these days I find myself proclaiming to others, and to myself as well: 'She seems to want to go to bed about seven,' or 'In this new phase she's very restless in the night.'
>
> Who is this She who has made an appearance, and with whom others and myself are so familiar? We are familiar because we are seeing her from the outside. She has indeed become a She.[4]

Pages later Bayley records that the apparent process of detachment from Murdoch has unexpectedly halted, even reversed, proclaiming, 'I shudder now when I think of the place where Iris briefly became a *She* in my imagination.'[5] Bayley's strength as a writer of grief memoir is his sense of humour and his ability, shared with Murdoch as a novelist, to look squarely and steadily at death and at the mechanisms by which we avoid confronting it. In his obituary of Bayley, Marcus Williamson remembers that '[a]sked about whether he was ready for his own death after Murdoch had died,

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[1] Iris Murdoch, 'John Sees a Stork at Zamorra', *Boston University Journal*, 23, no.2 (1975), p.31.

[2] Jeffrey Berman, *Companionship in Grief: Love and Loss in the Memoirs of C.S. Lewis, John Bayley, Donald Hall, Joan Didion, and Calvin Trillin* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), p.101.

[3] Anticipatory mourning refers to the initiation of the mourning process before death or loss has occurred. Darian Leader suggests that anticipatory mourning is closely associated with Alzheimer's and dementia: 'we sometimes hear it said after a bereavement that the mourning had already taken place: the person had already died for them. This is often heard from the carers of those suffering from Alzheimer's. They were no longer themselves, and this absence was mourned before the moment of biological death itself.' Darian Leader, *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (London: Penguin, 2009), p.139.

[4] John Bayley, *Iris and the Friends: A Year of Memories* (London: Abacus, 1999), p.249.

[5] *Iris and the Friends*, p.254.

Bayley replied 'all the stoic philosophers have always suggested that you should be prepared for death, and once you come to a certain age I think you are. Or I am, anyway.'"[6]

Bayley believed that memorialising the dead, or the irretrievably absent, in the form of art was 'the best use a writer can possibly make of the dear departed [....] a way of keeping in touch with them.'[7] This idea accords with, and to some extent pre-empts, the central doctrine of much of the new wave of mourning theory which largely rejects the idea of mourning as a process ending in detachment, identifying it instead as redefinition of the relationship with the dead person. In *Widower's House* he recounts a conversation overheard at a dinner party about a deceased married couple who were buried together in their garden. Speculation about their hypothetical feelings could none the less go on, suggests Bayley,

> in the same way that information could be exchanged about their physical whereabouts. There they were, in the garden; so must they in some sense not be aware of this comforting fact? It was certainly a comfort for others to suppose so.
>
> The couple interred under the rosebed in their garden continued to exist in the consciousness of the living. In what Milton called the 'thoughts that wander through eternity'. And eternity is not the afterlife but in our own minds. Communing with the dead in this way must be one of the oldest of all human indulgences.[8]

Bayley's obituaries, which appeared in publications all over the world, reveal a critic widely considered to be among the finest of his generation and a man fully and comically aware of the absurdity of his profession and of human life and death. What emerges most unmistakably in the tributes by those, such as Valentine Cunningham, who were familiar with the man as well as his work as a critic and teacher, is a consensus that Bayley was far more important, unique and dissident than he ever realised. Terry Eagleton is not alone in describing Bayley in a 1978 essay as 'perhaps one of the most inimitable critics in England today, nobody's fool and nobody's camp follower, free at once of slick professionalism and gauche amateurism in his resolute devotion to the business of criticism.'[9] Many of Bayley's obituaries unconsciously simulate his own style and speak to those who welcomed the lucidity and directness of his critical, and elegiac, work. He was unapologetically character-focused and happy to embrace his classification as an 'old-fashioned' critic, opposed to structuralism and post-structuralism, indeed anything that might be described as a theory. Thus, as Dulcie Leimbach writing for the *New York Times* recalls in her obituary of Bayley, he was hailed as a 'humaniser' of great writers.[10]

The bridging of the gap between what James Shapiro calls 'common readers and daunting writers'[11] often begins in Bayley's reviews and essays with a sliver of gossip, such as his contention in an article about Boris Pasternak that the author resembled a horse and was thus 'a horse-faced parsnip' since the direct translation of Pasternak is parsnip. 'What other great poet has the bigness and animal closeness of the equine,' asks Bayley, 'and words that plod like hooves

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[6] Marcus Williamson, 'John Bayley, Obituary', *Independent* <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/john-bayley-author-and-literary-critic-who-wrote-a-tender-unflinching-account-of-the-final-years-of-his-wife-iris-murdoch-9996612.html> [accessed 24/01/15].

[7] John Bayley, *Widower's House* (London: Duckworth, 2001), p.94.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Terry Eagleton, 'Liberality and Order: the Criticism of John Bayley', *New Left Review*, 110 (1978), 29-40, p.30.

[10] Dulcie Leimbach, 'John Bayley, Oxford Don Who Wrote of his Wife, Iris Murdoch, dies at 89', <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/22/arts/john-bayley-oxford-don-who-wrote-of-his-wife-iris-murdoch-dies-at-89.html?_r=0> [accessed 11 April 2015].

[11] James Shapiro, 'The Power of Delight: The Old Criterion', <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/12/books/review/the-power-of-delight-the-old-criterion.html> [accessed 29 May 2015].

with such delicate precision through twigs and grasses?'[12] Many of Bayley's obituaries recall his tendency to leave 'the dining table [at St Catherine's College] with his pockets lined with leftovers'[13] and his, perhaps deliberate, ineptitude with faculty administration which resulted in the loss of scripts, 'advertising remote rooms, moving rooms, postponing meetings, changing topic without notice.'[14] In 1956, as the obituary in the *Telegraph* recounts, Bayley was a signatory to two academic letters: one which supported the Suez invasion by the British, and one which condemned it. 'When one of his colleagues asked him how this could have happened, Bayley reportedly replied: "I believed both!"'[15]

This overt bumbling and apparent wooliness of ideals did not prevent his critical writing from becoming, and remaining, influential and authoritative to the extent that certain groups of theoreticians considered him a threat. Several obituaries record Bayley's quarrels with those who criticised him because he 'laid down no system and had no followers.'[16] Cunningham recalls that Bayley 'relished a critical fight, particularly with the structuralist and post-structuralist fashions of the 1970s and 80s.'[17] Bayley was slave to no theory, but he was unerringly consistent in his belief that 'as long as human beings accept one another with love their artists will try to embody that love in the representation of men and women and of the external world.'[18] Cunningham maintains that 'it would have been churlish to hold his peccadilloes [...] against the great critic who could really enthuse the young about literature. His enthusiasms were contagious. He made literature matter.'[19]

Bayley's description in several obituaries as 'one of the foremost critics of the post-war period' is unsurprising considering the wide appeal of his keenly observed *human* approach. He could make valuable connections between texts and characters based simply, it appeared, on a kind of educated instinct about literature and human nature, such as his contention that Stiva Oblonsky in *Anna Karenina* and Lucio in *Measure for Measure* 'curiously resemble' each other because they are both 'emphatically not a man "of our time"'.[20] Eagleton views Bayley's perspective as 'legitimated by the sheer force of his personal sensitivity and perceptiveness as a standpoint to be respected and adopted.'[21] Literary criticism is rarely sufficiently engaged with the emotional life to be moving, but Bayley's insight into character crucially invites the reader to empathise with both writers and characters and rethink a, perhaps entrenched, opinion on a piece of literature. In his introduction to Bayley's own novel *In Another Country* (1955), A.N. Wilson recalls Elizabeth Bowen's delight after attending a lecture by Bayley on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*: '[T]here were so many things in the book which she had never seen, and though she did not agree with all the lecturer's paradoxical insights, she had the heady sense, which she had never thought to recapture, of reading the

[12] John Bayley, 'On the Horse Parsnip', *London Review of Books*, 12 (1990), 16-17, p.16.

[13] 'John Bayley, Scholar', *Telegraph* <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11360441/John-Bayley.html> [accessed 01/02/15].

[14] Valentine Cunningham, 'John Bayley, Obituary', <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/22/john-bayley> [accessed 14/02/15], reprinted in this volume.

[15] 'John Bayley, Scholar,' *Telegraph*.

[16] 'Obituary: John Bayley: Of Literature and Love', Economist, <http://www.economist.com/news/obituary/21641126-john-bayley-english-don-literary-critic-and-husband-iris-murdoch-died-january-12th> [accessed 30/01/15].

[17] Valentine Cunningham, 'John Bayley, Obituary', reprinted in this volume.

[18] John Bayley, *The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality*, first published by Constable 1960, reprinted by Chatto & Windus, 1968, p.291.

[19] Valentine Cunningham, 'John Bayley, Obituary', reprinted in this volume.

[20] John Bayley, *The Characters of Love*, p.23.

[21] Terry Eagleton, *Liberality and Order: the criticism of John Bayley*, p.40.

novel for the first time.'[22] Similarly, his obituary in *The Times* reminds us that upon reviewing *The Power of Delight* (2005) Clive James was touched by Bayley's ability to invigorate the reader's perspective on a forgotten writer: 'Since we don't seem to need William Gerhardie's novels any more, do we really need what Bayley says about Gerhardie's life? 'Like most butterflies, he was far too tough to be broken on a wheel.' But no, it's too good: we do need it. And maybe we need Gerhardie's novels as well, if they could inspire a critic to a sentence as neat as that.'[23]

Bayley's insight was probably strengthened and honed by his own status as a novelist, and *vice versa*. He always referred to his novels as 'light' in comparison to Murdoch's, but his five published works of fiction demonstrate the same humorous, warm and yet undoubtedly sharp approach as his criticism. While his career as a novelist has been overshadowed by that of his wife, he managed to achieve something she always strove for and perhaps, by her own admission, failed to achieve: his novels are houses 'fit for free characters.' Wilson observes that Bayley's 'people' give the reader

> the feeling that they are simply there for their own sakes, and being allowed by their author to be themselves […] even when that self is reassuringly boring [….] We never feel that these people are here because the author wants to make a point at their expense; to demonstrate his wit, for instance, by making them jump through the hoops of some improbable plot; or, more deadly still, to project his ideas – perhaps about the class system, war and peace, or international relations. On the contrary, the novel's sympathies and felicities derive from an author who has patiently and contentedly soaked himself up in them – warily and observantly, but never […] with the intrusion of self.[24]

It is to be hoped that, after his death, John Bayley's novels will be reassessed with the same honest vigour that he himself applied in his criticism. He leaves a legacy of clear-eyed, truthful, tolerant, hugely well-informed writing which, due to his refusal to adopt a theoretical position, will remain timeless. In his obituary 'My Hero John Bayley', Richard Eyre, the director of the 2001 film based on Bayley's memoirs, suggests a fitting epitaph for a man who sought the truth in all that he did: 'from Tolstoy: "We can know only that we know nothing. And that is the highest degree of human wisdom."'[25]

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[22] John Bayley, *In Another Country* first published by Constable, 1955, reprinted by Oxford University Press, Twentieth Century Classics Series, with an Introduction by A.N. Wilson, 1986, p.v.

