THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER

Number 1 July 1987

IRIS MURDOCH AT TULANE UNIVERSITY

John Burks
University of Alabama

In the context of a course on Iris Murdoch he offered this spring at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, John Burke led a group of students to a public talk given by Iris Murdoch in the company of her husband John Bayley at Tulane University on Tuesday March 24th.

The lecture itself took the form of a conversation between Iris Murdoch and John Bayley before a large and appreciative audience in Tulane's McAlister Auditorium. Murdoch took the occasion to repeat some of her well-known views on the role the novel should play in a world that continues to shed its faith in traditional religious teachings. That role is not as easy for the novel writer today as it was for those in the nineteenth century. Characters, for instance, can no longer believably turn to prayer at critical moments in the action. John Bayley made some specific applications of these general points. He mentioned their surprise, for instance, at discovering the current popularity of Barbara Pym in America. This he sees as a sign of a continuing hunger for the spiritual in reading audiences, who he believes are looking for writers willing to restore the sense of soul to its proper place at the center of fiction.

The next day the Alabamians met with Iris Murdoch in a class she was conducting on A Fairly Honourable Defeat and The Black Prince, a class that was part of a course on women writers being taught by Professor E. Philip Bollier of Tunlane's English Department. Iris Murdoch turned out to be relaxed and genial in person, and quite skilful in the classroom. The most interesting questions tended to centre around her own intentions when writing a story as opposed to the interpretations that may later be put upon them. (Is The Black Prince, for instance, a story about ambiguity? Apparently not. In answer to the question, 'Who killed Arnold Baffin?' 'There can be no doubt of that. His wife did.' In answer to another question about Bradley Pearson, a question that arises about how at the climactic moment in The Black Prince the much older Bradley proves his virility to the much younger Julian, who is barely out of her teens. 'Should this be considered) "a rape"?' 'Not at all. She loved him.') If this hour with Iris Murdoch proved nothing else, it proved that she is unusually forthcoming and open about her intentions. She also made it clear that the allegorical elements in A Fairly Honourable Defeat are intentional and that we are right to hear echoes of Paradise Lost in the clash between Tallis Browne and Julius King. Leonard Browne is an embittered God the Father, dismayed at the way his creation has turned out. He is disgruntled with his ineffective, long-suffering son. Tallis is a Christ figure, a son who truly loves his Father, but who is also trying to redeem a hopelessly messy world.

THE BIRTH OF A WRITER: IRIS MURDOCH BEFORE 1950

John Fletcher
University of East Anglia

Like most professional authors, Iris Murdoch began writing when she was very young. Much of what she wrote before 1950 – the year in which she began to publish philosophical papers and book reviews – will probably remain unpublished, at least during her lifetime. It is known, for instance, that she wrote a number of novels before Under the Net was accepted for publication, but it is unclear whether the manuscripts have survived. When I asked Iris Murdoch how I should refer to these unpublished novels in the bibliography I am compiling, she agreed with me that the safe formulation to describe them was 'presumably lost'. This may of course mean that she knows that they are lost; but it could equally well mean that she wishes them to be treated as if they were lost. Either way, they are likely to remain inaccessible for as long as she has a say in the matter.

Most British schools issue a school magazine, and Badminton, where Iris Murdoch studied, was no exception. As one would expect, her earliest published writings appeared in this periodical, known simply as Badminton School. It is a rather high-minded publication, as befits the rather earnest liberal tone of the school generally, and Iris Murdoch's writings fit very well with the image. When she went up to Oxford in 1938 she continued to write for a time in the school magazine, but then equally she started to contribute to student publications, notably Oxford Forward and The Cherwell. So far as I have been able to check, nothing by her ever appeared in Isis, however. Her first appearance in a national, general interest periodical was the letter she wrote as chairman of the Oxford Labour Club 'Full Circle', which appeared in The New Statesman and Nation, a journal closely connected with the British Labour Party, in 1941. Otherwise she published relatively little while at Oxford. After she had left Oxford and joined the civil service, she was asked to contribute book reviews on philosophical and religious topics to The Adelphi, a quarterly edited by John Middleton Murray. Thereafter, so far as I have been able to discover, she published nothing until the two book reviews in The Listener, a BBC publication, with which most listings of her writings began (cf. Richard Todd [1984], p. 108).

A list, as complete as I can make it, of all Iris Murdoch's publications before 1950, the year of the Listener pieces, follows. The only item which I have reason to believe exists, but which I have not been able to find, is mentioned in At Badminton with BMB by Those Who Were There, ed. Jean Storry (Bristol, England: Badminton School, 1982), a compilation of reminiscences on Beatrice May Baker (1987-1973), the headmistress whom several generation of pupils including Iris Murdoch, referred to affectionately as 'B.M.B' On p. 20 of this memoir mention is made of a peace conference which Badminton organized and which was 'described in an article written by Iris Murdoch in the local paper'. Iris Murdoch did indeed write an account of the conference in the school magazine (issue no. 72), but this could hardly be described as a newspaper. There were at least three Bristol papers then, the Evening World, and the Western Daily Press, but careful searches at the British Library's Newspaper Library in Colindale, London, have failed to turn up any contribution by the schoolgirl Iris Murdoch, and the Bristol Central Library cannot help either. If any reader of the Iris Murdoch Newsletter is able to locate the article, or else eliminate it definitively from bibliographical enquiries, I should be most grateful to hear about the matter.

Note that Badminton School bears the date of the term or terms to which it refers (retrospectively), not the date of issue; for example, the issue dated Autumn Term 1933 appeared early in 1934.

1933

'The Fate of the Daisy Lee. (A ballad).' Badminton School, no. 61 (Autumn Term, 1932, and Spring Term, 1933), 45-6. Signed 'I MURDOCH (Group III)' this 13-stanza poem appears in the same issue which announces (on p. 6) Iris Murdoch's enrollment at the school.

1934

'Expedition to Bradford-on-Avon'. Badminton School, no. 63 (Autumn Term, 1933), 18-19. Signed 'I MURDOCH. A. LEECH' this account of an outing by the newly-formed 'Architecture Club' was ostensibly written in collaboration with a fellow pupil (also listed on p. 6 of no. 61 as having enrolled with Iris Murdoch). Since Iris Murdoch's name appears first, however, out of alphabetical order, we can assume that she actually wrote it, with some assistance from the young Miss Leech.

'To Lowbrows'. 'To Highbrows'. Badminton School, no. 64 (Spring Term, 1934), 21-3. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group IVA)' these two brief essays on a topical theme were placed first, in a series of such by pupils at the school, under the general heading 'Contrasting Views of Highbrows and Lowbrows'.

'Unimportant Persons'. Badminton School, no. 65 (Summer Term, 1934), 41-2. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH', this short essay extolls the virtues of the non-famous, of whom the writer considers herself one, although 'it sometimes depresses me' (p. 41).

1935

'How I Would Govern the Country'. Badminton School, no. 67 (Spring and Summer Terms, 1935), 56-7 Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (aged 16)'. This short piece may lay claim to be the author's first essay on moral philosophy: 'Government is the combination of knowledge of the nation with the ideals of freedom, justice and Christianity, and those countries are happiest', it concludes, 'whose rulers combine these essentials in the best proportion'.

1936

'Leonardo da Vinci as a Man of Science'. Badminton School, no. 68 (Autumn Term, 1935), 17-19. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group V1)', this report on a lecture by a visiting speaker bears the talk's title.

'Translation of Horace'. Ibid., p. 58. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (VIth Form)' this four-stanza poem translates
Horace's ode 'Quis nulta gracilis te puer in rosa' (Book I, v).

'League of Nations Union. Junior Branch'. 'Literary Club'. Badminton School, no. 69 (Spring Term, 1936), 9, 24. Two short accounts of meetings of the school clubs mentioned, the first signed 'I. MURDOCH' and the second 'I.M'.

'The Diver.' Ibid., p. 52. A 3-stanza poem of 30 lines signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group VI)'.

'Literary Club'. 'Architecture Club'. Badminton School, no. 70 (Summer Term, 1936), 28, 28-9. Two accounts, the first very brief, of club meetings; the signatures are 'I.M.' and 'IRIS MURDOCH' respectively.

1937

'The School Branch of the League of Nations Union'. Badminton School, no. 71 (Autumn Term, 1936), 14. A brief activities account signed 'I.M.'

'The League of Nations Union Christmas Holiday Lectures'.;Ibid., pp.14-19. A detailed account of lectures organised in London in January 1937 by the Education department of the LNU which won shared first prize in a competition held by the LNU magazine Headway; signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (VIth Form)'.

'Community Singing'. Ibid., pp. 36-8. An essay extolling the merits of this popular activity, in which Soviet Russia is referred to in passing as 'that courageous and much-maligned country' (p.38). A linocut, entitled 'The Prisoner' and signed 'I. Murdock' (sic) appears on p. 39.

Prize-winning essay on the theme 'What Interested Me Most in the Christmas Holiday Lectures'. Headway; A Monthly Review of the League of Nations, 19, 3 (March, 1937), 48. A short essay on the same subject as that reported on pp. 14-19 in no. 71 of the school magazine; untitled, author's name and school in lieu. For this essay too Iris Murdoch won divided first prize.

'The School Junior Branch of the League of Nations Union. Peace Conference March 17th to March 20th'. Badminton School, no. 72 (Spring Term, 1937), 12-13. Report, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH', of a conference for local schools held at Badminton School 'about the problems of war and peace, and how they affected youth' (p. 12). 'The Literary Club'. Ibid., p. 21. Report signed 'I.M'

'Millionaires and Megaliths'. Ibid., pp. 25-8. An account, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH' (Group VI)', of a visit to the marmalade millionaire and archaeology enthusiast Mr. Keiller which reveals already an eye for comic detail: 'collecting cow milk-jugs is yet another hobby of the eccentric Mr Keiller' (p. 28).

Untitled poem. Ibid., p. 48. A 4-stanza poem signed 'IRIS MURDOCH' (Sixth Form)'.

'The Praise of Colonos'. Badminton School, no. 73 (Summer Term, 1937), p. 34. Translated from the Oedipus Coloneus of Sophocles, 3 stanzas, 6 lines each, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group VIA)'.

1938

'Prize Essay in Headway's Holiday Lecture Competition.' Headway, 20, 2 (February 1938). 28; reprinted in Badminton School, no. 75 (Autumn Term 1937), 15-16. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH, Badminton School', this essay was on the theme 'If I Were Foreign Secretary' won undivided first prize in the second series of lectures by the LNU held in London in January 1938; the second prize went to Raymond Williams, future Professor of Drama at Cambridge University, England, and author of Culture and Society and The Long Revolution.

'Literary Club'. 'Debating Club'. Ibid., p. 19 Two activities reports, both signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Sixth Form)'.

Come, Pale Feet'. Untitled poem. Ibid., p. 34. Two poems, the first of 4 stanzas, the second of 3, both signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Sixth Form)'.

'Literary Club'. 'Expedition to the Severn Bore.' Badminton School, no. 76 (Spring Term, 1938), 27, 29-30. Reports on club activities and on a school expedition, the first signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Secretary)' and the second 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group VIA)'. The frontispiece of the issue is a linocut by Iris Murdoch entitled 'The Piper'.

'The Phoenix-Hearted' (pp. 5-6), 'Star-Fisher' (pp. 10-11), 'The Coming of April' (p.16), 'Lower Than the Angels' (p. 20). Four poems, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Aged 18 years) Badminton School', in Post Venturers: A Collection of Poems Written by Bristol School Boys and Girls (n.p., n.d.), on the pages indicated. This anthology, with a preface by W. H. Auden (dated October 29, 1938), was edited by Iris Murdoch and printing was arranged by Gollancz at cost price (one shilling), in aid of the Fund for Chinese Medical Aid. 'The Phoenix-Hearted' was reprinted in Badminton School, no. 77 (Summer Term, 1938), 18, and 'Star-Fisher' in Ibid., no. 78 (Autumn Term, 1938), 21, and all 4 poems in 600 Years of Bristol Poetry, ed. Edward Martin and Bill Pickard (Bristol, England: Arts and Leisure Committee of the City and County of Bristol, 1973), pp. 49-51.

'Poet Venturers'. Badminton School, no. 77 p. 11. An account, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH (Group VIA)', of the origins of the venture; Auden's foreword is reprinted immediately below her report.

'Visit of the Choir to Downside abbey'. Ibid., p. 12. Activity report, signed as above.

1939

'The Playhouse: 'Lady Precious Stream'. Oxford Forward , NS. no. 1 (January 14, 1939), 12. Theatre review, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH'. Review of Anna Christie (Eugene O'Neill) at the Playhouse. Ibid., no. 2 (January 21, 1939), 9.

'Poem'. The Cherwell, 56, 3 (May 13, 1939), 57. A 22-line poem, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH'.

'Oxford Lament'. Oxford Forward, no. 12 (May 19, 1939), 5. A 28-line poem in two stanzas, signed 'I.M.'

'The Irish-Are They Human?' The Cherwell, 56, 6 (June 3, 1939), 112, 114. A polemical essay, signed 'IRIS MURDOCH'.

'Badmintonians at Oxford'. Badminton School, no. 79 (Spring and Summer Terms, 1939), 27-8. An unsigned account of activities of former pupils, in which Iris Murdoch refers to herself in the third person; the piece is clearly attributed to her, however, in the issue's table of contents.

Untitled poem. The Cherwell, 57, 4 (November 11, 1939), 63. One of two poems under the general heading 'Poems'; the first is signed 'IRIS MURDOCH' and consists of 28 lines.