[23] Ben Gurr, 'John Bayley Remembered,' <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article1509676.ece> [accessed 22/01/15].

[24] A.N. Wilson, Introduction to *In Another Country*, p.xv.

[25] Richard Eyre, 'My Hero John Bayley',< http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/22/my-hero-john-bayley-by-richard-eyre-iris-murdoch> [accessed 22/01/15].

Michael Howard

An Introduction to the letters from John Bayley to Michael Howard 1948-2004

Was it just by good fortune, or was it the product of calculation or judgement, that John Bayley's letters – a sequence beginning in early January 1948 – are available to be read? It was neither of these things; it is simply that when I received and read the first, and had read it again, and looked back on the time we had spent together, I could not throw it away. And so with those that were to follow. The growing cache became a tangible evidence of the relationship, an expression of the affection that we had for each other. It was not by chance that from the first John signed himself 'Love, John'; it was a word that, between two young men barely into their twenties but holding the King's Commission, might have been misunderstood. I did not give it a moment's thought. It was something for which, throughout his life, he had not a talent but a gift, one that he bestowed widely if not always wisely. And it became a relationship never to be eroded by considerations of time or distance and, for me, survives his death.

And it was by chance, not calculation, that I mentioned to Peter Conradi that I had kept all John's letters to me, and learned that they could be of interest to the Iris Murdoch Archives. And so, with John's blessing, they were set in order, deciphered – his handwriting was terrible – and transcribed, and placed in the Archive together with a glossary to clarify anything that was not self-explanatory.

It was by chance that John and I met in the first place. He came - was sent to us - a lieutenant of the Grenadier Guards. His arrival was preceded by some hours with a warning signal and he was later disgorged from a staff car just outside my picture window over the market square. He wandered into my office and threw me a lame salute – all his salutes were lame – to be greeted with the less than civil question, 'And who the hell are you?'! It was intended to intimidate or unsettle, and succeeded; he was hardly able to stammer out his name.

In fact we took to him at once; he was the least guardsman-like Guardsman we had ever met, the least Etonian Old Etonian. He became a relaxed companion and welcome member of a very mixed Mess. I found a position for John which would keep him with us, rather than in a remote detachment elsewhere in the Ruhr, to perform duties which fell within his scope and which he would not find disagreeable: identifying and locating German scientists and technicians needed for interview – or was it interrogation? – in London, travelling in his Volkswagen with his interpreter. Learning the language, something he wished to achieve, provided him with relief from the limited life of the Mess. This took him into a German home on a number of the long evenings when later, in the Mess (the last resort soon reached), we were talking shop and drinking alcohol – often in excess. Predictably his teacher, a German lady of a certain age, had a daughter who became the inspiration for Hannelore in John's first novel *In Another Country* (1955), which reflected the life which we all were leading eight years earlier. His relations with 'Hannelore' were 'chaste but merry'.

Another outlet available to us, but shunned by John, was sport and even team games, of which he had been cured at Eton. He mimicked the cat, which holds that the more exercise you take the more you need: avoid it. One balmy summer evening after dinner in the Mess, I said to him, 'John, shall we take a turn round the block?' He was horrified. 'W-what, n-not the whole block!' The whole block involved a saunter approaching five hundred yards. He survived it.

And he survived, and enjoyed, a more physically testing occasion. One summer Sunday we neglected our duties and I took him and two others in my Volkswagen down the road along the Rhine. Opposite Bad Godesberg, Lorelei country, we could strip off and jump in – a pastime in

which he was famously later to indulge with Iris. A tug towing four huge barges struggled up river against the current toward Switzerland. It was an occasion which burned itself into his memory. Eight years later in his novel *In Another Country* such an excursion was transformed and developed, this time with Hannelore on board and not omitting the barges. It occupies some thirty pages!

In his very first letter to me from Oxford, when I had just arrived in Cambridge and had written to consult him on a matter of the heart, he wrote, 'Continue to write with the utmost candour', to make the point that he expected candour from me and that I could rely on it from him. I always did.

Our correspondence, after ten years and after he had married Iris, became occasional. Contacts were sporadic, but it was resumed as Iris declined and after her death. He wrote, 'You are the one person I love hearing from amidst the hoo-ha, as you so justly describe it' – aspects of his *Iris* trilogy had caused something of a furore and he felt a little under siege. He had long pressed me to write, without saying quite what: 'I revel in your letters,' he wrote. His words encouraged me and, building on my own letters to my mother from 1946/7, they drew from me my personal memoir of those days. It was published in 2010, replete with three or four dozen references to John and seven of my photographs – he never resisted being photographed.

In our letters to each other neither of us had an agenda; there was no room for artifice. John felt safe to indulge in self-revelation; the lambent honesty shone through. This disarmed Anthony Clare when he interviewed John for BBC Radio's 'In the Psychiatrist's Chair', seeking to pin him, in the nicest way, to his specimen board.[1] Those many years before in Germany, where the living conditions of the people of the place were so bad, we had both found that there was no room for anything in one's dealings except the utmost honesty. We had found it rather refreshing.

What I have taken from reading again his letters to me, those from sixty and more years ago, and those from the turn of this century, is the real John Bayley. I am sure that is what you will take from it too.

[1] Interview of John Bayley by Anthony Clare as part of the Radio Programme *In the Psychiatrist's Chair* broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 10 Oct 1999. Recording held as part of the Iris Murdoch Archives at Kingston University Special Collections, kindly donated by Michael Howard.

Letters from John Bayley to Michael Howard

(Annotated by Michael Howard)

Nettlepole, Pluckley, Kent
January 1948

Dear Mike,

It's no matter at all about the suit: I shan't be needing it now for some time.[1] Thank-you for writing Roddy. I will do so too & I'm sure all will be O.K. I imagine your farewell was eventful – from Iserlohn? – & that now the absence of petrol & *Steinhäger*[2] is letting you down as badly as it did me – the car sounds nice though.

I heard from Dicky, appropriate on his perch in Hallam St. He wants me to come & see him. I daren't alone – will you hold my hand?[3] Suggest we lunch together if you are up in town ever. How about the 15th of Jan, the day before I go back, because I shd like to see you before returning & can't really (tho' thank you very much) come down to Upper H.

Across-country is im *Augenblick*[4] impossible & trains, well … But let's do that. We will meet him in his den, at 12 say. I will arrange it. If this is O.K. remain silent, if not, a post-card with a modification.

Love John.

New College, Oxford
2nd March 1948

My Dear Mike,

I have been thinking about your letter, a very good one if I may say so. It puts your case – even all our cases – very forcefully & you have certainly no illusions about the business. But what then? Situations, instead of coming out one way or the other – either in the brisk diminuendo of the marriage bed or the semi-relief of a 'ruined life' – have a habit of simply going on. It is astonishing for how long things can remain 'impossible'. Yes? And yours looks to me like that. I have written to Margaret, as it were au naturel, & made various references to these matters, among others.[5] One must be honest. It is disconcerting how very nice people can do things which are really rather below the belt. Her refusal of marriage, Z.B,[6] & subsequent telling of the tale to you, seems to me to reflect no self-sacrifice, or even dilemma, but simply das *Ewig-Weibliche* trying to get the man she wants.[7] And you paint most tersely the very real horror of the phonograph coming back at you – I think one of the most nightmare feelings is that of having permanently 'influenced' a human being.

All that apart. But, to become a little more aggressive, I think you could do a lot worse than to marry her, not now but in 2-3 yrs time. Not for reasons of decency but simply because I doubt if you will be finding (in England) a more agreeable creature who would never let you down. But

[1] MH was to have brought a suit made in Germany for JB back in December.

[2] The ubiquitous German gin.

[3] Dicky Muir, formerly Adjutant, now at Cambridge. JB was, unjustifiably, uncertain of his sexual orientation.

[4] At present.

[5] Margret Kunsemüller, daughter of the (doctor's) house in which JB and MH had both been billeted.

[6] *zum Beispiel* – for example.

[7] The 'eternal feminine', c.f. Goethe's Faust, last line.

the prospect of a wife who won't run away or turn bad is not a wildly exciting inducement to the young I suppose: though it ought to be. Of course you don't want to get married, but you will do, & I see nothing better than one whose parents-in-law are out of England & whose presence would not put a stop to all travel & enjoyment.

It may be I am overrating her – you know her better than I. Christa is a literary complication, not a real one.[8] It is a memory you will rightly cherish, rather than feel embarrassment from. Continue to write with the utmost candour, & do nothing. She is what – 20?

Love John

Nettlepole, Little Chart, Kent.
Tue. June 1948

Dear Michael,

I was just idle, but it had occurred to me that if in fact you were having to arrange transport for Robin it could only be difficult to pick me up from Tunbridge Wells as well. I imagine Robin may well have felt apprehensive –as he relaxed '*bei* Howard' – of his forthcoming exertions in an English country-house, if you see what I mean.[9] Such things depend on immense leisures & *ennuis* – legions of servants & so on. People can only live together in comfort if they meet only with formality, idle & unattached, & then drift apart again, while the machinery goes on. Nowadays no one in the house is exempt from the machinery; the guests become St Sebastians stuck full of arrows of kindness, privilege & concealment – desperate attempts to 'muck him in' in some way or another. I prefer life in an institution, a mess or a college or something. Can you bear the thought of being a householder, the patriarch, merely the hatee with power, instead of the hater, watched by all those little animal eyes of one's children?

Incidentally, Mike, I do hope you will do economics now after doing well in the first part, because German languages is surely not much good when one knows them already. I shd love to come over for a night, before you go, if you are sure you can manage it. Next Thursday would be very nice if you're sure you can manage it. I can easily get to Tonbridge & will ring up – if that does – & tell the time of the train. The car sounds fine.

Love John

Nettlepole, Pluckley, Kent.
14th September 1948

Dear Michael,

I see America: the letters were rare, especially the second. It was nice just to sit back & have them & know one couldn't answer, retailing all our little country-house activities down in Kent in exchange for your heroic information about life up in Michigan. Of course there is no landscape there I take it? There is scenery, & a big car, & gallons of petrol, & hundreds of miles, & people clustering round the filling-stations eating corn-shucks (or cobs?) & dreaming about the big city. But no Cranford, no Granchester, Hardy Wessex, or Belloc Sussex? In fact people are not made worthwhile by their environment, which is what civilization in England adds up to? American

[8] Margret's elder sister.

[9] *Chez* Howard, Upper Hartfield, Sussex.

fiction, which is founded on a complete & virile pessimism, has no landscape. Just a main street. That came out v. strongly in a book called *Appointment in Samarra*,[10] that we read in Kamen, where Cadillacs just went from house to house. [11]

I loved your use of the word 'adhesive'. It has notable qualities, that word, like paraffin, pavement or *Studebaker* – it should be used more often. And the baseball: I see it. And the garage door that disappears into your bedroom wall. Well, well.

I believe that Robin is in Italy or nearly. I suppose it will be cooler for him now than earlier: wasn't there a heat-wave when you were in America? Is it a relief to be home, or do you find, like Dr Johnson's famous definition of marriage & celibacy, that America has many pains but England no pleasures?

Love John

New College, Oxford.
Monday. November 1948

Dear Mike,

We have been isolated in fog for several days though we now hardly notice it. It is like being under-water & I expect to find gills flapping pinkly under my vest whenever I undress – (which isn't often.) Write me one of your letters if you have a moment & make it a plum rather than a sheep's eye.

I don't know about Austria tho'. I met a horrible bloke who had been on the student's do at St Anton & said it was grand if one went for skiing alone & didn't mind roughing it. 'Bunks above Bunks y'know & outside to pee.' I said oh. There are excellent hotels there if one has ones 35£, & my Austrian step-cousin is going in Jan. (which is 'the time' it seems) & says he could fix one up but that seems late. In any case my eldest brother is just about to have a child (rather like your sister) & my mother will have to be away looking after his wife – everyone is defenceless nowadays – & I shd probably have to stay at home as there would be no one else, & look after Father. How far are you, if at all? It seems I shall be a non-starter.

Robin sends his love.[12] He is carrying on – and making out – with a girl called Barbara Belloc & Johnny makes the odd effort to supplant him.[13] Quite like old times but don't say I said so.

Love John

[10] John O'Hara, *Appointment in Samarra* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935). The title refers to an old story rewritten in 1933 by Somerset Maugham.

[11] Small mining town in Westphalia, headquarters of No 1 T-force Unit.

[12] Robin Smyth, officer of the Rifle Brigade, Assistant Intelligence Officer, by now up at Trinity, Oxford.

[13] John Laurence Pepys Cockerell, officer of the 60th Rifles, by now also up at Trinity, Oxford.

Nettlepole, Pluckley, Kent.
18th December 1948

My dear Michael

Do excuse my not writing so long. If only I'd got around to answering before leaving Oxford it would have been O.K. but out here the struggle for existence is too strong, nothing survives except coal, hens & women's institutes, & they flourish rankly. I have decided that life in an institution is alone bearable, families & lodgings equally impossible – strange, when you come to think of it – how few the possibilities are.

Robin, with his sense of the theatre, is enthusiastic about Oberammergau: I, with my limitations of the cinema, am not so sure.[14] Would it not be too gratuitously intelligent? I don't quite see how you would get in much action, & development. Isn't the story too emphatically in the tail? I think you could make something extremely interesting of it though. I look forward to seeing it.

I am very enthusiastic about *The Red Shoes* – have you seen it? The same remarkable length, solidity & imagination as *Blimp & A Matter of Life & Death*. This last I thought first-rate – especially those sand-dunes & rhododendrons. Now & again the Cloven Hoof, though, was it Pressburger's or Powell's?

I am delighted to hear that a liaison has been arranged. Tell me what it is like – I mean how this <u>particular</u> affair goes. I wish you a good Christmas (pray accept this instead of a card) & my regards to all at Catte Street House, your nephew included.

Love John

Nettlepole, Little Chart, Kent.
March 1949

Dear Michael,

I was wondering how things went on – well it seems. Are you working hard? I feel you ought, if you have these exam things next term. How fortunate we are to go 3 years without such things.

I am glad to hear your grandson shapes well. Children & dogs make a lot of difference in a house; they hold things together & by the necessity of behaving properly in their presence provide the element of formality so indispensable in any household. Queer how many young men today have a hankering for the pomposity that represents the solid spool of usage, running like black cotton all over the establishment. They are distressed if you talk about supper or 'the other room': I sympathise with them.

I imagine a desire to be able to say to people 'the fishing rods <u>always</u> live in the still-room, behind the dog-kennel' or whatever, is responsible for more marriages than one cares to think. I fancy it will not be of yours. But you are enjoying yourself. One can go on for a surprisingly long time in an impossible position, just as ones domestic usage is never shattered when one becomes bankrupt. I should keep it up.

How queer you should think that about homosexuality! I'm sure you're right. But I suspect you & I are not really fitted for the University, because in the last resort one becomes bored with the society of men, or rather it does not have for us that magical quality which so many find. I rather suspect that no friendship can exist on a basis of complete physical indifference.

[14] MH had mooted the possibility of writing a drama set among the performers of the Passion Play.

A saddening thought, because on the whole I would much rather know men intimately than women. Of course some lucky fellows have it both ways & they are the real social creatures. An institution for me is a convenience rather than a poetic background.

Love John

New College, Oxford.
Friday. June 1949

My dear Michael

It is doubtful whether strong feelings & dramatic narrative arrange themselves naturally on the page – with natural effect, I mean: much more likely 'sincerity is a matter of talent'. And it was talent that struck me most in your letter: I felt not unprivileged, because it was really rather a remarkable piece of narrative.

I think you need have no fears about your capacity to write your Oberammergau play, or anything else. Don't think me unsympathetic because it is this aspect of your weekend – the 'report on experience' in fact – which holds my attention. That is simply because I am not competent – incurable sex fantasist as I am – to comment on the behaviour of men and women. I shoot off into irresponsibility & Hans Andersen princesses the moment relationships with females impend; my only physical conception being the '*Maedchen mit den röten Backen*' who one addresses in a foreign tongue.[15] So on the implications of your weekend I must decline to comment (perhaps Robin will have more to say) – reserving my admiration for the story of it. One point however: I see no hope for you, with your positively Corinthian attraction, except to act the part. You must take them to bed, calculatingly & with the proper precautions: for the final and most desperate ingredient in your attraction (and of this I am sure) is the charming air of indecision and deprecation when it comes to the point. If you do not rationalize (& brutalize) these situations they will get you down & end in marriage or a monastery.

Love John

I enclose an amusing thing about Iserlohn, in the hope it may be therapeutic, like junket or milk of magnesia. Braatz[16] sent it me for Xmas, together with much news of the 'boys', e.g. that Herr Coe[17] weds Frau Leihburg![18]

Nettlepole, Pluckley.
1st September 1949

My Dear Mike,

Your description, so telling, cheered me up a bit because I go Sunday, & don't want to much. I should have liked to come very much but hope to be over in Cantab. next term & will certainly see you then.

[15] Girl with the red cheeks.

[16] Erich Braatz had been JB's German interpreter at Kamen.

[17] Major Ronald Coe, formerly Second in Command of No 1 T-Force at Kamen.

[18] Formerly the wife of Max Leihburg, Coe's German servant/interpreter/driver, from whom she had become estranged. Coe had been conducting an unseemly affair with her while retaining Max in his employ.

Dumbfounded to hear that Hanni[19] will be with us shortly – it only goes to show! I was seen off very sharpish by Margret[20] who wrote & told me I didn't understand these things. She said she had loved you & that was what mattered: marriage being the merest impertinence: but it seemed to me the grapes might be a little sour. A novel attitude for the girl & surely not a convincing one. Without marriage we have them where we want them after all. I am relieved to hear you are still seeing a little of the sex occasionally.

Must stop & sew on a button to complete my continental trousseau. Am all of a flutter.

Love John

New College
27th October 1949

Dear Mike,

I enjoy your letters: & was not really expecting, hardly hoped it took me for one, after not writing. I have been particularly lost this term, quite unable to do anything. It is not so much a condition of defeat or nostalgia as just the sheer artificiality of life. Don't you think so? One is always either wanting a cup of tea, or a pee, or something to eat, or – but the physical catalogue would soon get out of hand. The point is that how can one work with all these little tics that swarm on one like vermin. In the old days ministering to their wants was at once the normal traffic & enjoyment of life. Now they make it impossible to work. It is like trying to read the newspaper through a sheet of bath-room glass.

I am particularly conscious of the tics after France. That was as scrappy, as kaleidoscopic, as misleading as any fortnight abroad would be, but the great thing the surrendering oneself to the tics & by doing so to scrape them all off & live again in the warm clean envelope of one's body. Which is to say that eating & walking & feeling cold & tired were the big things, particularly eating. Wonderful food. First, thin slices of ham, with olives of 3 kinds, sausage, beans & tomatoes. Then 2 fried eggs. Then *sauté* potatoes frothy with olive oil. Then roast veal. Then asparagus. Then artichokes. Chantilly cakes, smothered in perfumed cream, to follow, with bananas, dates & ice-cream. Bags of light-red wine. That was lunch every day. A kind of massive simplicity that had no need to be French. An English cook is much more inventive & perverse. Nothing saturnine, sexual, or existential about it though. Lovely girls, students of a terrible & undesirable beauty – that curious French way of one not wanting to do anything about them. I was with a very nice family, the charming *père* of whom made an inexplicable quantity of money by selling nthg except brassieres in a little shop of which he was very proud. I used to be shown everything in it. A savage climate, like being on the moon, both wind & sun. Constant diarrhoea – in itself an exacting & tonic state of affairs – visits to Nice & Arles, dances at the Casino.

Margret too has an extraordinary talent. I enjoyed that bit very much. As so often in a family Christa is the sculpturesque, inarticulate, living member to whom things happen & to whom people respond – Margret is the commentator, interpreter & scribe.[21] I hear you are going to Münster? What an excellent idea. But I marvel at your courage – all that wonderful fairy-land power will be gone? How is the car? Petrol you must have.

Tony told me. We must meet when you come up. I am looking forward to it. Just received

[19] Johanna Henzian, Austrian servant in the Officers' Mess at Kamen, who had a cousin in Sidcup. Had a brief amorous passage with MH.

[20] Margret Kunsemülle.

[21] The two daughters of Dr Kunsemüller, owner of JB/MH billet in Kamen.

invitation from Dicky. Don't know what to think? Robin is well, & getting into the Trinity swing, I think, which is more marked than at most colleges here. Did you know how distinguished yours was? Gresham was there, & was turned out of the parliament (1649). I have just been reading about it. The local puritan soldiery came along & gutted PH chapel.[22] One of them – he must have been a sort of religious Johnny P.C.[23] – left an account saying that he'd pulled down '2 bloody great angels, in gold, & a host of smaller such'. Any bloody great angels nowadays?
Looking forward to seeing you.

Love John

Good luck in Exams. We have more here till bitter end.

Nettlepole, Little Chart, Kent.
Monday. June 1950

My Dear Michael,

Please forgive my silence: I am quite exhausted by doing nothing for 10 days. After 12 hours sleep I find it almost impossible to get out of bed in the morning. So far from being agreeable this state of affairs is distinctly depressing. At School a few days ago – the exams being over – it was really ambrosial to stroll about the streets reading the names above door-jambs on shops; to sit in pubs & to turn over the *Daily Mail* until 12 in the morning. Here, it is hell. You find the same? Obviously the traditional position of the young man of the house is what is at fault. The hereditary atmosphere of discredit which surrounds the healthy young man at home is too much for us. It is a palpable miasma, intended to drive one to drink or the colonies. The reason's quite simple: historically speaking our position – as licentiates in the house rather than ne'er-do-wells – is unique. At our advanced age we are still victims of the holiday system, compelled to prolong our adolescence.