1941

'Full Circle'. New Statesman and Nation, 21 (May 3, 1941), 460-1. Letter to the Editor about an article by Professor Joad.

'News from Oxford'. Badminton School, no 81 (Spring and Summer Terms, 1941), 18-19. Report on activities of former pupils; signed 'I. Murdoch', referred to in the text as 'Idris Murdoch' (sic).

'O.B.A. Week-end'. Ibid., pp. 22-3. Report of activities of the Old Badmintonian Association, signed 'I. MURDOCH'.

1942

'More about Wartime Oxford'. Ibid., no. 82 (1941-1942), 23. Signed 'I.M.', this report on activities of former pupils again refers to the writer in the third person.

1943

Review of Midnight Hour by Nicodemus. The Adelphi, 19, 2 (January-March, 1943), 60-2. Signed 'IRIS MURDOCH'.

Review of The Rebirth of Christianity by Stanley Cook and of Taken at the Flood by Kenneth Ingram. Ibid., no. 4 (July –September, 1943), 125-7. Same signature.

1944

Review of Worship and the Common Life by Eric Hayman. Ibid., 20, 4 (July-September, 1944), 134-5. Same signature.

FORTHCOMING AND NEWS

ENCOUNTERS WITH IRIS MURDOCH

Edited by Richard Todd
isbn 90-6256-499-2
approx. 96 pages
ppd
approx. DFL. 25.00

To mark the occasion of the visit to the Netherlands of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley at the end of October 1986, the Free University Press proposes to issue a short book covering the proceedings of the two-day symposium that was held in Amsterdam on 20 and 21 October.

The book, provisionally entitled 'Encounters with Iris Murdoch', will be introduced and edited by Richard Todd. The five papers given during these two days will be reprinted, and each will be followed by an edited transcription of the discussion that ensued after each paper, and will include Iris Murdoch's own response to the following speakers and topics:

*John Fletcher (University of East Anglia). The Foreign Translations.
*Peter Conradi (Kingston Polytechnic), Iris Murdoch and Dostoevski: The Comic Sense.
*Diana Phillips (Rijksuniversitair Centrum Antwerp), The Complementarity of Good and Evil in A Fairly Honourable Defeat
*Wim Bronzwaer (Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen), Iris Murdoch's Image of Plato in 'The Fire and the Sun' and 'Acastos'.

*Cheryl Bove (Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana), America and Americans in Iris Murdoch's Novels.

It is hoped that the book will be available during the Fall of 1987.

Free University Press
De Boelelaan 1105
1081 HV Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: 020-444355

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The first session devoted to Iris Murdoch at an MLA Convention will take place this year. Martha Satz, President of the Iris Murdoch Society, submitted a panel to the MLA on 'Iris Murdoch: New Readings', which has been approved and will be part of the program in San Francisco this December. Three papers, submitted by John Burke (University of Alabama), Christine Evans (Harvard University) and Barbara Stevens Heusel (Wake Forest University) will comprise this first Iris Murdoch panel.

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It will appear twice yearly, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings. We welcome short articles (no longer than 5 pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Christine Ann Evans
Editor
Iris Murdoch Newsletter
Program in History and Literature
14 Quincy Street
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive a Newsletter, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10 US, a student/retiree $5 US) to:

Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
Department of English/Box 7387
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27109

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER
Volume 2, December 1988

FIRST MLA SESSION DEVOTED TO IRIS MURDOCH

The first session devoted to Iris Murdoch at a Modern Languages Association convention took place last December in San Francisco. Martha Satz, then president of the Iris Murdoch Society, submitted the panel entitled "Iris Murdoch: New Readings." Abstracts of the papers follow. If you would like a copy of the papers, please contact the authors directly.

The Philosophical Fable in The Philosopher's Pupil
John J. Burke, Jr. University of Alabama

Murdoch's novels are so rich and complex they seem to defy a single interpretation, and The Philosopher's Pupil is no exception. When I call attention to the philosophical fable in The Philosopher's Pupil, I am not offering an overall interpretation of the novel, but rather an interpretation of one of its parts. In the story of the philosopher John Robert Rozanov, I find a fable not unlike that of Candide, Voltaire's attack on Leibnitzian optimism. The story of John Robert Rozanov, unbeknownst to most of the inhabitants of Ennistone, is the story of an empty success, a towering intellect who finds his best efforts to contain the world inside logical and orderly structures frustrated by the dark forces within. In Murdoch's fable those dark forces are represented by Eros who has the power to defeat and humble us, as he defeats and humbles John Robert Rozanov whose longings for his own granddaughter drive him to suicide at the end. The philosophical fable in The Philosopher's Pupil is a story of defeat of Philosophy and the triumph of Aphrodite

Iris Murdoch and the Forms of Popular Literature, Or Who Shot Radeechy?
Christine Ann Evans, Harvard University

It is the peculiar intersection between the moral philosopher and the literary theorist and practitioner that makes Iris Murdoch's writing on aesthetics so rich. But, though it would be folly to disentangle wholly these identities, too often Murdoch's critics err by entirely equating them, by seeing her aesthetic and literary theory as a mere corollary to her moral philosophy. This tendency makes itself particularly evident in responses to Murdoch's aesthetic valuation; while her distinction between "good" and "bad" art can be linked, finally, to an ethical effect upon a receiver ("great art is good for us"), discussions of her theories of valuation center too exclusively upon ethical and moral criteria to the exclusion of the aesthetic. One essential term in Murdoch's equation is overlooked – that of the strategies in art that mediate "good" and "bad" responses. These strategies, the systems of formal and cultural signs that structure meaning, constitute the medium through which the aesthetic is translated into the ethical, and it is these systems that this discussion attempts to outline. In my attempt to explore these strategies, I draw from and refer to the theory surrounding the valuation of popular literature, in particular its subgroup detective fiction, and this for several reasons. First, a lively debate on literary valuation is raging now around the subject of the popular, enlisting both noted apologists and vociferous nay-sayers. Murdoch's emphasis on "consolation" and the familiarity and circularity that produce it coincides with these major treatments, and reference to them will elucidate Murdoch's own theories and grant them their deserved place in this debate. Secondly, Murdoch herself has written several novels that touch the precincts of the popular; The Unicorn, for example, evokes the Gothic romance, and The Nice and the Good detective fiction. This paper at the end turns to a study of The Nice and the Good, a novel that at the same time works within and works against the form of detective fiction. Some of Murdoch's most mordant and effective criticisms of "bad" literature appear in this novel in the gap between a certain level of

expectations elicited by the novel's ostensible "popular" form and its refusal to satisfy these expectations. The text's invitation toward a certain reading and its subsequent refusal to permit that reading crystallize and render explicit those strategies operative within bad literature, and suggest the counter-strategies of good (or at least better) literature.

The Carnivalesque in The Philosopher's Pupil: A Bakhtinian Reading of Iris Murdoch

by Barbara Stevens Heusel' Wake Forest University

Critics have not recognized the dialogical openness of Iris Murdoch's twenty-three novels. Many of those who find fault with her fiction complain about the novel's strong carnivalesque flavor, her celebration of radical change and renewal: what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the violation of the usual. Bakhtin traces the doubleness of dialogic discourse in Western literature to the carnivalistic satyr play, the comic play that subverts rationality and gravity, wedding the sacred and profane (Problems 101). The content and form of virtually every Murdoch novel employs elements Julia Kristeva describes as carnivalesque – the spectacle without a stage, mirroring the folk game; the erotic orgies, mirroring ancient sacred worship; the phantasmagoria (Desire 82). For Bakhtin, birth is fraught with death and death with new birth, and carnival celebrates change itself (Problems 103); Murdoch revels in the same understanding. Bakhtin's writings, then, provide an especially fruitful way of seeing The Philosopher's Pupil (1983).

Throughout the novel Murdoch employs the two components of carnival: staged spectacle (e.g. the orgy following the Triumph of Aphrodite rehearsals) and conscious use of theatrical language (e.g.) diatribe, journalese, expose). Murdoch first stages a realistic representation and then, using language to repudiate it, provokes laughter; just as Kristeva says carnival does (Desire 79). In The Philosopher's Pupil spectacle and language bring to light insights from the unconscious: insights about sexuality, birth, and death (again, Kristeva discusses the pattern [Desire 78]. Murdoch uses the dialogic mode to test ideas, raise questions, and arouse the senses by exhibiting incongruity and eccentricity. Having found a strategy that makes room for contingency, she steps back from the text of this novel and gives characters the freedom to explore spiritual problems.

Review Article

Encounters with Iris Murdoch: Proceedings of an Informal Symposium on Iris Murdoch's Work held at the Free University, Amsterdam, on 20 and 21 October 1986. Ed. Richard Todd. Amsterdam: Free University, 1988, 116 pages.

In editing this spare volume that includes five papers and five discussions, Richard Todd made the felicitous decision to end not the way the conference did, but rather with Dame Iris's humble response to the discussion following Diana Phillips reading of The Complementarity of Good and Evil in a Fairly Honorable Defeat: "…if someone could tell me how to make my novels much better, I would be very glad. But I think the help that comes, that makes one's work better, comes from very deep inside the soul and the unconscious mind." During this "wide-ranging" discussion, Todd, in response to Murdoch's analysis of her novelistic reincarnation – Tallis as Christ, his father Leonard as God, and Julius as Satan – nudges Murdoch into talking about the way she separates her thought about the novel from her philosophical thought. She acknowledges that "making Leonard into a joke would be quite different from arguing why the idea of God the Father is not tolerable now."

Iris Murdoch aficionados will find John Fletcher's 15-page bibliography of translations of Murdoch's books into 28 foreign languages and his tabular list immeasurably useful. Fletcher informs us with his descriptions of the books and his analysis of the way the volumes betray national character and economic situation; then he entertains us with his examination of mistakes of translation and "real howlers" such as Andre Malraux's first wife's translation of bookie, a bookmaker, as "bootlegger".

Peter Conradi's "Iris Murdoch and Dostoevsky" demonstrates that Murdoch is a "direct heir" of Dostoevsky. The novelist's analyses of the irrational and of the sado-masochistic system grow out of times of moral anarchy: Dostoevsky's "paradigm crimes" being "child-rape and murder", Murdoch's being "incestuous love, adultery, theft."

In the discussion following W. Bronzwaer's paper, "Images of Plato in 'The Fire and the Sun' and 'Acastos'," Murdoch, exploring the ideal of prelinguistic reality, disagrees with Jacques Derrida's idea that "writing is prior to speech." One of the great moments in the book is Iris Murdoch's heated response to Cheryl Bove's "America and Americans in the Novels of Iris Murdoch," which concludes: "among the other national types represented in Iris Murdoch's novels, only Americans consistently reflect the self-serving attitude and desire for material returns of the spiritually unenlightened."

Iris Murdoch: "I want to defend myself against some of these charges!"

Cheryl Bove: "Oh, I wasn't attacking!"

Barbara Stevens Heusel
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

FORTHCOMING AND NEWS

IRIS MURDOCH, MURIEL SPARK, AND JOHN FOWLES: DIDACTIC DEMONS IN MODERN FICTION
Richard C. Kane
ISBN 0-8386-3324-2
176 pages
$28.50

This provocative study suggests a new genre in contemporary literature – demonic didacticism. With penetrating analysis of eight novels and references to essays by the artists, the author shows how Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark and John Fowles use a variety of demonic elements to make significant moral statements.

Fairleigh Dickinson University Press
440 Forsgate Dr.
Cranbury, N.J. 08512

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Christine Evans will propose a session dedicated to Iris Murdoch for the 1990 Northeast Modern Languages Conference. If you are interested in submitting a paper for this session, look for the call for papers in the NEMLA Newsletter or contact Christine Evans directly through Lesley College, Cambridge, MA 02238.

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John J. Burke, Jr., the President of the Iris Murdoch Society, submitted a proposal for a special session for the 1988 MLA convention entitled "Iris Murdoch's Experiments with Form." This proposal was not accepted by the Program Committee. The members of the Iris Murdoch Society intend to submit a new proposal for a special session for the 1989 convention in Washington, D.C. Look for an announcement of this proposed session in the MLA Newsletter.

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It will appear yearly, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings. We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Christine Evans
Editor
Iris Murdoch Newsletter
Lesley College
Cambridge, MA 02238

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Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
Department of English
CB #3520, Greenlaw Hall
The University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520

There will be a meeting of the membership of the Irish Murdoch Society at the MLA Convention in New Orleans in John Burke's room on Wednesday, December 28th. Board meeting at 3:00. General meeting at 4:00.

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER

Number 3 Summer 1989

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD AND THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

The Iris Murdoch Society will keep its membership apprised of its yearly meetings within the pages of The Iris Murdoch Newsletter. The following are the minutes of its meetings held at the MLA Conventions in San Francisco in 1987 and in New Orleans in 1988. We extend our thanks to Dennis Moore who has diligently maintained this record for us.

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

January 1988

MINUTES: Board Meeting, 3.00pm December 29, 1987

Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Secretary-Treasurer, called the meeting to order shortly after 3.00pm, in her room at the San Francisco Hilton. Attending: John BURKE, Christine Ann EVANS, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Amin MALAK, and Dennis MOORE.

HEUSEL reported that Martha SATZ, Society president, had called to say she cannot attend either this meeting or the 4.00pm annual meeting. SATZ gave HEUSEL her proxy for voting on the proposed Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

(Item: Special Sessions.) BURKE reported that the MLA program committee had accepted only 202 of the approximately 500 proposals they had received for special sessions. MALAK said he had been told, last year, that the Society had just missed the cut-off for having a special session approved. BURKE had written to SATZ with specific suggestions for making this year's proposal more likely to be accepted. MALAK raised question of submitting a proposal for 1988 special session, at MLA's New Orleans meeting, as opposed to waiting to have one in 1989 convention in Washington D.C. Board agreed to present question at 4.00pm annual meeting. BURKE, MALAK and HEUSEL each suggested possible topics.

(Item: Resolutions). Board considered and passed each of these four resolutions. MALAK moved that Board commend Wake Forest University for its generous support of the Society during our first year; Board approved resolution unanimously. MALAK moved that board commend Harvard University for contributing toward the expenses of the Society's first Newsletter; Board approved resolution unanimously. Moore moved that Board commend Barbara Stevens HEUSEL for her efforts at creating our Society; Board approved resolution unanimously. Board agreed that BURKE will announce these resolutions at tomorrow morning's Special Session.

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setting times and date for the next year's board meeting and annual meeting. BURKE recommended 3.00pm and 4.00pm on Wednesday, December 28, 1988, to avoid any possible conflicts with meetings of MLA Delegate Assembly.

Board adjourned in order to begin 4.00pm Annual Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

Minutes: Annual Meeting 4.00pm December 29, 1987

Amin MALAK, Society Vice President, called the meeting to order shortly after 4.00pm in the room of the Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Steven HEUSEL at the San Francisco Hilton. Attending: Miranda BOCK-PALLANT, John BURKE, Christine Ann EVANS, Barbara Stevens HEUSEK, Amin MALAK and Dennis MOOR.

(Item: Secretary-Treasurer's Report). HEUSEL circulated copies of minutes from December 29, 1986 meeting in New York City and then presented Secretary-Treasurer's report, a copy of which is to be attached to these minutes. MOORE moved, HEUSEL seconded that copy of report be furnished to EVANS for inclusion in next issue of Society's Newsletter; motion passed. MALAK asked EVANS to send additional copies to each Board member, HEUSEL will furnish copy of report, and of membership list (as of December 19, 1987) to MALIK.

(Item: Membership). MALAK said it is most heartening to see that the Society has 31 members during its first year. MOORE asked about legality of circulating membership list, MALAK said that to do so would be illegal.

(Item: Election of officers). HEUSEL nominated Amin MALAK, current Vice President, for one-year term as president, and John BURKE for one-year term as Vice President. Both passed unanimously.

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(Item: Proposing a session for 1988 MLA convention). MALAK suggested it would be appropriate to have a session every second year.
BURKE reminded group that Society's fate is not totally in our own hands, in that MLA has to decide whether to approve any proposal; he recommended that, having no guarantees, we submit a proposal each year.

MOORE asked if our sponsoring special sessions would strengthen our case when we apply to the MLA for Affiliate status, and BURKE said that it should. We discussed the question of including Iris Murdoch as proposed speaker in whatever special session we propose. Burke surmised that we would need to provide for John Bayley's accompanying her – and reported that Tulane University had brought them to New Orleans in early 1987 through a large Mellon grant.

MOORE suggested that BURKE develop a proposal for 1988 MLA, and BURKE reiterated possibilities: (1) a large session, perhaps with funding from MLA, that would include her presence; (2) simply having

another Special Session of papers. MOORE raised possibility of a two-part celebration of Murdoch's birthday; proposing a panel for 1988 and then proposing a larger program for the 1989 convention that would include participation by Dame Iris.

MALAK pointed out that through our Newsletter we can certainly call attention to her birthday. HEUSEL reported that the Literary Review (London) has asked her for a special critique of Murdoch's work in commemoration of the seventieth birthday, EVANS asked about possibility of targeting other publications, and MALAK reminded group of special edition
published in 1968 by Modern Fiction Studies.

Consensus was that first possibility BURKE had described would not be practical for 1988 MLA. BURKE agreed to submit proposal for 1988 special session, tentatively entitled 'Iris Murdoch's Experiments in Form', and he will announce that proposal at tomorrow's Special Session.

('Iris Murdoch: New Readings' will be at 8.30 a.m. in the Lassen Room of the San Francisco Hilton, as session 631 in the MLA's 1987 convention. Martha SATZ, the Society's 1987 President, will preside and BURKE, EVANS and HEUSEL will read papers).

HEUSEL volunteered to contact Dame Iris about the possibility of her coming to the 1989 MLA Convention, to be held in Washington D.C.

(Item: Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws) HEUSEL asked that the group act on the Articles of Incorporation and on the By-Laws; the Society's membership had approved both documents by mail earlier in the year. MOORE moved approval; EVANS seconded. Motion passed.

MOORE moved adjournment; HEUSEL seconded. Meeting adjourned shortly after 5pm

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

January 1989

MINUTES: Board Meeting, 3.00pm December 28, 1988

John BURKE, President, called the meeting to order shortly after 3.00pm in his room at the New Orleans Hilton, Attending: John BURKE, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Dennis MOORE, and Richard TODD.

(Item: Newsletter). BURKE asked about status of the Newsletter. HEUSEL described conversations in which new and prospective members have complained about lack of service. MOORE proposed readjusting specific issues (e.g., a Spring issue each March). Emphasizing that our Newsletter needs to be an outlet for inventiveness and creativity, BURKE suggested possible articles; the treatment of Dame Iris in recent editions of reference works (e.g., Encyclopedia Britannica and Reader's Encyclopedia); plans for Murdoch and John Bayley to give addresses at Christ Church, Oxford, 22-25 August 1989, at the Browning Centenary Conference; Richard Todd's current stay in North America; Dame Iris's new novel, to be published in the fall; and HEUSEL's July 1987 interview with Dame Iris, published in the fall; and HEUSEL's July 1987 review with Dame Iris' published in the University of Windsor Review; Winter 1988. After additional discussion, BURKE moved and TODD seconded that there will be an issue each March 1 and each November 1.

The motion passed, and BURKE agreed to write to Christine Ann Evans, Newsletter editor, informing her of the new schedule and instructing her on behalf of the Board to include in the Newsletter topical items and items of business – including minutes from the annual meetings and the annual Secretary-Treasurer's Report.

(Item: Special Sessions,) BURKE, having participated earlier in the day in the MLA's Delegate Assembly meeting, reported that the MLA had accepted 230 proposals this time from among 483 proposals. The groups discussed possible titles for another proposal and then agreed on 'Iris Murdoch Turns 70: New Assessments of Her Career', a panel to include Cheryl Bove, Peter Conradi and Richard Todd, with BURKE serving as respondent. BURKE will submit the proposal and will petition an exemption for Peter Conradi as a foreign scholar.

(Item: Possible Status as an 'Allied Organization'.) BURKE confirmed that MLA has called a moratorium on new allied organizations; that MLA is instituting a two-year application process; that the new requirements will include having been in existence for at least three years; having at least 100 dues-paying members, at least half of whom are MLA members; and/or having successfully held a certain number of seminars. TODD pointed out that our involvement with seminars on Murdoch in the Netherlands and in France should strengthen our position.

(Item: Membership.) Consensus is that the Society needs more members. HEUSEL reported that we have 31 members now, a number of whom are new people who have in effect replaced the original members who have not renewed. MOORE proposed designating someone to recruit new members and to encourage members to renew; HEUSEL suggested that such a job would be appropriate for the Society's Vice President, BURKE moved, HUESEL seconded that the Vice President also be Membership Chair; the motion passed.

Board adjourned in order to begin Annual Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

January 1989

MINUTES: <u>Annual</u> Meeting <u>4.00pm</u> December 28, 1988

John BURKE, President, called the meeting to order at 4.15pm in his room at the New Orleans Hilton. Attending: John BURKE, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Dennis MOORE, Richard TODD and Caroline WEBB.

(Item: Officers.) HEUSEL pointed out that John BURKE had succeeded Amin Malak, who has resigned as President, and that the vice president's position was therefore open. BURKE nominated WEBB as Vice President; she was elected unanimously.

(Item: Board Meeting.) BURKE described the proceedings of today's Board Meeting.

(Item: Newsletter.) Group discussed pressing need for revitalizing Society's <u>Newsletter</u>, so that it would be a vehicle for relaying details of particular interest to Murdochians.

(Item: Membership.) HEUSEL said Society needs to develop ways to attract prospective members at Ann Arbor.

(Item: Minutes of the 1987 Meetings.) MOORE presented minutes from last year's Board Meeting and Annual Meeting (3 p.m. and 4 p.m. respectively, December 29 1987). Group agreed on the following corrections: title of Elizabeth Dipple's book is <u>The Unresolvable Plot</u> (p. 2 of Board Meeting minutes); <u>MFS</u> had special issue in 1968, not 1969 (p. 3 of Annual Meeting minutes). BURKE moved, TODD seconded resolution thanking MOORE; motion passed. WEBB moved, BURKE seconded acceptance; motion passed.

(Item: Secretary-Treasurer's report). HEUSEL presented the attached report. MOORE moved, TODD seconded, that we send a $25 check to Dean Thomas Mullen of Wake Forest University as a token of our appreciation for his generosity and our commitment to repay his loan; motion passed. MOORE moved, WEBB seconded, acceptance of report; motion passed.

Having covered all relevant old and new business, and finding ourselves in New Orleans, the group adjourned just before 5 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

1. Update on our application(s) for tax-exempt status

Congratulations – we finally have it in writing that we're tax exempt!

I've received two letters recently, each replying to a year's worth of paperwork, applications, paperwork, paperwork etc:

a letter dated December 12 from Internal Revenue Service informing us that we are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501 (c) (3)

a letter from the North Carolina Department of Revenue informing us that we do not owe any state taxes, either.

2. Change of address

As many of you have already seen, I have changed addresses – and am in the process of changing the Society's official address, too. Please note this new address:

Dr. Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer, THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
c/o Department of English, University of Carolina
Chapel Hull, NC 27599-3520
Or
501 Jones Ferry Rd., Apt. P-9, Carrboro, NC 27510

Please note, too, that it says 'in care' of the English Department at Chapel Hill. During the 1988-1989 academic year, I am a visiting lecturer at U.N.C.

3. Memberships: we have 31.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stevens Heusel. Secretary –Treasurer

Murdoch, Satire and Song

John Burke Jnr.

Some of the more telling moments in Murdoch novel's can occur during closure. I would like to focus on one that occurs at the end of Under the Net (1954). Jake Donaghue has come back to Mrs. Tinckham's shop to retrieve a package of old manuscripts he has been storing there. Then while sorting through his mail he learns from Mrs. Tinckham that his old friend and lost love Anna Quentin will soon be singing on a French radio program called Qu'est-ce que la Chanson? Anna, it would seem, has at last shaken off the spell cast over her by Hugo Belfounder, a spell that had caused her to lose confidence in the world of words and so to turn away from her gift for song. She had placed her hopes instead on the world of action and had turned to mime; a wordless art form that would certainly have its appeal to Hugo, the man she loves and the man described by Jake in his first book as 'the Silencer'. That Anna would be singing again is a clear signal that she has been somehow restored to her former self. Mrs. Tinckham turns up the radio, and Jake listens feelingly as Anna sings 'an old French love song'. When Jake finds he can bear listening no longer, he asks Mrs. Tinckham to turn the radio off. Obviously, something important has happened. It is also fairly clear that this incident is intended to recall the song in Jean-Paul Sartre's La Nausée for those who have read both books. (See Elizabeth Dipple, Work for the Spirit, 54). What is not clear, however, is what it is all supposed to mean.

Two possibilities do readily come to mind. Murdoch could be affirming her kinship with Sartre through this incident. But it could also be just the opposite, that she is instead pointing out the distance between her world view and the existentialist world view of Sartre. On the surface of things, the second of these seems the more probable. Murdoch's own book on Sartre (1953) certainly leads us to believe that she became disenchanted with Sartrean existentialism much earlier than most, and well before she composed Under the Net. On the other hand, there is an argument for a more positive and continuing influence of Sartre (see the essay by Ben Obumselu in ELH ,42 (1975), 296-317). There have also been ***** as a moralist. (See, for example, Linda A. Bell, Sartre's Ethics of Authenticity [Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1989]). Still I believe we are on the right track when we see Murdoch's reaction to Sartrean existentialism as primarily critical, if for no other reason than the existentialist concept of freedom ignores the sovereignty of the good.

But if that is so, what is the point of the insistent echo of Nausea in the song at the end of Under the Net? To know that we must first understand the point of the song in Sartre's much earlier novel. Nausea (1938) can strike us as a grim and unpleasant book. For one thing very little seems to happen in it that matters. What little that can be said to matter is the refrain of a song, a jazz song that Antoine Roquentin, the narrator and hero of the book, likes to hear played whenever he is near a phonograph. When he goes to his favourite pub Rendezvous de Cheminots early in the story, and discovers that his female comforter is nowhere to be found, he asks to hear it: 'Some of these days/You'll miss me honey'. We are not sure at first what to make of Roquentin's attraction to this song. He claims that it cures him of his nausea, if only momentarily. We are very aware, however, that Roquentin lives a solitary life style and that he clearly feels lonely. The words of the song seem to match his need for companionship. Nevertheless, it may be worth noting that the words of the jazz song are in English in the original French text. And that seems to suggest that the emotions the song expresses are more important than anything the words say, or even that words aren't important at all.