I rather envy Robin,[24] who is homeless, & whose parents littered him like the tiger & the fox, & now regard him with intelligent detachment. It is not very good for him, & I don't think he likes it, but he is fortunate in some ways. You must have heard, incidentally, of his bladder, & bad luck about Schools. It was lucky the stone did not get underway in the middle of them, but even so it was bad enough – and painful. Robin gave me a superb description of his week in the Radcliff[25] – to go to hospital nowadays seems to be a mediaeval experience about which one says little in later life – the pure physical humiliation of it must breed phobias for one's middle years beside which the mere infantine micturation fantasies and so forth of one's present life are mere *Kinderspiel*![26] It seems there was a male nurse, a Latvian called Alphonse, for whom the real rough stuff was reserved, and the morning came when the Sister said smoothly: 'Alphonse: shave Mr Smyth.' (The operation did not involve the face.)

It was really this misfortune which prevented us from coming to see you, for otherwise we had everything worked out.

I must say, Michael, your experience of love has the grace & *vraisemblance* of a real Sentimental Journey. 'As she passed her hand across & across my neck in this manoeuvre I seemed to feel

[22] Peterhouse, Cambridge, where MH was studying.
[23] John Pepys Cockerell.
[24] Robin Smyth, up at Trinity where he had been the top history scholar.
[25] The John Radcliffe Hospital, in Oxford.
[26] Child's play.

the laurels shake that fancy had wreathed about my brow'. A delicious sentence don't you think? – from when the *fille de chamber* is repairing Steve's neck-cloth *in situ* – at his instigation. No one has conveyed animal dalliance with his peculiar felicity, but you are a worthy follower. I'm so glad to hear of your land-lady's daughter. The majestic fitness of the incident quite takes my breath away. My respect for you, already great, is increased considerably: like the Mona Lisa you are become older than the rocks among which you sit. The only thing that gives me to think – you enchanting sharp-nostrilled satyr, you – is that when someone marries you you will know what it's like to be devoured feet foremost by the cannibal female. You will be an absolute Flanders by the time you are 30, the passive locale of innumerable bloody campaigns. I only hope the wife will take time off from field operations to cook you your K-rations now & then.

Jobs sound rather alluring, especially Balcon.[27] I have firmly done nothing, & now have the conviction that I just did moderately well in Schools (so much more unfortunate than doing badly) & so had better look for one I suppose. But at the moment feel utterly indifferent to everything except meals. Robin is staying another year.
We must meet soon.

Love John

New College, Oxford.
October 1953

My Dear Michael,

Well, well, Guatemala eh! & what descriptions! German secretaries, birds that whoop & flowers that are 1/2 wax 1/2 water. Really you ought to write you know. Become like Valéry – 3 parts *vrai* business man & 1 part seer.

But first, so many congrats on your engagement – I am pleased. I do indeed remember her & thought at the time how delightful she was, tho' I was at the time, come to think of it emerging from a v. gloomy time with a 34 year old Catholic. We were v. much in love & going to get married but then she decided it was not her rule (what awful jargon these people can't help using, but she was a marvellous person) & after a most emotional 4 weeks ran away & has since gone into a convent. It sounds even more absurd on paper than it was – & in any case even the most absurd things can be most intense, & the most physical oddly enough too. So having had my particular Garden of Allah I have 'retired' to St Antony's College where we are all cold fish of international varieties, living comfortably. When Dons get married it is almost always unsatisfactory because they have known better things. A monastery without a rule is awfully jolly but undoubtedly it shrinks one like a Jivaro head. Ah well. Rather like Kamen, about which I have been desultorily writing a novel, which is clearly going to be rather bad, however. I went back there in the summer. My brother is at 4 Guards Brigade HQ at Dusseldorf, & I borrowed his Mercedes & spent Thursday to Tuesday *chez* Blome (nice family whom I don't think you met) which was well worth while. They seemed glad to see one – very – & happily heaped coals of fire & stoked one with sausage (57 varieties) *'Wie er ist furchtbar dünn – in England ist man noch Rationiert'*[28] – was one coal. From being the *Deus ex Machina* one had become the country cousin, & they rather preferred one that way. I called on the Kunsemüllers – unfortunately the young ones were all away but Mama asked

[27] Later Sir Michael Balcon, film producer, Ealing Studios, who had offered to find MH employment there on leaving Cambridge.
[28] How terribly thin he is, is there still rationing in England?

after you, with just a suspicion of *Zweideutigkeit*[29] in her manner. But the real thing was Kamen itself – all those great *Trauerweiden*[30] grown much larger you know, & everything very smartly rebuilt – I sat drinking beer in the identical spot *bei* Bierman where your desk used to be. V. Ritzy now 3 cinemas & all.

Michael Holland[31] & I met the elusive Robin quite by chance in the vac at Hyde Park Corner. He was down about Derby, naturally enough – but I expect you have heard from him. Perhaps it won't be long before he returns to civilisation.

Dear Michael do write to me again when you have a moment. I envy you deeply. The story idea sounds lurid – shall be interested to hear what comes of it.

Yours, John

Nettlepole, Pluckley.
January 1955

My Dear Michael,

So very many thanks for your splendid letter, and many apologies for my silence: it arrived just at the maximum flap-point at the end of term. I was delighted to hear you were getting on so well in every way, & so was Robin, whom I saw briefly before he left for Berlin; a palace revolution – as he probably explained to you – having swept him without warning from the provinces up to the seat of power.

Guatemala sounds heaven, & marriage blissful: I must really think seriously about a job in the one & a partner in the other. In actual fact I <u>have</u> a partner in a sense (& between ourselves), a 35 year old philosophy tutor & Fellow of St. Anne's (just across the road from St. Antony's). We are much in love, & live in great harmony & domesticity, but she has no use at all for the idea of marriage, tho' I hope she will eventually change her mind. Earning about 2 x as much as I do & wedded to literary ambitions – (she as written a book on Sartre & a novel called <u>*Under the Net*</u>, which had quite a success in the summer – Iris Murdoch is the name) – she finds the present arrangement has all the conveniences of marriage & none of the (are there any?) vices.

I, being the junior partner, put up with this as best I can – the main difficulty being the exercise of an almost mediaeval discretion (which I am now breaking *zum erstenmal*[32] to my old friend in Guatemala!) I shall expect your advice as an obviously very successfully married man and father! So sorry to hear about the slipped disc, which sounds gruesome, & especially at the time. I hope it is quite recovered?

Dear Michael, be sure you come and see me when you get home, which surely can't be too far off now – for leave at least? – (My father is v. impressed to hear about Grace[33] by the way, which, in the sage way fathers have, he says is the most superior concern of its kind in existence) – & then you must come and see me at St. Ants, which is a rather jolly place with Frenchmen & Germans & all sorts. My own tenure is a bit insecure, but I hang on from year to year, teaching at New College.

The novel is <u>bad</u> – written more or less as a bargain, in 4 months – & reading I'm afraid rather like a v. young & inexperienced Eliz. Bowen. Some Germany in it, but all imagined tho' the central

[29] Ambiguousness, ambivalence.
[30] Weeping willows.
[31] Fellow Old Etonian of John's, formerly 60th Rifles, commissioned with MH and Robin Smyth in 1945.
[32] For the first time.
[33] W R Grace of New York, MH's employer in Guatemala.

figure,[34] I regret to say, is not so far from me I suppose & the other central figure a sort of dreary Alter Ego,[35] a tough persona – quite an ugly customer in fact. At least one learns a good deal (& disconcerting) about one's psychology when doing this kind of thing. Anyway, I do hope you will read it. *In Another Country:* Constable's. Publishing date Feb. 7th approx. Hope the next one (just starting) will be better. Just finishing a v. dreary critical book about poetry, but the less said about that the better.

I have seen Dicky once or twice, editing his successful motor magazine in London & having parties. A rather forlorn figure. Otherwise nobody, apart from Robin.

It is cold, bleak and disagreeable in England: would be nice to be out in Central America, revolutions & all. Dear Michael, write again & come back soon. With best wishes to your wife.

Love John

Postcard postmarked 26.10.1998.

So good to hear from you & how fascinating about Maurice C![36] He was so brilliant I always assumed he was older! Thanks v. much for the obit. which shows I was wrong on many points. A marvellous letter, & thank you. I shd love to see the T Force piece, because like your letter, it will have your style! – inimitable!

XX John

30 Charlbury Road, Oxford.
23rd February 1999

Dear Michael,

I was so touched and pleased by the pictures you sent, & by your letters. Few such letters touch the heart, or wherever it is, but yours did. (Bushels of letters. Marvellous, but demanding).

I was so lucky to find this marvellous Home just near the end, & Iris was happy there, as she wouldn't have been away from home before. A peaceful end and I was there: I should have been miserable if I hadn't been.

Loved the pictures! I remember the 'Baby on the Shore'![37] A memorable place & scene – all due to you and the trusty VW![38] If I ever finish the little memoir your picture of me shall be offered to Duckworth.

My love to Ann and to you, and bless you both.

XX John.

P.S. Had a letter from Jean Draper (married name), used to be at Bad Oeynhausen (I stayed in her flat – she absent?)

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[34] The central figure was named Oliver Childers, Oliver was JB's second given name.

[35] 'Other self' – in his novel it took the part of Duncan Holt, a character which JB admitted, fifty years later, had been built on that of MH (who had known all along).

[36] Maurice Charlton, an immediate contemporary of MH at Rugby, Exhibitioner of New College, Oxford, brilliant winner of the Ireland, Craven and Gaisford Prose and Verse Prizes, Fellow of Hertford, etc., suitor for Iris's hand at the time when John first met her. Later, Professor of Neurology, lectured on neurology in Japan in Japanese and wrote on the translation of electroencephalographic terminology into Chinese. Died in 1994, when Iris was still writing, and so could not have played the role assigned to him in the film, 'Iris'.

[37] A photograph taken by MH of JB sitting naked on the pebbled shore of the Rhine near Königswinter in the summer of 1947.

[38] Volkswagen.

St. Catherine's College, Oxford.
26th October 1999

My Dear Michael,

You are one of the great letter-writers of the world – getting one of them is a very special pleasure.

Clare[39] was indeed a charmer – the meeting was back in early May, at a rather sinister sort of 'safe house' in Bushey, & we had 2 hours chat which was edited down I suppose (including the rather nice moment when he said 'If there were more like you we shrinks would be out of a job'). Irish compliments.

Hannelore[40] (real name) quite vanished – you are so good about your old friends out there – & as you perceptively surmise truth and invention blur a bit in the book, tho' I did go out & borrow brother Michael's car & found her fiancé from Russian POW camp just arrived.

Do write yourself. I'm investigating a bit (in words) what being a widower is like – therapy, I suppose.

Heard from Julia Draper[41] – you met her, I'm sure – rather bossy lady at Bad O but quite nice. Roger Underhill[42] worked for her, died of a stroke last year. You probably knew all about it. Any time you feel like writing one of your letters…

Love, John

St Catherine's College, Oxford.
January 2000

My Dear Michael,

You are the one person who I love hearing from amidst the hoo-ha, as you so justly describe it.

Fortunate Audi (real name Audhild – v. Norwegian) is in The Canaries & so out of it. I shall be there some time but mostly in Oxford – in fact things just as they are now – the only reason for doing it is that Audi is so sweet about wanting a Church Wedding! (authorised version: she's quite High) & who could have the heart to deny her that as she's never been married in church before. She's such a very old friend that I don't think it'll feel very different.

You & I must be among the few survivors of our lot? Did I tell you I heard from a lady now called Draper[43] who I 'worked' for a bit in Bad O? She told me that nice chap, father a parson at Nettlebed, had just died. I remember her as being distinctly sharp.

Love to you & Ann[44] – & Margret if you're in touch. It is nice to be cooked for by an expert sometimes tho' I also like my own solitary sardines and fish fingers, taken over a long period with a dash of rum (remember gnome's blood?)[45] , a pint of Chilean[46] & a book.

XX John

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[39] Dr Anthony Clare, psychiatrist and presenter of the radio interview programme 'In the Psychiatrist's Chair'.

[40] Hannelore Blome (?) a German girl whom JB had got to know in Kamen in 1946/7, who provided the model for a character called Liese in *In Another Country*.

[41] Lady civilian officer at HQ T-Force in Bad Oeynhausen. Known then by her married name of Jean Hughes-Gibb. Has recently celebrated her 90th birthday.

[42] A young captain, the Glosters, at HQ T-Force 1946/7, later a regular army officer in the 60th Rifles, and ultimately Director of the Institute of Advertising.

[43] As in letter dated 26 October, 1999.

[44] Had married MH in Guatemala in January 1954.

[45] A cocktail composed of rum, port and orange.

[46] Wine.

St Catherine's College, Oxford.
31st January 2000

Dear Michael,

What a marvellous & totally compelling letter, to say nothing of the 'History',[47] which I was absolutely fascinated by! How hard you must have worked! – I had no idea. But then, in spite of being a bit older than you I was still a military innocent, knowing neither the meaning of work nor play. My own memories (in the book about *Iris & the Friends*), much of which is in any case helped out by invention, are largely Narcissistic. There was a Hannelore,[48] with whom my relations were chaste but merry, & that's about all. You meanwhile were carrying the weight of the Force on your shoulders.

You don't mind my saying that you write so well. I wish you would write more & more. I am feeling more & more nervous about remarriage. I don't think any sane person does it again, even with such a very old friend. But Audi is totally beguiled by the idea of a wedding in church. She never had one before.

XX John

St Catherine's College, Oxford.
21st March 2001

Dear Michael,

You know far too much about me, but coming from you it's a compliment! I always revel in your letters! (That funny pen has suddenly given out.)

I'm fascinated by your Nincompoop derivation.[49] Do you read by any chance the military newcomer who probably hopes to rival P. O'Brien & is still in the army I believe? (Can't recall his name. Mallinson?)[50] He writes about Hussars & such.

My trouble *entre nous* seems to have been meeting Humfrey Carpenter,[51] a BBC man who Iris & I used to see occasionally, & asked what the book was about. I must have said I'd made up some female characters who were all too like the real thing. This, improved on, must have gone to the *S. Times*. The Telegraph is too annoyed to be very reproachful but will probably dock my not too generous fee.

Alas for the girls with red *backen* or *'Wangen'* (neither a successful word compared with cheeks?)[52] nothing of that sort any more. In the strange unreality of bereavement my fate was a married American lady who was kind & determined but also had to go back to hubby & grown-up kids in America. The other girl even more surreal – perfectly genuine but just not true somehow. Fantasy would have been greatly preferable, but fantasy is very def. replaced by unreality in bereavement.

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[47] MH's earlier (1999) 6-page memoir written for the Royal Green Jackets Chronicle about his service in T-Force.

[48] As in letter dated 26 October, 1999.

[49] MH's derivation of the word, from the name that the troops of the British army had bestowed upon the natives of the Basque country who signified their incomprehension by responding 'non comprend', transmogrified into 'nincompoop'.

[50] Brigadier Allan Mallinson, at that time Defence & Military Attaché in Rome, author of a history of the Light Dragoons and the Mathew Hervey series of military historical novels tracing the army career of the eponymous hero.

[51] Properly Humphrey Carpenter, Oxford writer (biographer) and broadcaster, d. 2005.

[52] Properly *Backen*, both mean 'cheeks'.

Audi was amused by the account I poured out, & suggested writing it as therapy (this was some time before we got married.) So, *Widower's House* got tacked on as the end of my trilogy.

A prolonged period of silence is now very much in order!

Let us know should you ever visit Oxford or indeed Lanzarote. I do not recommend the latter – more tourists all the time, & as our mothers would say 'not quite our class dear'. That wd be an understatement. Audi (who knows about you now) sends friendly greetings to you & Ann.
Me too.

XX John

30 C.R., Oxford.
February 2002

I loved your letter as usual, & excuse a v. briefish *Ad hoc* reply. Will write properly later. But fascinated, dear Michael, to hear of your caring for Emma – it reminded me so much of 3-4-5 years ago, which I want to be always in mind (& it is) when Iris created the strange & wonderful word 'Poujin' for carer – she really did.

Audi equally fascinated by your letter, & Emma.[53] Sends love. I love what the Spaniards call 'blue fish' & wolf kipper fillets (uncooked) & thanks for Mazepa tip.[54]

XX John

30 Charlbury Road, Oxford.
End of February 2002

Dear Michael,

I was completely fascinated and captivated by your Austerlitz saga![55] I rather envy the lady for having acquired you as a correspondent! But I'm ashamed to say I've barely heard of Max Sebald. I must do something about that – & Austerlitz. (I remember once tramping with a patient Iris round about the village of Wagram, no longer very close to the Danube, which has apparently changed course. In fact, as a reward for the tramp, we had a plunge in the Danube shallows. Our minder, a nice Austrian working for the British Council, was full of admiration. Reminded me of the Rhine on that long-ago agreeable occasion.)

I envy your book-reading, and your meticulous sense of their niceties. It's as much as I can do nowadays (strokes leave one not only shaky but stupid) to re-read my dear Barbara Pym or something like that. Billiard tables! Wow! Wonderful!

We saw the film, to see which we had postponed Lanzarote (no hardship for me.) You are right about Judi Dench – admirable person, I should think. Husband, much loved, died a short while ago. We agreed that grief stimulates the mind. She's done three films since then.

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[53] Emma Morris, a young woman brain-damaged in a riding accident, whose mentor, for the Prince's Trust, MH was during a period of protracted recovery and rehabilitation, with symptoms very similar to those of male stroke victims in later life.

[54] Properly *Maxepa*, a food supplement containing Omega 3 fatty acids EHA and EPA, to aid brain regeneration.

[55] The 'saga' related to how MH had fallen into correspondence with the 'distinguished translator' from the German of Sebald's 'Austerlitz' – in this case a person's name rather than the battlefield, as John had presumed. Max Sebald, Professor of European History at the UEA, was killed in a car crash shortly before Christmas 2001; he had lived in England for 36 years but preferred to write in German. MH felt that JB would love the subtlety of his mind, so evident in his work.

Wonderful having a son with a chateau in France! How much I wish that Audi and Borys had stayed in France and Italy and not fallen in love with the Canaries when they were empty and beautiful. But how could they have known, dear things? Audi was working as a courier then for a Norwegian Travel Agency. Nemesis takes strange forms…

I always love hearing from you. My best to Ann too.

John

24th September 2004

Dear Michael,

Some letters – in fact most – I fear need to be answered: or better still, not answered. A few, a very few it is a real pleasure not only to read but to reply to … This sounds like JB in his pompous vein – put it down to a slight – fortunately very slight – stroke. They seem to come and go.

Audi and I were fascinated by your description of the *Beuchelle* [56] – and if only brains and thymus and other delicious innards – pancreas – were more readily purchasable (that word must be a stroke product?) Also, thanks to you, we shall really go into the Alsace question. At the moment we drink the Wine Society's French Dry White for lunch, and ditto's Claret for supper. You make Alsace sound really inviting. I had always assumed it a bit sickly, but it is clear from what you say that I have been gravely in error – a case of gross ignorance in fact.

Funny things letters. Iris was one of the worst of correspondents, perhaps because she always conscientiously answered every one she got, and there were a great many, often fairly dotty. When I was trying to court her, and wrote her what you might call long and pseudo-brilliant letters, I always got a few – a very few – hasty but kindly words in reply. Letters were emphatically not her mode of expression or being; although the ones in her novels are a very different matter, being imaginary letters, I suppose. J. Austen's made-up ones are so much better than those she really wrote although I'm sure that Cassandra & Co, always hungry for Jane-gossip, would not have agreed at all.

Fascinated by your keyhole ordeal. You must have exerted yourself in heroic style 20 or so years ago? My brother Michael, in his post-military career as an apprentice church restorer, ruptured himself so many times that the Military (King Edward's?) hospital, (somewhere north of the Park) said that if he came again they would turn him away. He has just been given a steel knee, which he says (DV) is working very well. Do hope your hernia repair will settle down, I'm sure it will.

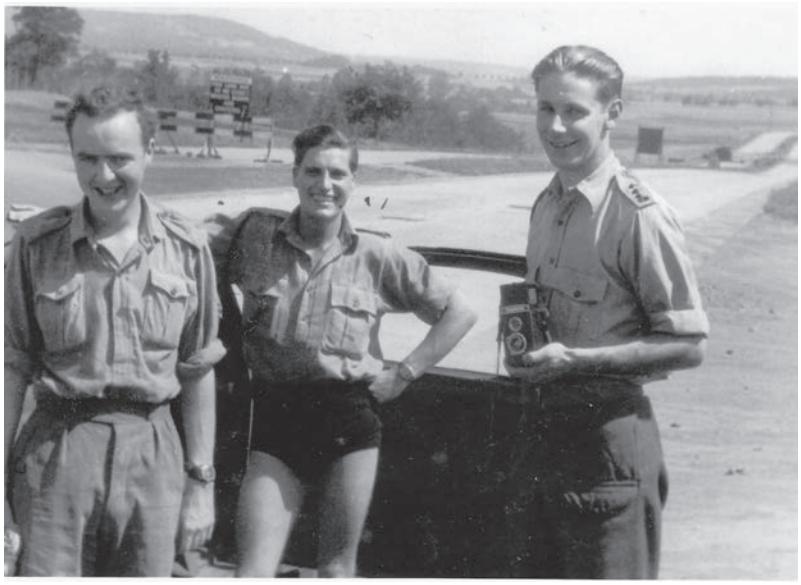
Audi's is yes & no. Hardly any pain now in the bad place, but lots in other places (she sends love).

Very fascinated by all your Irish cousins. Iris had a brood of them—mostly dentists, both male and female, in the County Down. They all seemed a good bit older than her, and tho' very amiable not v. conversable, except about teeth & the Pope & the Rev Paisley, whom they adored.

X X Much love,

John

[56] *Beuchelle à la Tourangelle*, a dish said to be from the Touraine, made of calves sweetbreads and kidneys, in a rich sauce with *champignons de couche* or pleurotes.