This point seems especially significant at the end. By that time Roquentin no longer has any sense of vocation because he has lost his faith in history and this abandoned the book he was writing about the Marquis de Rollbon. He has watched his former lover Anna go off with another man. He has also, with a much less clear rationale, turned aside from humanism which is discredited again in the shameful behaviour of the Self-Taught Man in Sartre's Roquentin at the end? He is left, we are asked to believe, with faith in the power of popular art forms such as song. 'Some of these days/You'll miss me honey'. The song apparently provides him with faith in the power of art, especially popular art, to transcend the

*** this part of the text is missing from the original Newsletter**

loneliness and isolation of individual existence. The novel asks us to believe that this particular jazz song convinces Roquetin that he should dedicate himself to creating something comparable to the song, something that will touch the hearts and minds of others as successfully as that song has touched him. What Roquentin will produce, of course, is Nausea, the very novel we have been reading.

Murdoch's Under the Net is also a self-begetting novel, but it does not rely on the aesthetic solution proposed by Sartre. Jake Donaghue is also being prepared for writing the novel that is before us, but his preparation is primarily moral. Jake, too, has to put aside thoughts of romance because he learns that the woman he loves has been in love with another man. He, too, loses faith in what he has been writing; in his case, translations from the French. Jake also has to straighten out his relationship with Hugo Belfounder before he can get on with his life. When he tastes the goodness of Jean-Pierre Breteuil's most recent novel, he sees what it is he might be able to do. But to become the kind of writer he wants to be requires moral growth, a willingness to put aside the demands of self. He demonstrates to us that he can do that when he turns down Madge's tempting offer to sell his talents to the new Anglo-French film company. He demonstrates it again when he puts up all the money he has to save the aging Mr. Mars from the equivalent of the dog pound, meaning that his pockets will be empty at the end as they were at the beginning. Murdoch's Jake Donaghue is almost ready to be an artist.

Anna's song comes as a reminder of the price he has to pay in personal satisfaction if he is going to follow through his new-found commitment to art. Anna's song does not point to the future, as the jazz song does in Nausea, because it is not a promise of who Jake will create. It refers rather to the past, to his pursuit of Anna, to the frustration of his desire for meaningful companionship, to a love that can never be. Art for Murdoch requires pain and renunciation, but it begins with attention to the mystery of things. That is why the story ends, not with the song, but with Jake turning his attention to Mrs Tinckham's cat Maggie. Maggie, it turns out, has just given birth to four kittens. Two of them are pure Siamese, one is a tabby, and the other is tabby and white. None of them are half tabby and half Siamese as we might expect them to be. What accounts for such a strange and varied litter? Art for Murdoch, it would seem, begins with the contemplation of such mysteries.

University of Alabama

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Delos Press will publish Iris Murdoch's essay 'The Existentialist Political Myth', first published in The Socratic Digest, in an edition limited to 225.

***

Iris Murdoch and John Bayley will both be giving papers (or at least talking) at the Centenary Conference on Robert Browning that is to take place at Christ Church College, Oxford, this summer from the 22nd to the 25th August.

***

There is news that Iris Murdoch has completed yet another novel and that it is now in the hands of her publishers.

***

John Burke brings to our attention that there is an entry in the third edition of Benet's Readers Encyclopedia (1987) on Iris Murdoch that, though certainly positive enough, does not much add to the information included in the second edition (1965). The newest entry extends the list of novels by a few,

but oddly enough leaves out some that are considered among her best (The Nice and the Good, A Fairly Honourable Defeat, The Black Prince, A Word Child) while including other less celebrated titles such as The Sandcastle, Henry and Cato, and Nuns and Soldiers. Moreover, while three of her novels Under the Net, The Bell, and An Unofficial Rose) rated individual entries in 1965, those same entries have been retained in the 1987 edition, but no new entries have been added. In John Burke's words, 'Time seems to have stood still at The Readers Encyclopedia'.

Barbara Stevens Heusel conducted an interview with Iris Murdoch in July 1987 which was published in the University of Windsor Review (Winter 1988).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Christine Evans is organizing a session entitled 'Iris Murdoch: Her French Connections' for the NEMLA Conference to be held in Toronto in 1990. She invites papers (not over 8 double-spaced pages in length) or proposals for papers on the topic of Murdoch and her interest in French literature and philosophy. Such possible focuses might include: Murdoch and the French new novel, France in Murdoch's novels, Murdoch and Raymond Queneau, Simone Weil, Jean-Paul Sartre. Please send papers of proposals before September 1, 1989 to:

Christine Ann Evans
Lesley College
Undergraduate School
29 Mellen Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY NEWS

Caroline Webb of Wellesley College was elected vice president of the Iris Murdoch Society at the meeting of the society in New Orleans during the Modern Language Association Conference.

****

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Christine Ann Evans
Editor
Iris Murdoch Newsletter
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THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It will appear yearly, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive a Newsletter, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10, couple $15, student/retiree $5) to:

Dr Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
c/o Department of English
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520
Or
501 Jones Ferry Rd., Apt. P-9
Carrboro, NC 27510

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER

Number 3 Summer 1989

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE BOARD AND THE ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

The Iris Murdoch Society will keep its membership apprised of its yearly meetings within the pages of The Iris Murdoch Newsletter. The following are the minutes of its meetings held at the MLA Conventions in San Francisco in 1987 and in New Orleans in 1988. We extend our thanks to Dennis Moore who has diligently maintained this record for us.

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

January 1988

MINUTES: Board Meeting, 3.00pm December 29, 1987

Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Secretary-Treasurer, called the meeting to order shortly after 3.00pm, in her room at the San Francisco Hilton. Attending: John BURKE, Christine Ann EVANS, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Amin MALAK, and Dennis MOORE.

HEUSEL reported that Martha SATZ, Society president, had called to say she cannot attend either this meeting or the 4.00pm annual meeting. SATZ gave HEUSEL her proxy for voting on the proposed Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws.

(Item: Special Sessions.) BURKE reported that the MLA program committee had accepted only 202 of the approximately 500 proposals they had received for special sessions. MALAK said he had been told, last year, that the Society had just missed the cut-off for having a special session approved. BURKE had written to SATZ with specific suggestions for making this year's proposal more likely to be accepted. MALAK raised question of submitting a proposal for 1988 special session, at MLA's New Orleans meeting, as opposed to waiting to have one in 1989 convention in Washington D.C. Board agreed to present question at 4.00pm annual meeting. BURKE, MALAK and HEUSEL each suggested possible topics.

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The motion passed, and BURKE agreed to write to Christine Ann Evans, Newsletter editor, informing her of the new schedule and instructing her on behalf of the Board to include in the Newsletter topical items and items of business – including minutes from the annual meetings and the annual Secretary-Treasurer's Report.

(Item: Special Sessions,) BURKE, having participated earlier in the day in the MLA's Delegate Assembly meeting, reported that the MLA had accepted 230 proposals this time from among 483 proposals. The groups discussed possible titles for another proposal and then agreed on 'Iris Murdoch Turns 70: New Assessments of Her Career', a panel to include Cheryl Bove, Peter Conradi and Richard Todd, with BURKE serving as respondent. BURKE will submit the proposal and will petition an exemption for Peter Conradi as a foreign scholar.

(Item: Possible Status as an 'Allied Organization'.) BURKE confirmed that MLA has called a moratorium on new allied organizations; that MLA is instituting a two-year application process; that the new requirements will include having been in existence for at least three years; having at least 100 dues-paying members, at least half of whom are MLA members; and/or having successfully held a certain number of seminars. TODD pointed out that our involvement with seminars on Murdoch in the Netherlands and in France should strengthen our position.

(Item: Membership.) Consensus is that the Society needs more members. HEUSEL reported that we have 31 members now, a number of whom are new people who have in effect replaced the original members who have not renewed. MOORE proposed designating someone to recruit new members and to encourage members to renew; HEUSEL suggested that such a job would be appropriate for the Society's Vice President, BURKE moved, HUESEL seconded that the Vice President also be Membership Chair; the motion passed.

Board adjourned in order to begin Annual Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

January 1989

MINUTES: <u>Annual</u> Meeting <u>4.00pm</u> December 28, 1988

John BURKE, President, called the meeting to order at 4.15pm in his room at the New Orleans Hilton. Attending: John BURKE, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Dennis MOORE, Richard TODD and Caroline WEBB.

(Item: Officers.) HEUSEL pointed out that John BURKE had succeeded Amin Malak, who has resigned as President, and that the vice president's position was therefore open. BURKE nominated WEBB as Vice President; she was elected unanimously.

(Item: Board Meeting.) BURKE described the proceedings of today's Board Meeting.

(Item: Newsletter.) Group discussed pressing need for revitalizing Society's <u>Newsletter</u>, so that it would be a vehicle for relaying details of particular interest to Murdochians.

(Item: Membership.) HEUSEL said Society needs to develop ways to attract prospective members at Ann Arbor.

(Item: Minutes of the 1987 Meetings.) MOORE presented minutes from last year's Board Meeting and Annual Meeting (3 p.m. and 4 p.m. respectively, December 29 1987). Group agreed on the following corrections: title of Elizabeth Dipple's book is <u>The Unresolvable Plot</u> (p. 2 of Board Meeting minutes); <u>MFS</u> had special issue in 1968, not 1969 (p. 3 of Annual Meeting minutes). BURKE moved, TODD seconded resolution thanking MOORE; motion passed. WEBB moved, BURKE seconded acceptance; motion passed.

(Item: Secretary-Treasurer's report). HEUSEL presented the attached report. MOORE moved, TODD seconded, that we send a $25 check to Dean Thomas Mullen of Wake Forest University as a token of our appreciation for his generosity and our commitment to repay his loan; motion passed. MOORE moved, WEBB seconded, acceptance of report; motion passed.

Having covered all relevant old and new business, and finding ourselves in New Orleans, the group adjourned just before 5 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

1. Update on our application(s) for tax-exempt status

Congratulations – we finally have it in writing that we're tax exempt!

I've received two letters recently, each replying to a year's worth of paperwork, applications, paperwork, paperwork etc:

a letter dated December 12 from Internal Revenue Service informing us that we are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501 (c) (3)

a letter from the North Carolina Department of Revenue informing us that we do not owe any state taxes, either.

2. Change of address

As many of you have already seen, I have changed addresses – and am in the process of changing the Society's official address, too. Please note this new address:

Dr. Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer, THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
c/o Department of English, University of Carolina
Chapel Hull, NC 27599-3520
Or
501 Jones Ferry Rd., Apt. P-9, Carrboro, NC 27510

Please note, too, that it says 'in care' of the English Department at Chapel Hill. During the 1988-1989 academic year, I am a visiting lecturer at U.N.C.

3. Memberships: we have 31.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stevens Heusel. Secretary –Treasurer

Murdoch, Satire and Song

John Burke Jnr.

Some of the more telling moments in Murdoch novel's can occur during closure. I would like to focus on one that occurs at the end of Under the Net (1954). Jake Donaghue has come back to Mrs. Tinckham's shop to retrieve a package of old manuscripts he has been storing there. Then while sorting through his mail he learns from Mrs. Tinckham that his old friend and lost love Anna Quentin will soon be singing on a French radio program called Qu'est-ce que la Chanson? Anna, it would seem, has at last shaken off the spell cast over her by Hugo Belfounder, a spell that had caused her to lose confidence in the world of words and so to turn away from her gift for song. She had placed her hopes instead on the world of action and had turned to mime; a wordless art form that would certainly have its appeal to Hugo, the man she loves and the man described by Jake in his first book as 'the Silencer'. That Anna would be singing again is a clear signal that she has been somehow restored to her former self. Mrs. Tinckham turns up the radio, and Jake listens feelingly as Anna sings 'an old French love song'. When Jake finds he can bear listening no longer, he asks Mrs. Tinckham to turn the radio off. Obviously, something important has happened. It is also fairly clear that this incident is intended to recall the song in Jean-Paul Sartre's La Nausée for those who have read both books. (See Elizabeth Dipple, Work for the Spirit, 54). What is not clear, however, is what it is all supposed to mean.

Two possibilities do readily come to mind. Murdoch could be affirming her kinship with Sartre through this incident. But it could also be just the opposite, that she is instead pointing out the distance between her world view and the existentialist world view of Sartre. On the surface of things, the second of these seems the more probable. Murdoch's own book on Sartre (1953) certainly leads us to believe that she became disenchanted with Sartrean existentialism much earlier than most, and well before she composed Under the Net. On the other hand, there is an argument for a more positive and continuing influence of Sartre (see the essay by Ben Obumselu in ELH ,42 (1975), 296-317). There have also been ***** as a moralist. (See, for example, Linda A. Bell, Sartre's Ethics of Authenticity [Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1989]). Still I believe we are on the right track when we see Murdoch's reaction to Sartrean existentialism as primarily critical, if for no other reason than the existentialist concept of freedom ignores the sovereignty of the good.

But if that is so, what is the point of the insistent echo of Nausea in the song at the end of Under the Net? To know that we must first understand the point of the song in Sartre's much earlier novel. Nausea (1938) can strike us as a grim and unpleasant book. For one thing very little seems to happen in it that matters. What little that can be said to matter is the refrain of a song, a jazz song that Antoine Roquentin, the narrator and hero of the book, likes to hear played whenever he is near a phonograph. When he goes to his favourite pub Rendezvous de Cheminots early in the story, and discovers that his female comforter is nowhere to be found, he asks to hear it: 'Some of these days/You'll miss me honey'. We are not sure at first what to make of Roquentin's attraction to this song. He claims that it cures him of his nausea, if only momentarily. We are very aware, however, that Roquentin lives a solitary life style and that he clearly feels lonely. The words of the song seem to match his need for companionship. Nevertheless, it may be worth noting that the words of the jazz song are in English in the original French text. And that seems to suggest that the emotions the song expresses are more important than anything the words say, or even that words aren't important at all.

This point seems especially significant at the end. By that time Roquentin no longer has any sense of vocation because he has lost his faith in history and this abandoned the book he was writing about the Marquis de Rollbon. He has watched his former lover Anna go off with another man. He has also, with a much less clear rationale, turned aside from humanism which is discredited again in the shameful behaviour of the Self-Taught Man in Sartre's Roquentin at the end? He is left, we are asked to believe, with faith in the power of popular art forms such as song. 'Some of these days/You'll miss me honey'. The song apparently provides him with faith in the power of art, especially popular art, to transcend the

*** this part of the text is missing from the original Newsletter**

loneliness and isolation of individual existence. The novel asks us to believe that this particular jazz song convinces Roquetin that he should dedicate himself to creating something comparable to the song, something that will touch the hearts and minds of others as successfully as that song has touched him. What Roquentin will produce, of course, is Nausea, the very novel we have been reading.

Murdoch's Under the Net is also a self-begetting novel, but it does not rely on the aesthetic solution proposed by Sartre. Jake Donaghue is also being prepared for writing the novel that is before us, but his preparation is primarily moral. Jake, too, has to put aside thoughts of romance because he learns that the woman he loves has been in love with another man. He, too, loses faith in what he has been writing; in his case, translations from the French. Jake also has to straighten out his relationship with Hugo Belfounder before he can get on with his life. When he tastes the goodness of Jean-Pierre Breteuil's most recent novel, he sees what it is he might be able to do. But to become the kind of writer he wants to be requires moral growth, a willingness to put aside the demands of self. He demonstrates to us that he can do that when he turns down Madge's tempting offer to sell his talents to the new Anglo-French film company. He demonstrates it again when he puts up all the money he has to save the aging Mr. Mars from the equivalent of the dog pound, meaning that his pockets will be empty at the end as they were at the beginning. Murdoch's Jake Donaghue is almost ready to be an artist.

Anna's song comes as a reminder of the price he has to pay in personal satisfaction if he is going to follow through his new-found commitment to art. Anna's song does not point to the future, as the jazz song does in Nausea, because it is not a promise of who Jake will create. It refers rather to the past, to his pursuit of Anna, to the frustration of his desire for meaningful companionship, to a love that can never be. Art for Murdoch requires pain and renunciation, but it begins with attention to the mystery of things. That is why the story ends, not with the song, but with Jake turning his attention to Mrs Tinckham's cat Maggie. Maggie, it turns out, has just given birth to four kittens. Two of them are pure Siamese, one is a tabby, and the other is tabby and white. None of them are half tabby and half Siamese as we might expect them to be. What accounts for such a strange and varied litter? Art for Murdoch, it would seem, begins with the contemplation of such mysteries.

University of Alabama

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Delos Press will publish Iris Murdoch's essay 'The Existentialist Political Myth', first published in The Socratic Digest, in an edition limited to 225.

***

Iris Murdoch and John Bayley will both be giving papers (or at least talking) at the Centenary Conference on Robert Browning that is to take place at Christ Church College, Oxford, this summer from the 22nd to the 25th August.

***

There is news that Iris Murdoch has completed yet another novel and that it is now in the hands of her publishers.

***

John Burke brings to our attention that there is an entry in the third edition of Benet's Readers Encyclopedia (1987) on Iris Murdoch that, though certainly positive enough, does not much add to the information included in the second edition (1965). The newest entry extends the list of novels by a few,

but oddly enough leaves out some that are considered among her best (The Nice and the Good, A Fairly Honourable Defeat, The Black Prince, A Word Child) while including other less celebrated titles such as The Sandcastle, Henry and Cato, and Nuns and Soldiers. Moreover, while three of her novels Under the Net, The Bell, and An Unofficial Rose) rated individual entries in 1965, those same entries have been retained in the 1987 edition, but no new entries have been added. In John Burke's words, 'Time seems to have stood still at The Readers Encyclopedia'.

Barbara Stevens Heusel conducted an interview with Iris Murdoch in July 1987 which was published in the University of Windsor Review (Winter 1988).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Christine Evans is organizing a session entitled 'Iris Murdoch: Her French Connections' for the NEMLA Conference to be held in Toronto in 1990. She invites papers (not over 8 double-spaced pages in length) or proposals for papers on the topic of Murdoch and her interest in French literature and philosophy. Such possible focuses might include: Murdoch and the French new novel, France in Murdoch's novels, Murdoch and Raymond Queneau, Simone Weil, Jean-Paul Sartre. Please send papers of proposals before September 1, 1989 to:

Christine Ann Evans
Lesley College
Undergraduate School
29 Mellen Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY NEWS

Caroline Webb of Wellesley College was elected vice president of the Iris Murdoch Society at the meeting of the society in New Orleans during the Modern Language Association Conference.

****

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Christine Ann Evans
Editor
Iris Murdoch Newsletter
Lesley College
29 Mellen Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

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THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It will appear yearly, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive a Newsletter, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10, couple $15, student/retiree $5) to:

Dr Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
c/o Department of English
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3520
Or
501 Jones Ferry Rd., Apt. P-9
Carrboro, NC 27510

The Iris Murdoch Newsletter

Summer 1990

THE BOARD MEETING OF THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
(3:00 p.m. Thursday, December 29, 1989, in Washington D.C.)

FROM: Dennis Moore (919) 942-3186
Department of English
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599-3520

[Present: John BURKE, President; Caroline WEBB, Vice President; Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Secretary-Treasurer; Christine Ann EVANS, Newsletter Editor; and Dennis MOORE, Board Member.]

BURKE called the meeting to order, in his room at the Washington Hilton, shortly after 3 p.m. HEUSEL distributed copies of the Secretary-Treasurer's report, showing a current total of 27 members.

[Item: Dame Iris' impending visit to the States.] HEUSEL also passed around a personal letter from Dame Iris, confirming that she will visit New York in February to receive the Medal of Honor from the National Arts Club.

[Item: discussion of most recent novel.] Group discussed The Message to the Planet; BURKE described pattern of publication: each novel appears in England in the fall [in time for consideration for the Booker Prize, HEUSEL pointed out], and then in an American edition around the first of the year.

[Item: membership.] HEUSEL distributed copies of membership list, and WEBB reported that a couple of new people have signed up but have yet to pay dues.

[Item: panel for MLA convention.] HEUSEL reported that Elizabeth Dipple has not yet responded to her suggestion for proposing a panel for the Modern Language Association.]

[Item: articles for Society's Newsletter.] BURKE suggested contacting Professor Dipple to remind her about her offer to write up, for our Newsletter, an account of the dramatization of The Black Prince; group agreed that BURKE should follow up on behalf of the Board. MOORE offered to write up the February presentation, which he, HEUSEL and Cheryl BOVE will attend.

[Item: presentation at conference.] HEUSEL reported that she will give a paper on Murdoch on February 22, the day after Dame Iris receives the award in New York City; the paper will be at the Conference on Twentieth-Century Literature at the University of Louisville.

[Item: Murdoch biography.] BURKE reported that he has written Andrew Wilson to ask whether the latter will indeed be Dame Iris' biographer; he has not yet received a reply.

[Item: Murdoch interview.] Group discussed advantages of including an interview with Dame Iris in the Society's Newsletter. MOORE suggested that BURKE arrange a written interview, with questions and answers to be published in the Newsletter. WEBB proposed that in the next issue we solicit questions from readers, so that we could submit a list of questions from the Society. In discussing possible questions, the group mentioned such topics as the role of enchanters in her fiction and the significance of Salman Rushdie's ordeal. Group agreed that it would be wise to ask Dame Iris in advance to participate.

[Item: Secretary-Treasurer's report.] HEUSEL distributed copies for discussion. . Regarding the expense of publishing the Newsletter, EVANS said she will know by mid-January about a possible grant. WEBB moved, BURKE seconded approval of Secretary-Treasurer's report, which passed unanimously.

[Item: Memberships.] WEBB has contacted nine prospective members, whose names she has obtained through bibliographies and informal contacts; two new

members have to pay their dues. EVANS sent a copy of the Newsletter, with an invitation to join the Society, to each person who attended the recent conference in the Netherlands.

[Item: Membership meeting, 4:00 p.m.] Discussion continued without formal adjournment; for details, please see minutes of that 4:00 p.m. meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
(4:00 p.m. Thursday, December 28,1989 in Washington D.C.)

[Present: John BURKE, President; Christine Ann EVANS, Newsletter Editor; Lana FAULKS, new member; Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Secretary-Treasurer; Randy MALAMUD, new member; Dennis MOORE, Board Member; and Caroline WEBB, Vice President.]

Meeting began with informal discussion, a continuation of 3:00 p.m. Board meeting (for details, please see minutes of that 3:00 p.m. meeting). Like the Board meeting, this meeting was at BURKE's room at the Washington Hilton.

[Item: discussion of the Murdoch manuscripts in Iowa City.] Group discussed richness of materials available at the University of Iowa library. Working there last May, for example, HEUSEL discovered Murdoch's note to herself in manuscript of The Black Prince, on page facing an especially heavily revised portion of Francis Marloe's Postscript: "Absurdity Francis."

[Item: discussion of Murdoch's fiction.] Group enjoyed discussing various ways Dame Iris has portrayed Americans as characters.

[Item: article on Murdoch.] BURKE reported that Vanity Fair printed an article by James Atlas at the same time that American edition of The Book and the Brotherhood appeared.

[Item: proposals for special sessions for MLA conventions.] BURKE summarized response by Phyllis Franklin to the proposal he submitted to the Modern Language Association last year on behalf of the Society: our proposal had merit but came too soon after the 1987 MLA panel. He added that his experience on MLA Delegate Assembly convinces him that it is becoming increasingly difficult to arrange single-author panels.

Group discussed approaches that might make subsequent proposals more likely to succeed. More emphasis on discussion might be helpful; topics might include ambiguities and/or homo-eroticism in Murdoch's fiction. Possible titles include "The Ethics of Androgyny"; "The Ethics of Sexuality"; "Sexualities and Murdoch"; and even "The F-Word in Murdoch: Freud, Androgyny, and Homo-Eroticism."

After considerable imaginative discussion, group agreed to submit two proposals for the MLA convention (which will meet in Chicago December 27-30): BURKE will resubmit last year's proposal, and WEBB will submit a second one.

[Item: NEMLA panel.] EVANS reported that she will chair a panel on Murdoch at the Northeast Modern Language Association meeting and that her panelists will include Cheryl BOVE, John BURKE, and Lisa HEIJN.

[Item: approval of minutes.] Group approved minutes of last year's Annual Meeting and Membership Meeting. MOORE agreed to submit minutes of both of today's meetings to EVANS for the Newsletter as quickly as possible.

[Item: elections.] Group named Lana FAULKS to first opening that materializes on the Board and agreed that everyone on the Board and in an elective office is to continue in his or her present capacity unless there is any particular problem in doing so.

[Item: next year's meetings.] As is the tradition within the Society, there will be two meetings in conjunction with the Modern Language Association, which meets next in Chicago: a Board Meeting followed by a Membership Meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned shortly before 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member

Secretary-Treasurer's Report, The Iris Murdoch Society

Memberships: we have 27 in 1989. (We had in 31 in 1988 and 1987.)

Dollars and cents:

Income, December 17, 1988, to date:

Donation:		$ 20.00
Memberships:		
23 regular memberships (1989)		230.00
4 student memberships (1989)		20.00
7 regular renewals (for 1990)		70.00
1 student renewal (for 1990)		5.00
Interest, December 17, 1988, to date:		36.00
Subtotal:		$ 381.60

Expenditures, December 17, 1988 to date:

January 1989: reimbursing portion of loan from Dean Mullen		$ 25.00
July 21, 1989: reimbursing newsletter editor for mailing expenses		120.24
December 1989: reimbursing secretary-treasurer for out-of-pocket expenses:		15.95
1989 postage:	12.00	
1989 photocopying:	2.52	
1989 envelopes:	1.43	
Subtotal:		$ 161.19
Net increase since December 17, 1988: (381.60-161.19)		220.41
Balance brought foward:		567.24
New Balance:		$ 787.65

Reconciling latest bank statement, dated December 13:

Balance on statement		723.42
plus deposit, December 19	$70.00	793.42
plus deposit, December 21	5.00	798.42
minus withdrawal, December 21	15.95	782.47
plus petty cash on hand	5.18	787.65
New balance:		787.65

Recommendation:
let's reimburse Thomas Mullen another $25 of the $125 balance remaining on his very generous loan of $150.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary-Treasurer,
IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

Two Accounts of Iris Murdoch's Visit to New York City to Receive National Arts Club Medal of Honor

News from National Arts Club Literary Award Dinner Honoring Iris Murdoch

Cheryl Bove
Ball State University

Important news came out of the National Arts Club's Literary Award Dinner honoring Iris Murdoch last February 21st. Murdoch scholars who have been waiting for the publication of her latest philosophical work, now ten years in progress, will be delighted to learn that James Atlas's introductory remarks at the dinner indicate that Dame Iris has just finished her work, which she has described as a "rethinking of Philosophy from Plato onwards."