John Bayley, Tony Scolding and Michael Howard at the Rhine © Michael Howard

John Bayley © Reynolds and Janet Stone Estate

John Bayley © Reynolds and Janet Stone Estate

‘I adore snaps of all kinds, the more incompetently taken the better. The spontaneity, or rather the awkwardness, of any given moment that has gone by is what appeals to me, and even moves me’ John Bayley, *The Red Hat,* p.123.

John Bayley and Iris Murdoch © Reynolds and Janet Stone Estate

Left: John Bayley and Iris Bayley, Peter Conradi and Cloudy © Jim O’Neill

Right: John Bayley and Audi Bayley and Cloudy © Jim O’Neill

Liber Amicorum for John Bayley

Peter J. Conradi, Iris Murdoch scholar and biographer, and close friend of John Bayley

John Bayley, CBE, FBA, 27 March 1925 – 12 January 2015

This tribute starts with a short formal eulogy evoking John Bayley's public *personae*; it was written for the Royal Society of Literature and is reprinted with their kind permission. The second part evokes the private John whose friendship I and my partner treasured.

John Bayley, who has died aged 89, wrote some of the best literary criticism and journalism of the age. When his *The Power of Delight: a Lifetime in literature* was published in 2005 – a collection of his *LRB* and *NYRB* article-reviews – Clive James was not alone in recording his awe at the span of John's intellectual sympathies and the trenchant subtlety of his judgements.

John was sent to Eton, after which he joined the Grenadier Guards, then T-Force in Germany. This last provided copy for his first and finest novel *In Another Country* (1955), admired by Elizabeth Bowen, whose influence in it is palpable. At New College Oxford he won in the same year both the Newdigate Verse Prize and the Chancellor's English Essay Prize, a feat achieved by few, and became a premier pupil of Lord David Cecil's. He fell in love with Iris Murdoch and they married in 1956.

John was once described as 'the runt of the litter' of three brothers. In fact he had extraordinary hidden strengths. He was to be Oxford's first Warton Professor of English literature and a serious teacher who, beneath his charm, wit and warmth, possessed an elusive determination. This was evident both in the working discipline he shared with Iris and in his intimacy with French, German and Russian literatures as well as English and American. Once a student submitted an over-long tutorial essay, on which John wrote 'Some very good ideas here, *I feel sure*'. His air of puckish inconsequence, however, was misleading. He found time to write and publish a dozen books of criticism, three memoirs and a further trilogy of late novels.

His powerful memoirs of Iris, for all their felicity, helped fix Iris in the public gaze in the period of her decline. Nor did *Iris* the film help: John had signed away all film-rights in a contract he (typically) never bothered to read. His reputation as a brilliant and remarkably independent critic risked becoming sidelined.

John Gross in 1969 had celebrated Bayley in *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* as the last and most distinguished of old-time bookmen. His *Characters of Love* (1960) made a simple case for the centrality of 'character' in literature when this was distinctly unfashionable. His dazzling *Tolstoy and the Novel* (1966) praised Tolstoy's talent for inhabiting the bodily existence and physical self-satisfaction of his characters – decades before the cult of the body itself became modish. James Wood called it 'one of the most delicately intelligent works of criticism ever written about fiction'. His book on Pushkin was equally masterly. It was an excellent thing, John quipped, that there was a fashion for 'theory' nowadays: it provided occupation for the many academics in English departments who had no feeling for literature whatsoever. He, by contrast, never abandoned the common reader.

He was lucky in both his marriages. His second was to an old friend, Audi Villers, who took good care of him over fifteen years, in Oxford and in her house on Lanzarote; he spent his last years in a wheel-chair. On the tenth anniversary of their marriage, Audi asked him over breakfast whether he could remember why today was special? After some minutes he announced triumphantly, 'The murder of Richard III on Bosworth Field!' He requested that there be no memorial service, and

that his ashes be scattered at Cascob in Radnorshire, where his second marriage was solemnised, and where he and Iris had lived with my partner Jim O'Neill and myself for an aggregate of around eight happy months in all, during the period 1996 to 1998.

* * *

Friendship with John had two phases. As a student in the 1960s, I admired his humane and brave *The Characters of Love*; and a *New Left Review* article on the 'neo-liberal' criticism of Iris, John and W.J. Harvey fascinated me.[1] I was twice 'on-stage' with him at British council-sponsored events to celebrate Dame Iris's writing: in Amsterdam in 1987, followed by Madrid in 1992. Then in 1994 I chaired the opening session at the Cheltenham Literature Festival that marked the 40th anniversary of the publication of *Under the Net*; I drove John and Iris from Oxford to Cheltenham and back.

Early the following year, having met John at an exhibition of Harry Weinberger's paintings, I plucked up courage to invite him and Iris to a big birthday party we were hosting in Wales. He replied that they would love to come – straight from Charleston – and that they would stay two nights. 'Iris is very enthusiastic too … It would be wonderful to see your country place', he wrote. While there he indicated that they would like to return. I duly invited them for a weekend and – in what soon became a familiar pattern – they stayed for a week. (Another friend observed that the Bayleys were experienced 'cuckoos').

While on a trip to Ménerbes in Provence in May 1997, John invited me to write Iris's biography, a task that would necessitate our spending a good deal of time together. Michael Holroyd once remarked that any biography-writing can 'put one on the rack'. But it must surely be unusual for a biographer to be acting simultaneously as one of his subject's principal carers: the sense of being eaten up by another consciousness is doubly overwhelming. Here was a rite of passage that I was unsure how to survive.

I tried to make light of this when I wrote 'As she gradually forgot her past, I rediscovered it'. One reviewer commented acidly, 'So that's alright then'. I sympathised: but the alternative to sounding glib would have meant baring my soul – a boastful distraction. Similarly in *Going Buddhist*, I concealed the fact that the worst panic attacks I experienced happened during the writing and run-up to publication of the biography: attacks that made me almost lose consciousness (in Dublin, Belfast, Oxford, London and elsewhere).[2]

Appeals to John – some by mutual friends – to get professional help in looking after Iris were dodged. We tried, he resisted. A long letter in September 1997 acknowledges that Iris feels lost at home in Oxford, and continues 'I can't tell you what a difference it makes having you & Jim in support […] you are […] just what is needed […] I can't imagine what I should do without you'. The situation gradually became *fait accompli*, and then choiceless. We had to learn some necessary new skills. Happily, other friends rallied and helped too. And friendship with John came to matter a great deal: he was an extraordinary man, brilliant, wayward and generous in equal measure.

This situation was also - in a strange way - beautiful. We satisfied each other's need for rational converse; Iris's joy and relief at being with us, and at being helped to bathe and wash her hair, were palpable to everyone; we soon felt like family, with an uncanny ease of communication, and essential to one another. 'Each of the four of us gives the other three the space to be exactly who s/he is', John observed. And he added, 'I've only ever had one friend before this – Lord David Cecil'. When I enquired, 'What *is* a friend?', he replied, 'Someone you *don't have to bother about*

[1] John Goode, '"Character" and Henry James', *New Left Review* 1/40, Nov-Dec 1966, pp.55-75.

[2] Peter J. Conradi, *Going Buddhist: Panic and Emptiness, the Buddha and Me* (London: Short Books, 2004).

at all' (said with emphasis). There were tears and anguished rows when papers left around the house made clear another memoir was on its way. 'I don't see why I should be silent', he once said. Silence is not a charge that will stick.

When it was hot, we all went swimming in our pond: Iris sat regally in a white chair by the water's edge, dragonfly darting and hovering around her head, while Jim acted *coiffeur*. John stripped down to an astonishing vest that had so many loops, strands and holes you could no longer tell which were the arm-openings. His index-finger to his lips, he whispered owlishly, 'Mustn't let the moths think they are winning'.

Other memories surface. John describing my partner Jim with his rosy cheeks as recalling Stravinsky's puppet, Petrouchka, while also being good - as Winnie-the-Pooh remarked of the honey he had stolen - 'right down to the bottom of the jar'.

John gifting me with a book and remarking, 'If you don't want to read it Darling, just lose it in your car …'.

John in Lanzarote airport setting off the metal detector, then drawing a small but appreciative audience by emptying his pockets like a conjuror of the plunder of previous weeks: bread-rolls, anchovies, oranges, dusty cloves of Iranian garlic, salami slices, chocolate biscuits and baked potatoes.

John feeding each of us all like a mother bird, with pieces of sausage or whatever delicacy he was enjoying that moment.

John calling waiters 'Darling' and when challenged, replying in a whisper that he did this because it was '*confusing to Australians*'.

Once John and Iris arrived at Clapham Common underground having forgotten our address; they stopped a total stranger, never identified, who said 'Oh you mean the man who lives part-time in Radnorshire', and who at once supplied our London address. Jim (a psychotherapist) was seeing a patient who had been obsessing about Iris's novels for some years, when she wandered by mistake into the therapy room: he looked appropriately shell-shocked, not to say impressed and meditative.

On another occasion, after visiting Leo Pliatzky, I got into a District line underground carriage and found myself sitting exactly opposite John and Iris, en route for lunch with Audi Villers. Astonished and delighted by a happenstance that would have been deemed improbable in an Iris novel, we joined forces.

The second, tranquil phase of my friendship with John dated from his marriage to Audi in June 2000. In his final years his live-in carers were Polish Buddhist friends of ours. He never lost his wit and élan. His friendship blessed us. His favourite gnarled walking-stick - one a Hobbit might choose - is still here in Wales.

Cheryl Bove, Murdoch scholar

The first time I met John Bayley was in 1986 at an Iris Murdoch conference in Amsterdam where he and Iris responded to five of our papers. Then, as for the rest of Iris's writing life, he generously deferred to her, supported her and amplified on her remarks. A few years later we had dinner together at the Randolph Hotel in Oxford, along with Glenn and Barbara Phillips, a philosopher and a civil servant who were vegetarians. While we were sitting in the hotel bar discussing the Randolph's vegetarian entrees and the moral ethics of eating meat, the waiter appeared with the menus. Iris declared, 'Nevertheless, I'll have beef,' and John did as well.

The final time I saw John was at their Oxford home on Charlbury Road for an interview about his and Iris's London. On the way to the lounge John led me through a hallway that was entirely covered with paintings by Iris's friends. Although John had been a Londoner, he mentioned that Iris frequented London, 'usually a day a week or so,' while he preferred to stay in Oxford: 'Iris had

a lot of friends who I hardly knew or even particularly wanted to see'.[3] John also remarked that because of her father's World War One service Iris had been particularly fond of two Kensington monuments: The Royal Artillery Memorial, Hyde Park Corner, which John called 'the big gun,' and the Machine Gun Corps Memorial. In this interview one saw John Bayley as he always was with people, relaxed and conversational as with a friend.