Iris Murdoch's remarks in the acceptance of the Medal of Honor for Literature included three areas: the recent events in Eastern Europe, brief thoughts on the nature of the novel, and her views on deconstruction. She expects an influx of works by innumerable Eastern European writers who have, until now, been unable to distribute their work for political reasons. She also made an aesthetic point about the novel, saying it consists of stories about people conveying "many deep truths about the individual." But her greatest emphasis was directed at her "current hobby horse," which she described as the post-modernist "menace," the deconstructionism promulgated by Jacques Derrida. Murdoch agrees that meaning cannot exist in isolation, but she points out that Ludwig Wittgenstein made this point long before Jacques Derrida. Derrida has combined the ideas of Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, and Wittgenstein into a metaphysical system which Murdoch views as a new version of determinism where people are told they are not responsible for their actions because they are not free, and that "reality lies in some sort of system." For the first time, Murdoch clearly details her main objections to deconstruction: According to deconstructionists, language plays, meaning plays, and very few exceptional people are able to play with language while the rest of us are in the dark. This idea obliterates freedom, truth, the individual present, morality, and the Divine. The deconstructing critic is elevated above the ordinary writer who doesn't have the technique. The critics' deconstruction of the text is then the work of art. Then students, instead of happily reading works, have to spend their time reading odd books written in jargon by structuralists. (Acceptance remarks February 21,1990)

While in New York, Murdoch was also interviewed by James Atlas; this extensive interview will appear in Paris Review after follow-up questions have been submitted to Murdoch in writing and she has had time to edit her remarks; it will also be published as an individual volume in Viking's "Writers at Work" series. Interviews already published on the Award Dinner include: Sara Booth Conroy, The Washington Post (March 11,1990): F1, F6-F7; and John Russell, New York Times (February 22,1990): C15, C20.

Dame Iris Murdoch visited New York City in February to receive the National Arts Club's twenty-second annual Medal of Honor for Literature. She is shown here with Barbara Stevens Heusel, founder and secretary-treasurer of the international Iris Murdoch Society.

DAME IRIS RECEIVES MEDAL OF HONOR IN MANHATTAN

Dennis Moore
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill

At a black-tie dinner in New York City Wednesday night, February 21, **Dame Iris Murdoch** received the Medal of Honor for Literature from the National Arts Club.

Martha Nussbaum, Professor of Philosophy, Classics, and Comparative Literature at Brown University, was among the four special speakers on the evening's program, along with **Louis Auchinloss**, recipient of the Club's first such award in 1969; James Atlas, an editor of the New York Times Magazine; and the **Honorable Gordon W. Jewkes**, her Majesty's Consul-General for New York. Master of Ceremonies was **Dr. Timothy S. Healy**, president of the New York Public Library and former president of Georgetown University.

Three members of the International Iris Murdoch Society attended the black-tie dinner: **Barbara Stevens Heusel**, founder and Secretary-Treasurer of the Society; **Cheryl Bove**, and **Dennis Moore**. At Dame Iris' suggestion, Dr. Heusel was seated at the dias.

During her brief acceptance speech, Dame Iris referred to Jacques Derrida as "that brilliant magician" and described his approach as "destructive" and "a menace." The plausibility of post-structuralism, she insisted, "rests upon a number of things which are of themselves comprehensible but which have been joined together in a misleading way."

"We are faced with a rather chilling picture," she continued. "Derrida and one or two poets are able to play with language, like seals sporting with a ball at the surface of the water, while the rest of us are down in the dark. This approach is destructive."

Sarah Booth Conroy, a staff writer for the Washington Post, also attended the program and wrote an extensive article--"The Lasting Powers of Iris Murdoch: Philosophic, Intuitive, Intriguing, Precise--the Novelist at 70"--which appeared in the Post's Style section on Sunday March 11.

This prestigious award from the National Arts Club places Dame Iris in the distinguished company of such recipients as W.H. Auden, Saul Bellow, Anthony Burgess, Robertson Davies, Carlos Fuentes, Allen Ginsberg, James Merrill, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Barbara Tuchman, John Updike, Eudora Welty, and Tennessee Williams.

Iris Murdoch and Her French Connections

Christine Evans of Lesley College organized a session entitled "Iris Murdoch and Her French Connections" for the 1990 NEMLA Conference held in Toronto. The abstracts of the three papers presented at the panel follow. If you wish more information on any of these papers, please contact the writer directly.

Iris Murdoch and the Ghost of Jean-Paul Sartre

John J. Burke, Jr.
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa

It has always been evident that Jean-Paul Sartre was a major influence on Iris Murdoch's career as a writer. What may not be so evident is how pervasive and how deep that influence may be. It can easily be underestimated because Sartre's influence was largely negative and therefore nearly invisible. But he is present even when he is not named, present like a ghost, haunting the stories Iris Murdoch tells.

It is highly doubtful in my veiw that Murdoch would ever have become the writer she has become if it had not been for Jean-Paul Sartre. The evidence of this begins with some identifiable echoes of Sartre's novel La Nausee (1938) that can be found at crucial points in the narrative of Under the Net (1954). However, these are the first indications of Murdoch's methodic doubt about philosophy's ability to provide workable solutions to the puzzles of life. This theme reoccurs in all the novels that followed, but The Time of Angels (1966) is probably the most striking treatment of this theme. In that novel we see in its bleakest form Murdoch's vision of the chilling consequences of the personal "liberation" brought about by modern philosophy.

The Philosopher's Pupil (1983) is a more recent treatment of this theme. There we watch a successful professional philosopher, John Robert Rozanov, brought low by the unruly workings of an all too human nature.

The Enchanting Landscape: France as a Setting in Iris Murdoch's Under the Net and Nuns and Soldiers

Cheryl Bove
Ball State University

Iris Murdoch's detailed and close observation superbly conveys the feeling of two diverse French settings, the frenzied carnivalesque Paris of her youth and the magnificent wilds of sun-struck Provence which she regularly visits now. In both circumstances the French landscape is seen as enchanting, and the plotting follows the tradition of the staid British being captivated and transformed by the more relaxed French atmosphere. Significantly, for Murdoch, this change also involves moral awareness, for both novels' main characters experience epiphanies which result in self-knowledge, and both undertake new directions in their lives due to their French experiences.

Jake Donahue, the picaresque hero of Under the Net, follows Murdoch's own post-war Paris haunts. For Jake, Paris is a city of lost love, and he takes the reader on a tour of the sacred places on the left bank which he had shared with Anna Quentin, including especially detailed and moving descriptions of La Fontaine Medicis in the Jardin du Luxembourg, with its reflecting pool and the Ottin statue of the lovers Acis and Galathee watched-over by Polyphemus. Later that evening he reminisces about Anna while watching Bastille Day fireworks and fragmented images of the cityscape in the Seine. Sighting Anna across the Seine, Jake follows her to another of their favorite places, the Jardin des Tuileries, but loses her when she turns into one of the avenues of chestnut trees. Then begins a futile, nightmarish pursuit through the garden, where Jake imagines himself mocked by its statues.

A later work, Nuns and Soldiers (1980), contains another failed artist, Tim Reede, whose life is changed forever by the influence of a different French landscape. Initially Tim is sent to France by Gertrude Openshaw, the widow of Tim's benefactor, where Tim is to become caretaker for the Openshaw's French cottage and eventually arrange for its sale. This part of France is wild and sun-washed. Mountains and rock formations appear in the distance. An olive grove and a canal actually exist, for the setting is based on Stephen and Natasha Spender's Provencal farmhouse, which the Bayleys regularly visit. But here Murdoch develops a mythic landscape where Gertrude swims in a crystal pool and becomes, for Tim, a goddess. Tim worries that they have been enchanted by the landscape. In fact, their London friends object to their marriage plans, and their relationship falters once they return to London.

However, France has a healing effect on both artists' work and on their relationships with other people. For Jake, Paris remains a city of bitter-sweet memories of lost love, but he does rediscover artistic truth, and he vows to pursue his own art, rather than translating Jean Pierre Breteuil's novels. For Tim, his relationship with Gertrude cannot develop in a staid and disapproving London, and he can only achieve the courage to save it in France. Recognizing the connection between life, love, and art, he is able to experience both Eros and art under the mythic French landscape.

Marcus Vallar, the new messiah in The Message to the Planet (1989), is also brought low in the end. But what may be more noteworthy about this latest novel is the way it makes a bold new statement even as it conforms to the patterns of the past. There may again be no message to the planet, but it is more important to notice that the planet clearly wants a message. Our collective hunger for a vital new spiritual experience, even when misdirected, is the best sign of what and who we are, and of hope for the future.

Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch's Saints

Lisa Heijn
Brooklyn, New York

Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch have quite distinct temperaments, yet strikingly similar theories. The paper begins with an exploration of Murdoch's use, in her philosophy, of many of Weil's concepts, such as "love" and "attention." A comparision of the two women's philosophies follows. Both confront the problem of how to live morally amidst the confusion of the modern world, where, as Murdoch puts it, "thought and emotion ...no longer...move together," and both respond with philosophies emphasizing an attentiveness to the Good, or God, that is at once intellectual and loving. For Weil, however, intellect and emotion fuse in her persistent belief in God's reality, and this fusion is reflected in the complexity and richness of much of her work. Murdoch, unable to trust in God or a concrete notion of the Good, proceeds more cautiously. Intellectually certain that an emotional commitment to the Good is feasible, she is only able to enact that commitment convincingly in some of her mature works of literature.

A discussion of some of Murdoch's "saintly" characters, such as Tallis in A Fairly Honourable Defeat or Ann in An Unofficial Rose, illustrates the ways the unimaginable nature of the Good that her characters move towards creates difficulties in our imagining them. This is not necessarily an aesthetic problem. Our alienation from the characters forces us to put Murdoch's philosophy of "attention" into practice, to interpret the witty convoluted plots that arise from the characters' alienation from one another. Yet with Nuns and Soldiers, and the "saintly" character of Anne, Murdoch seems to fuse thought and emotion. She allows herself and her reader an easier flow of sympathy with her characters, without worrying that this sympathy may be false or flawed by a hazy concept of the Good. Thus Murdoch writes at least two types of novels in her efforts both accurately to represent and present a solution to the problems of modern life.

A Range of American Responses to The Message to the Planet

Christine Ann Evans
Lesley College

Publications as different as the New York Times Book Review and USA Today responded to the American appearance of Iris Murdoch's latest novel, The Message to the Planet, a fact that attests to the range of her audience and the familiarity of her name. Both Bruce Allen's review in USA Today (February 23, 1990) and that of Anatole Broyard in The New York Times, devote much time and attention to relating the many and complex plot articulations that characterize this and Murdoch's other novels. Allen's very favorable review closes with an homage to Murdoch's ability to write a novel of ideals "that feels as deeply as it thinks."

Broyard's critique, entitled "In the Emergency Ward of the Mind," represents at one and the same time a serious and at moments flip attempt to place this novel within Murdoch's oeuvre while placing that oeuvre within the "great tradition" of the Western European novel. The critic recognizes resonances with other novelists, a kinship of spirit to which Murdoch would cheerfully acquiesce ("When she writes about moral predicaments here she sounds like Henry James on crack") and places the novel's towering philosopher-enchanter-schizophrenic, Marcus Vallar, within a continuum of literary characters become types that includes Don Quixote, Dr. Faustus, Raskolnikov and Captain Ahab. This insertion of Murdoch's novels and her characters into the "best and brightest" of the Western pantheon certainly represents a sign of her increasing "canonization."

Broyard notes, too, the concerns and novelistic strategies that this latest novel develops from earlier Murdoch works: the power of the charismatic "enchanter" figure; the role and importance of the uncanny; the way love functions to hold together and impel the entire novel (much as "Arab tribes in North Africa used mud to build whole cities"); the plot turns that, in this and her other novels, seem to "hit some gigantic fan."

Although Broyard is unwilling to vouch for the place this novel will have in any future canon, her own or that of Western literature (is it merely an interesting novel or a great one?), he fully recognizes its challenge and fascination, and admits himself unable to exhaust its complexities by explication. This conclusion constitutes proof enough of the novel's greatness.

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

John J. Burke, Jr. has organized and had accepted a special session for the Modern Language Association Conference in Chicago in December 1990 entitled "Iris Murdoch's Fiction: The New Directions." The participants in the panel will be Peter J. Conradi ("Turning Eastward: Iris Murdoch's Christian Buddhism"), Cheryl Bove ("The Changes in Murdoch's Women"), John J. Burke, Jr. ("From Existentialism to Exorcism: Murdoch's Changing Artistic Role"), with Richard Todd as respondent.

.....

The Iris Murdoch Society will hold a meeting for the membership at large at the MLA Conference in Chicago in John J. Burke, Jr.'s hotel room. Look for notices of this meeting on the billboards, or contact John Burke or another of the Society's officers directly by way of the hotel phones for further information.

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Iris Murdoch revealed at the awards ceremony of the National Arts Club that she had just finished the book of philosophy that she had been working on for the last ten years.

.....

Iris Murdoch has agreed to a request made by the Iris Murdoch Society to respond to specific questions members might pose about her work. If members have questions to ask, please submit them to any officer of the Society for consideration.

.....

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Christine Ann Evans
Editor
Iris Murdoch Newsletter
Lesley College
29 Mellen Street,
Cambridge, MA 02138

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THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December, 1986. It appears yearly, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive a Newsletter, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual $10, couple $15, student/retiree $5) to:

Dr. Barbara Stevens Heusel
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
The Department of English
Northwest Missouri State University
Maryville, Missouri 64468-6001

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The Iris Murdoch Society wishes to acknowledge the generous support of Dean Carol Moore of the Undergraduate School of Lesley College in the production of this Newsletter.

Iris Murdoch News Letter

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Summer 1991 • Number 5

University of Alabama, Dept. of English, Box 870244, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

IRIS MURDOCH ANSWERS OUR QUESTIONS

Titles: I care very much about titles (and have a clause in my contracts that they should not be changed in other languages, from a literal translation, without consulting me). The titles come variously, often halfway through (though I start with many possible ones). Or it may be there at the start—or be altered at the end. The title must be the *name* of the book, its proper name and stating what the book is *about*. *The Message to the Planet* was originally called *The Dragon's Riddle* and then *The Language of the Planet*. I had a lot of trouble with *The Philosopher's Pupil* too. I think one must often wait patiently for the book to *tell you* its name. I like all my titles. *Nuns and Soldiers*—there are two nuns (Gertrude is described by one of the other characters as unworldly, like a nun) and Tim is described as being a soldier, certainly not an officer (like the count) but an ingenious scrounging private. *The Good Apprentice* is, I would have hoped clearly, Stuart. He is the one who is always trying to do good, attempting to be virtuous and saintly without belief in God.

Foreign Countries, I have visited a great many, though usually not staying there very long: all European countries west and east, except Albania and Bulgaria. Egypt, Israel, Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Iceland, Singapore. The countries which have influenced and moved me, and deeply (apart from, in Europe, France and Italy especially) are Russia, India, and Japan. I have been only twice to Japan, twice to India, once to Russia, but I feel extremely at home and emotionally connected with these places. In the case of India I was early introduced through reading Kipling's great novel *Kim* at an early age—(my father was a dedicated novel reader, and I read novels soon after I could read)—and have read it often since. Also, I was at school (a girls' boarding school in England) and at college (in Oxford) with Indira Ghandi. We kept in touch and I saw her both in India & in England. I have had many splendid Indian pupils. I love India, its people, its attachment to religion, its beauty. My literary introduction to Japan was through the *Tale of Genji* (another great novel written by a court lady about 1000 years ago). I like the weirdness of Japan, its strangeness, its whole different impenetrable in some way frightening being. Russia is near home, through the great Russian novels (novels again) and the magnificent language (I learnt Russian over a long period and used to read Pushkin and other writers in Russian—but am beginning to forget much of it now.) I love Russia and the Russian people and their thought. I like Dostoevsky's reflections on religion. Religion indeed ties me to both India and Russia, and I have learnt a lot about Buddhism, especially in Japan.

There is more to say, but I must stop here.

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY: MINUTES, BOARD MEETING

1:00 p.m., Saturday, 29 December 1990
Chicago, Illinois

As is its custom, the international Iris Murdoch Society met in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. President John BURKE called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. in his room at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. Present were Cheryl BOVE, John BURKE, Peter CONRADI, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Dennis MOORE, and a distinguished visitor, Richard TODD.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: HEUSEL distributed copies of her report, which the group discussed. She reported that the new balance in the treasury is $1,008.78. She also raised the question of how to count membership money received relatively late in the calendar year: whether to apply it toward that year or the next. The consensus was that the Secretary-Treasurer may use his or her discretion in counting such income. MOORE moved approval of the report, and BURKE seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Membership of Executive Committee: BURKE announced that at the membership meeting he will step down as President and will nominate HEUSEL as his successor. The group discussed the importance of having a strong newsletter and discussed the possibility of BURKE's being the new editor. BURKE proposed that BOVE be Secretary-Treasurer and that CONRADI be Vice President, and the group discussed the advantages of having the Vice President serve as a membership chairperson. CONRADI acknowledged that he had experienced problems, during his tenure as a visiting scholar in Poland, receiving mail; he suggested that mail be sent via his London address and gave everyone present his telephone number in Cracow, where he is teaching at the Jagiellonian University.

Announcements: *Twentieth Century Literature* has awarded David Gordon a prize for his comprehensive article on Murdoch's fiction. In keeping with the earlier discussion regarding the duties of the Vice President vis-a-vis recruiting members, the group agreed it would be a good idea for the new Vice President to write Professor Gordon a congratulatory note. Forthcoming from Garland in June 1991 is the Murdoch bibliography compiled by BOVE and John Fletcher. TODD described a recent article in *Mosaic* on food in *The Sea, the Sea.*

Progress toward Affiliated-Society status: While the Modern Language Association supposedly has a moratorium on considering single-author societies' applications to become affiliated societies, the 1990 convention program includes organizational sessions for a number of such groups (e.g., new organizations focusing on Margaret Atwood, John Donne, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman).

Projects for the coming year: At its December 1989 meeting in Washington, the Society had agreed to submit two proposals: the one that resulted in the panel chaired by BURKE ("Iris Murdoch's Fiction: The New Directions," Sunday morning, 30 December) and another prepared and submitted by Caroline Webb. The group discussed the advantages of resubmitting the latter, perhaps in a slightly revised form.

Moreover, TODD suggested proposing a session on unauthorized readings of Murdoch's texts, and CONRADI mentioned androgyny as a fertile topic; BURKE offered to take on the work of preparing a proposal on the latter.

Adjournment: At approximately 2:00 p.m., the meeting adjourned so that the membership meeting proper could begin on time.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member
Department of English
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY: MINUTES, ANNUAL MEETING

2:00 p.m., Saturday, 29 December 1990,
Chicago, Illinois

Immediately following adjournment of the Society's Board Meeting, President John BURKE called the Annual Meeting to order, also in his room at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. Present were Cheryl BOVE, John BURKE, Peter CONRADI, Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, Louis MARTZ, Dennis MOORE, Barbara STUART, and Richard TODD.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: HEUSEL presented her report and reminded the group that the Society has two honorary members, Dame Iris and Dean Thomas Mullen of Wake Forest University. CONRADI moved approval of the report, and BURKE seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Memberships: BOVE asked about the dues for members from countries outside the United States. After a discussion, the group agreed that the dues are to be payable as equivalent to U.S. dollars. TODD proposed wording the necessary motion so that it referred to payment of the Society's dues "in U.S. dollars or the discretionary equivalent"; the motion also reaffirmed that membership in the Society is open to all people who are interested in Dame Iris and in her writings. HEUSEL moved passage of the motion, and MARTZ seconded; passed unanimously.

Election of officers: BURKE explained that Caroline Webb has resigned as Vice President because of her being out of the country during part of the current academic year. He then presented the names discussed at the board meeting, with the following members to hold these offices until the Society's next meeting, which will coincide with the Modern Language Association convention in San Francisco in December 1991: HEUSEL, founder and Secretary-Treasurer since December 1986, as President; CONRADI as Vice President, with duties as the Society's Membership Chair; BOVE as Secretary-Treasurer; and BURKE as editor of the Society's News Letter. Treating BURKE's proposal as a nomination, the group discussed the names and elected the new officers unanimously.

Proposals for MLA Panels: The group reviewed the system for allotting spaces on the annual MLA convention's program to various types of organizations: an allied organization has two such spaces guaranteed, and a division has three—and proposals for special sessions must compete for the remaining slots. BURKE pointed out that, at its 1989 meeting, the Society had agreed to submit two proposals (see minutes for 29 December 1990 Board Meeting). After a stimulating, polyphonic discussion, the group arrived at a tenative consensus: the Society will again submit two proposals, one of which will be a revised version of the one prepared last year by Caroline Webb, and the other of which is to be on one of the two possibilities first discussed at the Board Meeting, i.e., (1) androgyny, and (2) authorized and unauthorized readings of Murdoch's texts.

Working from this tenative consensus, the group had a spirited discussion of several approaches. One cluster of topics included refugees, exiles, people from other cultures, and displaced persons; another suggestion was interlopers; another was enchanter-figures, who, in Murdoch's fiction, are often from Central Europe. (CONRADI briefly described Murdoch's experience with the camps for DPs, or displaced persons, shortly after World War II.) TODD proposed combining several of the ideas under discussion, suggesting as a possible title "Authorized Readings in Murdoch's Fiction: Androgyny, Exile, and Thought." The group agreed that proposals cutting across disciplinary lines would likely be more attractive to the people who must select panels for the MLA convention.

STUART suggested incorporating a prominent figure into a panel proposal to serve as a respondent; the group eagerly discussed two possibilities, Robert Scholes and Louis MARTZ, and the latter graciously agreed to participate in whatever way would help the Society.

Working toward closure, the group agreed that the Society would propose these two broad topics: (1) *gender and sexuality*, with HEUSEL and STUART reworking the proposal submitted by Caroline Webb; HEUSEL agreed to ask Robert Scholes to serve as respondent; and (2) *androgyny*, with BURKE preparing a proposal that would include MARTZ as respondent. Moreover, the group agreed to consider proposing such topics next year as "sense of place in Murdoch" and "deracination as displacement in Murdoch."

News Letter: BOVE pointed out the advantages of standardizing the numbering of issues and the format and layout.

Dues: New and renewing members present dutifully submitted checks to the new Secretary-Treasurer for the coming year.

Adjournment: At approximately 3:20 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member
Department of English
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036

REVIEW

□ *Iris Murdoch: Figures of Good.* By Suguna Ramanathan. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990. 243 pp. $39.95.

Suguna Ramanathan's new book represents a welcome addition to Murdoch scholarship. Elizabeth Dipple's 1982 *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit* closes with a study of *Nuns and Soldiers*, while Peter Conradi's *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist*, first published in 1986 with a revised second edition appearing in 1989, focuses on novels from *Under the Net* to *The Sea, the Sea*, discussing the four following novels in more cursory "conclusion" and "postscriptum" chap-

ters. In addressing the novels from Murdoch's mid-career to the present (*Henry and Cato* to *The Message to the Planet*), Ramanathan offers the major study that Murdoch's later fiction eminently deserves.

Ramanathan selects this group of novels because she argues that the good manifests itself with a "new insistence" in them, provides their "deep structure" in a way that it did not previously in Murdoch's oeuvre. In the line that connects Brendan Craddock of *Henry and Cato* to Ludens in *The Message to the Planet*, Ramanathan identifies a growing complexity and refinement upon the notion of the good and the figure who represents it. She traces the successive elimination of "props" to the imagination of god and good—the refining away of consolatory images and mythology in *Henry and Cato*, the "unselfing" at the heart of *The Sea, the Sea*, the apotheosis of a certain blankness in the figure of Jenkin Riderhood in *The Book and the Brotherhood*:

> He is a secularized, ageing Brendan without the charm, the intellect and the mystery; he is a James without the interesting Eastern spirituality; he is an Anne without her struggle, and Eastcote without his stillness and a Stuart without his idealism. There has been a progressive discarding, and Murdoch now presents a figure who is virtually unnoticeable till the novel gathers gradually to his death. (175)

Ramanathan looks unblinkingly at the increasingly less "personalized" and less attractive figures of the good in Murdoch's novels; she recognizes their limitations yet does not see these as compromising any fitness to represent the good. And she admits the background din that makes it so difficult for good to act in any coherent way in the world. Ramanathan accepts as a first premise the fact that good need not be perfected to serve as an important beacon, and as a second premise that all of these figures of good do indeed appear flawed, perhaps ineffectual, but that such limitations comprise good's very mode of existence in this world. "In the world's terms, good is not powerful or sovereign; yet the good figures stubbornly haunt the memory as it contemplates the Murdochian universe" (5).

Ramanathan possesses a background and training that suit her admirably for this study. Iris Murdoch reveals a knowledge of both Western and Eastern philosophy and religious tradition in her novels, and while other critics have acknowledged and studied her treatment of the Western tradition, they have merely touched on her interest in the Eastern. Ramanathan's background allows her to comment insightfully on both. An Indian educated in India and the United States, she brings to this book an enviable breadth of knowledge. She discusses lucidly and elegantly such subjects as Pauline Christianity, Julian of Norwich, the Buddhist eight-fold path, Platonic visions of the good and contemporary liberation theology. Ramanathan decides, quite rightly, not to argue an "influence" or primacy of one or another philosopher, theologian, or religious tradition on Murdoch's thought, but posits them as parallel, independent realms that serve to illuminate her novels.

I have a slight quarrel with Ramanathan's stated rationale for focusing on this particular group of novels. She posits the point that the figures of good in the later novels are qualitatively different from similar earlier figures, a change that reveals Murdoch's new modes of conceiving of the good. I would have liked to see her argue this point. I want her to convince me that Uncle Theo of *The Nice and the Good* differs essentially in conception and function from these later figures. And Ramanathan cannot entirely confine herself to Murdoch's seven last novels. As she admits, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*'s Tallis Browne fits very well into her schema, and is in fact discussed at length in her introduction. In arguing the essential coherence of this group of novels against Murdoch's earlier works I think she may be overstating the point. I suspect that chronology rather than some more profound system dictated her choice of novels and that this quite valid logic of inclusion and exclusion should have been acknowledged.

Christine Anne Evans, *Lesley College*

REVIEW

□*A Female Vision of the City: London in the Novels of Five British Women.* By Christine Wick Sizemore. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989. 307 pp.

Christine Sizemore's work, *A Female Vision of the City: London in the Novels of Five British Women*, offers images of London in the works of Doris Lessing (the City as Palimpset); Margaret Drabble (the City as Network); Iris Murdoch (the City as Labyrinth); P. D. James (the City as Mosaic) and Maureen Duffy (the City as Archeological Dig). Citing literary criticism, psychological and feminist theory, urban theory, and urban literary criticism, Sizemore establishes a contemporary British women writers' vision of the city. She notes that while contemporary British male novelists are increasingly turning toward exotic or historic settings for their novels, British women

continue the tradition of writing about the city. Yet unlike many modernist writers such as Jean Rhys who depict a "particularly grim" urban vision, the contemporary British women writers celebrate the cityscape. They acknowledge the negative aspects of the city, yet they also depict its freedom, its possibilities, and its variety. Thus these women are reestablishing the balanced attitude toward the city that was typical of premodern times (21).

All of these novelists use images of the city which are feminine in nature, that is "nonorganic and nonhierarchical," and their women characters notice the connections between city spaces. This point is particularly appropriate in the chapter on Iris Murdoch's novels, for Sizemore makes a connection between Murdoch's moral philosophy, with its emphasis on otherness, and her portrayal of the City as labyrinth.