Patsy Grigg, lifelong family friend

My husband first met John when they were both at school and he was invited for tea to meet 'this extraordinarily well read and interesting young person'. They remained friends for life. Soon after we were married in 1958 we went to stay with them in Steeple Aston and John said if they were found dead in bed Iris would have been reading philosophy while he would have been reading women's magazines which had been left at the house for Iris's mother. In fact John read everything and was interested in everything and everyone. We went with them to Russia by land and sea from Harwich. Sailing from Stockholm to Helsinki we met a young man on his way home to Finland. John said he knew only one word in Finnish 'Perkele'. The Finn was very shocked and said that was a terrible word (meaning 'demons', and worse ...). How did John know it? Oh in a book *The Last Grain Race* by Eric Newby. Many years later he told us that he and Iris arrived early to meet Lord Saatchi at Claridges and when the waiter asked John how he wanted his martini he said 'straight up'. He had no idea what it meant but had read about it in books. We went to India with them in 1967. They travelled there separately, and when their plane landed in Zurich John popped round to inspect the tyres. As he was patting them a major security alert was triggered. We went on a Swan Hellenic Cruise with John and Iris. We asked them why they disappeared every day. They said that they never had time to see the doctor at home, so visited him daily during the cruise. The morning we were leaving we were all having breakfast. As we stood up John started filling his pockets with croissants and bread rolls. One of the lecturers, Professor Owen Chadwick, asked him why. John said, 'just in case'.

Professor Sir Michael Howard, O.M., C.H., M.C., fellow guards officer

I first met John at a reading party in the long vacation of 1946, between our military and academic careers. We had both done our military service in the Brigade of Guards, but John – amiable, shy, self-effacing – was the least typical guards officer that one could ever hope to find. I remember him saying little, but beaming happily throughout our conversations, and in general making the rest of us feel good.

Then our careers diverged, he staying in Oxford, I going to King's College London, and I really only saw him again twenty years later, when I returned to All Souls. By that time of course he was married to Iris, and it was as a pair that I henceforth knew them – although even then I only met them occasionally at social occasions at which Iris made all the running. But he had changed very little: increasingly dishevelled, perhaps, growing into a role of absent-minded professor rather more successfully than he had filled that of ensign in the Grenadiers, but still saying little, beaming happily, and making the rest of us feel good.

[3] 'John Bayley on Iris Murdoch and London', in *Sacred Space, Beloved City: Iris Murdoch's London* by Cheryl Bove and Anne Rowe (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008).

Priscilla Martin, Oxford colleague and Murdoch scholar

John was one of the few people who have made me think 'Can anyone be as nice as this?' I never heard him say a bad word about anyone except Canetti, which was understandable. And I have never heard anyone in the English Faculty at Oxford say a bad word about him. He could be generous to a fault. He once contrasted his notoriously squalid kitchen with the 'hygienic' culinary practices of Peter Conradi, a prize example of the pot calling the kettle white. John was in some ways a surprising and contradictory person. He was sociable, talkative and articulate, despite a stammer. Apparently impractical and unworldly, he had improbably enjoyed the army. He was a learned, polyglot and productive academic who, in a time of energetic critical theorizing, was not affiliated to any movement but illuminated texts in the light of his own wise and perceptive reading. He was very generous and helpful to me in sharing memories of Iris when I was working on the *Literary Life*.[4] He was devoted to Iris and proud of her but I had the impression that he did not much like the novels. He even refused to agree that there was any comedy in them. But there had been plenty of humour in their life together and he missed her dreadfully. He was with Iris when she died peacefully and he said to the nurse, 'I wouldn't mind doing that.' In the interim before his marriage to Audi he told me that he felt 'after the ball.' He was realistic about his own death. His last note to me ended 'See you again … or not.' Sadly, it was not.

Lady Marcelle Quinton, British sculptor

What follows are notes on a conversation with Anne Rowe on 6 May 2015

Lady Marcelle Quinton, the distinguished British sculptor and her late husband, the political and moral philosopher, Baron Anthony Quinton, were great friends of Professor Bayley and Dame Iris Murdoch for many years. Lady Quinton studied at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and Dame Iris knew both the Quintons as early as 1952, when Lady Quinton was then Marcelle Weiger. Tony Quinton and John Bayley were elected Fellows of New College during the same week in June 1955, Tony gave the speech of acceptance for both, because of John's stammer. Lady Quinton believes that the couple bridged the London intellectual world and the continent because, when young, Dame Iris was so enchanted with French philosophy; the couple 'would have made good Europeans' she thinks. After decades of friendship Lady Quinton misses both her friends, but in particular John Bayley's engaging company. She remembers him fondly for his intelligence, his many talents and his entertaining eccentricities. Yet, despite his intellect, he would 'never do anyone down', make them ill at ease or belittle them. She remembers too the quality of his marriage, and how he and his wife were touchingly sweet and polite to each other, almost formally so. They were, she says, 'unknowing' as a couple, caring little about other people's reactions to them. She has many funny anecdotes to recall, among them how Professor Bayley once lost his car in an asparagus bed in the wildness of the garden at Steeple Aston, and how he once lied about his wife's cooking skills, ordering in food from his college, St Catherine's, and announcing to guests that Dame Iris had cooked it. Yet despite his child-like eccentricities, he detested children and his judgement, she suggests, could be poor. Ultimately, Lady Quinton remembers a man who was mild and tough in equal measure, with a certain capacity for ruthlessness when necessary.

[4] Priscilla Martin and Anne Rowe, *Iris Murdoch: A Literary Life* (London: Palgrave, 2010).

Gloria Richardson, lifelong family friend

Gloria Richardson has been blind for some years, and hence unable to pen her reminiscences: what follows are notes on a conversation with Peter Conradi on 27 April 2015

Around 1941 or 42, Gloria Richardson travelled on a Greenline bus to Gerards Cross, to meet the Bayleys who lived there. Gloria travelled with Hilda Müller,[5] a friend both of the Bayleys and of her own family. She found John on that first meeting 'sweet and kind'. He was about 16 and so one year older than she was (she was born in 1926, he the year before).

Within two years she had joined the WRENs and in 1944 he was posted abroad. She and he nonetheless met occasionally during the war, always at the Müllers. (The Richardsons and Müllers lived close to one another opposite South Kensington tube station. Widowed and penniless, Hilda lodged with her wealthy brother who owned a private railway at Littlestone, and Hilda had first met John's mother Olivia on Littlestone Golf course. Thus the Müller/Bayley friendship had begun: Gloria's mother, a VAD, played bridge with Hilda Müller.)

Hilda had known John Bayley from 1929 and recalled him to Gloria as an 'absolutely brilliant' child prodigy who never used one word when three would do. Around 1930 she took John to a performance of *Peter Pan*. During a blinding family row between the Darlings on-stage, John – roughly five years old – leant over to Hilda to enunciate clearly, 'A slight domestic upheaval, wouldn't you say?' Olivia encouraged all three boys to be intellectual, more than did Jack. Gloria says John knew the whole English dictionary by age two.

The Bayley parents had an odd marriage, sometimes spending three weeks without talking to one another. Jack was an oddball, a martinet;[6] Olivia was opinionated and could be heavy-handed and bossy. Both John and his favourite brother Michael stammered. Michael had tied up John's shoes until he was seven and a half. At nine he and his mother had sailed to the Caribbean to help pre-empt an incipient TB. On Michael's testimony, Olivia spoiled John 'wickedly' – he was so witty and amusing and beguiled everyone. A much loved and indulged delicate youngest son, he early learnt that his wit could ease and flatter. He was scruffy and indeed absolutely charming, an entertainer.

John was unlike anyone else Gloria ever met, a 'one-off'. It was notable that he got on with everyone, giving his interlocutor of the moment absolutely undivided attention. He was 'dazed', impractical and unreliable. He got away with everything because of his extraordinary charm: 'Charm-on-wheels'. He early acquired the habit of agreeing with everyone as a line of least resistance, while doing roughly as he pleased. Everyone forgave John because of his wit, warmth and good humour.

When John was called up, the Army tested him and called him physically fit but unaccountably declared him intellectually unsure, adding: 'Never mind, in the Grenadier Guards it won't matter if you're slow'. The tale – apart from illustrating Army incompetence – also makes clear that John was always unaccountably 'different'.

Gloria and John re-met once the war was over. John had an attractive unworldliness. Glyndebourne owner John Christie was in the Coldstream Guards with Gloria's uncle and during the first post-war season of Glyndebourne Gloria was given tickets for Britten's *Rape of Lucretia* with Peter Pears and Nancy Evans. Opera was not then a black-tie affair; and on the train from Victoria John leant across, placed a hand on her knee and inquired innocently, 'What exactly is Glyndebourne by the way?'

[5] Hilda was English: Müller had been her third husband, a Frenchman perhaps from Alsace and a gynaecologist.

[6] There is a portrait from the life of Jack as a comically down-at-heel military man wearing moth-eaten tweeds in the Pop Larkin novels by the Bayley's post-war neighbor and friend in Little Chart, H.E. Bates.

By around 1954 Gloria considered John a significant part of her life and she was often invited to Nettlepole by John's parents who might perhaps have welcomed her as a future daughter-in-law. Although she and John were not engaged, they did take successive holidays together, the first on the French Riviera, the second a week on Sicily. Though never lovers, they sometimes shared a bedroom simply to save money. Given this close friendship, Gloria was accordingly put out when Iris appeared on the scene, as also when she took lodgings near Ashford so that John could 'sneak off' for occasional liaisons with her. Gloria started to feel that she was being used as a smoke-screen to disguise the progress of John's and Iris's affair.

Olivia was 'insanely' ambitious for her three sons as for their marrying well. Iris did not fit the bill. She was six years older than John, and moreover with a reputation for same-sex friendships. Olivia was accordingly very anti-Iris, who was by no means in 1955/6 yet a household name[7] and Olivia would complain bitterly about Iris 'hanging around'.[8] Iris was in turn very long-suffering.

Gloria at this time worked as private secretary to George Weidenfeld at his small firm Weidenfeld & Nicholson on Cork Street. She was understandably curious about Iris, with whom she knew John to be romantically involved and asked Antonia Fraser, an editorial assistant with knowledge of Oxford life through her father Frank Longford, about her. Antonia reported Iris's then 'notorious' reputation as lesbian, something Jack and Olivia were, Gloria believes, well aware of.

Gloria observed that John was not fazed by Iris's infidelities and that their marriage ended by being a happy one. Roy Jenkins, at Balliol with Gloria's brother-in-law, used to poke fun at Iris and John's 'Darby-and-Joan' like mutual devotion. Even Olivia liked Iris much more once she became famous.

From 1982 Gloria, as a very old family friend keen to keep the family together, borrowed her cousin's Dumfriesshire house, set in wild country for the first of a series of annual Bayley family holidays. Brothers Michael and David Bayley played golf nearby. David's wife Agnes cooked, John and Gloria helped. There were walks and sight-seeing. Then from 1986 until 1994 they rented houses in Cornwall, North Wales, Shropshire and Suffolk.[9]

Others concur that John simply 'could not be bothered' to disagree with most people, though he had often secretly strong opinions. Gloria agrees that John was privately a person of strong views, which he was often 'too lazy' to disclose. He had a habit of agreeing slavishly with his interlocutor, whoever that was: he was 'very, very quaint. But he also had always', she added, 'as well as brilliance, a very, very kind heart'.

Lord Maurice Saatchi. He and his late wife, the novelist and producer Josephine Hart, were close friends of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley

John Bayley's masterpiece of literary criticism, *The Power of Delight*, opens with this from Pascal: 'The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing about'. That sentence explains Iris and John better than anything else I know. Like the rest of the human race, they suffered from

[7] She was equally put out when Michael in the 1940s formed a strong attachment that turned out life-long to the wife of his commanding officer, and only slightly appeased when, by a series of chances, she became Duchess of Norfolk. Olivia acted chaperone on holidays Michael and Anne Norfolk took in Cyprus, the Caribbean and N. Africa.

[8] Iris makes an unmistakable comical cameo appearance under her own name in H.E. Bates's [see above] novel *A Breath of French Air* (1959).

[9] There might – it occurs to me – be an echo, albeit unconscious of Gloria's attachment to all three Bayley brothers in the figure of Anthea in *The Time of the Angels* (1966), whose first name also half-rhymes with her own, an old flame of the Fisher brothers, Carel, Marcus and Julian.

thwarted idealism and compromised ideals. But in the face of all contradictions and frustrations, they shared a persistent belief that the eye sees further than the hand can reach. It made them the most romantic and therefore the most easy couple in the world. There was never any need to 'make conversation'. It just happened. To see them arrive in Sussex or the South of France was a sight to behold. This is not Louis Vuitton meets Karl Lagerfeld. When they were asked: 'May I take your luggage to your room?' they handed over a Tesco bag.

Until I knew John Bayley, my dinner party cabaret had always been a thorough and well-researched explanation of Hamlet's delay. Once, I fearlessly played my ace of trumps with John. Did this Shakespeare professor know that Laurence Olivier had been to see Ernest Jones, Freud's student and biographer, while making his iconic film of Hamlet; and Jones had explained to Olivier that Hamlet hesitated to kill Claudius because: 'Through Claudius, Hamlet achieved the oedipal feat of murdering his father and marrying his mother'? But John put an end to that theory by pointing out that there was no hesitation, because when Hamlet puts his sword through the arras in Act 3, Scene 4, the closet scene, he says: 'Is it the King?' In other words, John explained, Hamlet meant to kill the king. There was no delay. So ended my cabaret.

Josephine often reminded us that if all of English literature was burned one night, the country could just turn to John Bayley who would just re-write the whole thing. John returned the compliment by telling her she was the best-read woman he'd ever met. John Bayley lived a much longer life than Josephine Hart, but I am certain they are together now, and talking about poetry, and how it is lifesaving. They finished each other's poetry recitations. They both had the same facility – which I so envy – to produce the precisely apt quotation at precisely the right moment to take the trick in a conversation. Two people so in tune, probably helping each other now to recite: 'No I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be', with every colon, comma and full stop in the right place. It was a privilege to hear them.

Iris and John always spoke of another couple, Audi and Borys, and how they were going to the Canary Islands to be with them. Then we finally met this mysterious couple, and what a wonderful thing it was years later, after all the twists and turns of life, to attend John and Audi's wedding celebration in Oxford. John Bayley is the greatest of all our literary scholars. He was a man. Take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.

Ed Victor, Iris Murdoch's literary agent and friend

Although John Bayley was probably better known to the public as the husband, and later the widower, of Iris Murdoch, he was far from being a Dennis Thatcher figure. His achievements as a university professor, an author and a literary critic were outstanding and widely recognised among his peers. But he became a sort of literary celebrity to the wider world as the author of *Elegy for Iris*, his deeply touching memoir of caring for his beloved wife as she descended into the hell of Alzheimer's disease.

My relationship with John was mainly through Iris, whose literary agent I was for over 20 years. My abiding memory of him was as her loving, ever supportive consort, and, as such, we shared many wonderful times. He was a delightful companion to her and to their wide circle of friends – a man whose demeanor (and stutter) seemed to indicate a shyness that masked a razor sharp mind and a wicked wit. Here are a few of my fondest memories of John.

It was the launch of one of Iris' novels, and her publisher, the fierce and fiery Carmen Callil, gave a party at her home. The nervous young publicity assistant (now the bestselling author Ben Macintyre), charged with pouring drinks for the guests, spilled a glass of red wine on the beige carpet. Carmen immediately spotted this outrage and came racing over to the scene of the crime. As she was about to let loose at her young colleague, John said, 'Oh, so s-s-sorry Carmen, I'm

afraid I spilled a glass of w-w-wine on your carpet', thus deftly deflecting her rage at Ben. After Carmen left, Ben confessed to John that he was terribly anxious to be at such an occasion. 'Never mind', John said, 'take one of t-t-these – ' removing a large horse pill, covered in lint, from his coat pocket. Ben did as he was told, and said to me, many years later, that he was 'high for three days afterwards'!

John and Iris, and my wife Carol and I went to a grand lunch at *Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons* outside Oxford. Iris said that she thought that, if I were an animal, I would be a panther and Carol a leopard. I then asked John what animal he thought he would be. After a long, contemplative silence, he said 'I think I would be a w-w-woodlouse'.

The serial rights of *Elegy for Iris* were sold for a large sum of money – I seem to remember £80,000 – to *The Times*. However, Tina Brown, editing her very last issue of the *New Yorker*, decided to run it ahead of the agreed embargo date. *The Times* duly cut the fee in half, as happens in these cases. When I phoned John to comfort him about this loss of income, he just said, 'Oh, d-d-dear boy, it was only ever f-f-fairy gold'!

I accompanied John to the first screening of Richard Eyre's marvelous film based on *Elegy for Iris*. As the film ended, my eyes flooded with tears, recollecting how a woman with one of the greatest minds of her age ended up watching *Teletubbies*. John, on the other hand, was calm, smiling and dry-eyed. When I asked him why he was not as emotionally upset by the film as I was, he said: 'D-d-dear boy, I simply apprehended it as a w-w-work of art.'

John and I remained in touch for many years after Iris's death, and frequently spoke or corresponded about Iris's business affairs because he was the Executor of her Literary Estate. I shall forever miss our conversations, always salted with his sly brand of humour.

At the Memorial Service (After Thomas Hardy)

The treasured poems and thoughts in prose,
The favourite music, yes;
By turns voiced out, stringed over, those
That brought him happiness.

The self – oh yes – assembled too:
Kindness and skill and wit
In friendsome hush recalled anew –
Nor lost one charm of it.

Ah yes. Our man is gone away.
In proof whereof he leaves no trace.
A perfect stranger here today
Already takes his place.

John Bayley

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reprinted by kind permission of Mrs Audi Bayley.

Bibliography of John Bayley's Major Works

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Notes on Contributors

Ian Beck is a children's illustrator and author. In addition to his numerous children's books, he is also most famous for his cover illustration on Elton John's *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* album.

Cheryl K. Bove is former editor of the *Iris Murdoch News Letter*, has written several works on Iris Murdoch, and now teaches at Metropolitan State University of Denver (Colorado).

Peter J. Conradi is Emeritus Professor of English at Kingston University and Honorary Research Fellow at University College London. He has published widely on Iris Murdoch and is author of her official biography, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (2001). He is advisor to the *Iris Murdoch Review*, to which he contributes articles and reviews. He was a made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2011.

Valentine Cunningham is Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford. He tutors English at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he is an Emeritus Fellow and served as Vice President.

Patsy Grigg and her husband John were close friends of John Bayley and Iris Murdoch, with whom they travelled widely.

Professor Sir Michael (Eliot) Howard, O.M., C.H., M.C. was successively Chichele Professor of the History of War, and Regius Professor of Modern History and Fellow of Oriel College Oxford, until 1989, which was during the period of John Bayley's time at Oxford. Author of a score of books on a wide range of subjects in his field, including *Captain Professor, a life in War and Peace* (2006), he is now President Emeritus of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Michael H.S. Howard served in the Army 1944-48. As Intelligence Officer of secret technical/industrial intelligence unit, John Bayley was under his command 1946-47. He joined W.R. Grace in 1950. In 1986 he retired as Assistant Chief Manager at Lloyds Bank plc and Director of subsidiary of Lloyds Merchant Bank. His memoir, *Otherwise Occupied: Letters Home from the Ruins of Nazi Germany* (2010), includes his wartime friendship with John Bayley.

Clive James is an Australian-British author, critic, broadcaster, poet, translator and memoirist, best known for his autobiographical series *Unreliable Memoirs*, for his chat shows and documentaries on British television and for his prolific journalism.

Charles Lock received his D.Phil. from Oxford in 1982; from 1983 to 1996 he taught at the University of Toronto and since then he has held the Professorship of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen.

Priscilla Martin teaches English and Classics at the University of Oxford. She has also taught at the Universities of Edinburgh, London and California. Her publications include books on Chaucer and *Piers Plowman* and a novel. She is the co-author with Anne Rowe of *Iris Murdoch: A Literary Life* (2010).

Pamela Osborn is a researcher with the Iris Murdoch Archive Project and part-time lecturer at Kingston University. She achieved her PhD, 'Another Country: Bereavement, Mourning and Survival in the Novels of Iris Murdoch' in 2013. She has published essays on Iris Murdoch and is currently researching references to Murdoch in the work of contemporary novelists.

Lady Marcelle Quinton is a distinguished British artist whose work has been exhibited in Europe and America. Her London sculptures include busts of Bertrand Russell, Cardinal Newman, Harold MacMillan and Lord Carrington. She is also known for her sculptures of mythical animals and paintings.

Gloria Richardson is a family friend of all the Bayley brothers and spent many holidays with them and Iris Murdoch.

Anne Rowe is Lead Editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*, Director of the Iris Murdoch Archive Project and Associate Professor in English Literature at Kingston University. She has published widely on Iris Murdoch and is co-editing, with Avril Horner, *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* (forthcoming, Chatto & Windus November 2015; Princeton University Press 2016).

Lord Maurice Saatchi is the Founder of Saatchi & Saatchi, and a Partner in M&C Saatchi. He is a Governor of the London School of Economics, Chairman of the Centre for Policy Studies, and a member of the Council of Reference of the Westminster Abbey Institute. He was formerly Conservative Shadow Minister for the Treasury and the Cabinet Office, and Chairman of the Conservative Party.

Ed Victor is Chairman of the Ed Victor Ltd Literary Agency and represents, among other clients, Edna O'Brien, John Banville and the estates of Raymond Chandler, Douglas Adams and Josephine Hart.

Frances White is Writer in Residence at Kingston University Writing School and acting Assistant Director of the Iris Murdoch Project and editor of the Iris Murdoch Review. She has published widely on Iris Murdoch; her *Becoming Iris Murdoch* (Kington University Press, 2014) won the Kingston University Press Short Biography Competition.

A.N. Wilson is a writer and newspaper columnist known for his critical biographies, which include *Iris Murdoch: As I knew her* (2003), novels, works of popular history and religious views. John Bayley was his tutor at Oxford where he met Iris Murdoch.