Sizemore argues that the image of the labyrinth is negative for male novelists (Dickens, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet), but that for Murdoch the labyrinth is related to other female images such as net and web. This is a labyrinth that is ambiguous and can sometimes be negotiated safely. Like Ariadne, who holds the thread of survival through the labyrinth, the female virtues (unselfish attachments) can guide Murdoch's characters towards spiritual redemption. Sizemore discusses *A Word Child* and *Nuns and Soldiers* to show how two male characters (Hilary Burde and Tim Reede) and two female characters (Anne Cavidge and Gertrude Openshaw) wander about London looking for salvation and/or direction in their lives. The men are fixated on landmarks and thus on themselves. Yet some small optimism comes at the end of their novels with their connections with others, though in Hilary's case it must be called tenuous. For Sizemore the Minotaur which must be killed is self-centeredness. Gertrude survives the "muddle" by attaching herself to others, and Anne illustrates yet another possibility, redemption by attachment to God.

Sizemore's treatment of Murdoch's London does not communicate the joyful discovery of the city to be found in *Under the Net*, something that was so vividly captured by Louis Martz's piece on the London novels. Nevertheless, the novels of the 1970s illustrate Sizemore's theory, and the labyrinth provides an effective and flexible image for her thesis. Sizemore's work also provides a new reading of Iris Murdoch from a feminist perspective.

This study, generally a closely-detailed observation of the novels, contains two (possibly printing?) errors, including one in which Hilary in *A Word Child* finds himself at St. Stephen's church looking at T. S. Eliot's "grave"—but there is a later reference to T. S. Eliot's memorial tablet, which *is* at St. Stephen's. Missing, too, are the extensive patternings made by Murdoch's characters as they pilgrimage to their favorite museums, hoping to gain insight from great art (another source of truth in Murdoch's moral philosophy). *The Sea, the Sea*, for example, has a beautiful set piece on the Wallace Collection. All in all, though, this is a viable critical study which enriches the texture of our vision of Iris Murdoch's London.

Cheryl Bove, *Ball State University*

NEWS ON THE PUBLICATION FRONT

Murdoch Article Wins Prize

Our members will be pleased to learn that a fine article on Murdoch's work by David J. Gordon was named winner of the 1990 *Twentieth Century Literature* Prize in Literary Criticism. David Gordon is professor of English at Hunter College and the Cuny Graduate Center, and previously the author of *D. H. Lawrence as Literary Critic, Literary Art and the Unconscious*, and *Bernard Shaw and the Comic Sublime*. This prize is awarded to the best essay submitted to *TCL* in a given year. Claude Rawson, professor of English at Yale University, served as the 1990 judge. Gordon's article is entitled "Iris Murdoch's Comedies of Unselfing." For those who would like to look it up, it can be found on pp. 115-36 in bound volume 36 of *TCL*. Gordon's emphasis on the Buddhist notion of unselfing in Murdoch's fiction lines him up conspicuously with Peter Conradi, who is cited on several occasions, along with Richard Todd and Elizabeth Dipple.

As Claude Rawson mentions in the citation, Gordon covers the large territory of the Murdoch world in a relatively small amount of space. He also makes the interesting suggestion that all of Murdoch's work tends to merge into a single oeurve, or, if you will, that all of her novels are one story. From that observation Gordon goes on to argue that the best way of looking at or discussing her work would involve a "cento approach," or a critical discussion that talks about everything at once.

There is much to be said for Gordon's point, but it also needs to be said that a cento approach would necessarily have a cramping effect on Murdoch criticism. It would limit professional discussion of her work only to those completely familiar with everything she has written. It would also make it difficult for readers to benefit from such discussions since they would

have to be familiar with all or most of her work in order to make sense out of what was being said, and that would necessarily be but a small percentage of Murdoch's readers. There has to be room in Murdoch criticism for discussions that respect the integrity of individual works and also for treatments that might be concerned with smaller groupings within the larger canon.

Publications Soon to Appear

We also have some information about forthcoming publications:

We have word from Gayle Swanson at Newberry College that *Studies in Short Fiction* will be publishing a piece on Iris Murdoch's only short story. Our preliminary information is that the article is by Deborah DeZure, and that it is entitled "The Perceiving Self as Gatekeeper: Choice in Iris Murdoch's 'Something Special.'" It is likely that the piece will appear this year.

Cheryl Bove, perhaps our most diligent student of Murdoch's work, has been working on a book with John Fletcher of the University of East Anglia that will be forthcoming from Garland Press in New York. It is first of all a descriptive bibliography of Murdoch's writing from the juvenalia to the present—poems, reviews, essays, contributions to other works, manuscripts, and of course the novels, both English and foreign translations. There will also be a bibliography of secondary materials. It will include articles, books, reviews, dissertations, interviews (broadcast and published), among other things, not only those in English but also where possible those in French, German, and other major European languages. This book promises to be a goldmine of information and an indispensable research tool for every serious student of Iris Murdoch.

Lindsey Tucker of the University of Miami is even now preparing a new collection of essays on Murdoch for G. K. Hall's British Writers Series.

We welcome news from our members. Please let us know about any publications on Iris Murdoch or anyone closely connected with her that you think our membership might like to know about. We will be happy to pass on the information.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

John J. Burke, Jr.
Department of English
Box 870244
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWS LETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December, 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the News Letter, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10; couple, $15; student/retiree, $5) to:

Dr. Cheryl K. Bove
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0460

The Iris Murdoch Society would like to thank SAMLA and the Department of English at the University of Alabama for their support. We would also like to extend personal thanks to John Barret, Bob and Chris Bell, and Lisa Hammond Rashley for their assistance in preparing this issue of *IMNL*.

Join us in San Francisco, 27–31 December!

Iris Murdoch News Letter

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University of Alabama, Dept. of English, Box 870244, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

A MAJOR NEW BOOK ON PHILOSOPHY

☐ *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. By Iris Murdoch. London: Chatto and Windus, 1992. 576 pp. £20.

The twentieth century has not always been kind to its veteran thinkers, so fast have its changes been. E.M. Forster ceased writing novels after 1924, silenced by modernity. H.G. Wells's last book was aptly entitled *Mind at the End of its Tether*. At a dinner-party in *The Good Apprentice*, Iris Murdoch's characters discuss the modern world: pornography, computers, structuralism, unending TV, a decay of the moral sense. The tone is dark and the future threatening. But Murdoch is a professional philosopher as well as a novelist. *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is her attempt to discuss recent changes in our ways of seeing the world from the standpoint of philosophy. "We cannot see the future but we must fear it intelligently."

"Intelligently" is the word. When Dame Helen Gardner sought to defend traditional literary and humane values in her last book *In Defense of the Imagination* she appeared supercilious and ill-informed, firing her pistols into the night at unknown foes. Dame Iris carries bigger guns, and is a wiser and altogether more formidable opponent. She knows that the first rule of war is understanding your enemy. There are hard things said of our condition: for example, "How can such a terrible planet dare have any art at all?" She hates and fears TV, the dictator's friend, equal to the Platonic Cave, or the lowest state of illusion. But though the contemporary world sobers her, it has not soured her generosity of spirit.

Her argument continues the long, complex conversation among Great Minds that has constituted Western philosophy. The blurb suggests that the book contains something for everyone. Maybe. But, though there are passages to delight the student of her fiction, much of her argument is detailed and technical.

Our time is one of "demythologisation," a key word here: the single God goes, and with him the old ideas of the unique individual, and of the unified text or art-work. Are these cataclysmic changes irreversible? What can be rescued from them? The example of the anti-Communist revolutions of 1989 suggests that our conception of the individual as special, unique, different from his neighbor, may be hard to do away with. The peoples of Eastern Europe were ready to die to defend it.

Yet Murdoch's position is a paradoxical one. She has long pleaded for the demythologisation of, for example, Christianity. To survive, it must jettison its supernatural myths (Incarnation/Resurrection): Christ is to become the Buddha of the West, "What can we do now there's no God? This doesn't affect the mystical, or meditation." To pursue this line of thought: Murdoch wants demythologisation, but she does not want to lose the idea of transcendence, the ideas of good and evil, or the idea that people are capable of spiritual change.

This helps explain her chief loyalties in this book, and her chief enmities too. Her heroes are Plato (above

all), Kant, and Schopenhauer. Plato invents the idea that learning is spiritual, indeed invents the soul, invents the ideas of goodness and of morality as a difficult moral quest within which love-energy (eros) gets transmuted: what we perceive is progressively "demythologised" which means that as we change morally we come successively to see our last state of mind as illusory. She loves Plato because he offers demythologisation without losing transcendence. Indeed, "Plato understood our problems today." She loves Kant because he believes in duty, and thinks everyone instinctively understands the difference between good and evil. Murdoch agrees: relativism is mere intellectual posturing. She loves Schopenhauer because he marries Plato to Kant and adds Eastern asceticism too. She also has soft spots for Kierkegaard and Adorno. Her subject matter is thus Western metaphysics, including some recent prophets of the end of this tradition. Metaphysicians offer useful pictures by which we can image forth the necessary idea of spiritual change. Her foes are therefore Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, and a collective hydra-headed beast she terms "structuralism." These last are variously the enemies of "transcendence." The latest phase of structuralism (termed "deconstruction") privileges writing over speech, and reverses the logic by which we normally think of writing as secondary to speaking, or as an act of communication between individuals.

From that point of view the *voice* of this book is interesting. Unlike her earlier works of philosophy, this book is not concise: it often feels like someone talking to us, or even thinking out loud. Like her admired Schopenhauer, she exhibits puzzlement and has the courage to go on excursions and diversions, to repeat, to stray, to make odd connections. She reveals a very particular mind, a civilized taste, indeed a unique consciousness, generous, humane, struggling towards the light, anxious for its contemporaries and successors. Though she can be odd, she is never self-important: because she is meek, she is also forceful. Deconstructionists might see in all this the symptoms of a terminal incoherence, the collapse of the very liberal idea of consciousness she is struggling to defend and describe. Friends will hear the voice of contemporary reason, profoundly personal, magnificently objective too.

There are passages to delight in: on the goodness of good *aunts* as opposed to mothers (too much power); on refuting the argument about the existence of God from the *Design* of the universe: think of swallows having to migrate to Africa, an arrangement both wasteful and immoral. There are sterling defenses of the traditional literary critic; of art as our chief spiritual resource; of the artist as a free spirit, not to be bullied by theory; of the philosopher as metaphysician. There are discussions of Henry James, Tolstoy, Proust, and praise of Shakespeare: *Antony and Cleopatra* as a "brilliant portrait of a nasty woman." There are wonderful pages on *King Lear* and some splendid scorn for the idea of poetic justice. She is good on Shakespeare's pathos, too.

Lord Melbourne said religion was all very well provided it did not interfere with one's private life. For her, on the contrary, the moral demand never ceases; if anything it penetrates each moment of conscious life. Philosophy must be moral philosophy. We need a traditional metaphysics and art, though neither can get us all the way. Good people exist and we can learn from them also. A passionate stilled attention is needful. As I've indicated, Iris Murdoch's study is aimed at fellow-thinkers, and only in part at the ordinary lay reader. So far as philosophers go, they have been less unsettled by her chief adversary Derrida than literary critics, whom she takes to task but who (in my experience) will believe anything at all. (For some examples of the curious things intellectuals will allow themselves to believe, one need look no further than the cast-list of a number of her novels.) They tire easily, however, and after believing one impossible thing for a few years, move on and find a new one. Since 1982, when Murdoch gave the Gifford lectures in Edinburgh on which this book is loosely based, deconstruction has been effectively discredited. The real test of her book will be among moral philosophers and theologians, who will find much to chew on, for a long time to come.

Peter J. Conradi, *Kingston University, London*

IRIS MURDOCH RESPONDS TO OUR QUESTIONS

One of the most striking features of your novels would seem to be the decidedly different (some might say modern) view you take of sex and sexuality. Some even think of you as a pioneer. Certainly you were drawing attention long ago to the curious androgynous mix in much sexual attraction. One is tempted to say you were challenging fixed gender roles long before it became fashionable to do so. How did you develop the notions of sex and sexuality that seem to inform your fictions? Presumably, they were based on some combination of reading and personal observation. Which books or which thinkers would you say have most influenced your views? Or is what you are rendering something that is deeply personal?

I can't recall "developing" any notion of sex out of reading or reflecting. I grew up in an "old fashioned" sex scene and am very glad I did. What I write about sex seems to me to be simply intuitive, though of course it must also be fed by experience and reading. (The concept of sex is everywhere.) I certainly can't recall being influenced by particular books. I think "deeply personal" is right.

Your novels would lead us to believe you are fascinated by the Jewish experience. A surprising number of your characters are Jewish, and they cover a spectrum that ranges from the villainous Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* to the saintly but deluded Marcus Vallar in *The Message to the Planet*. What factors enter into your thinking when you create a Jewish character?

I learnt about Judaism when I was at my (very enlightened) boarding school in the middle thirties when suddenly the school was filled with Jewish refugee girls, admitted on generous scholarships. I think we knew about Hitler before most people did. (Of course, the school also contained British Jewish girls.) I had two close Jewish friends (both of them are dead) and have close friends who are Jewish. In a sense, I have lived in a Jewish milieu and feel a special attachment. I do not speculate as an outsider.

THE CONVERSION OF HILARY BURDE IN *A WORD CHILD*

by Nancy E. Schaumburger

All of Murdoch's fiction seems to pose variations on the same question. If you have committed a sin that is "unforgivable" by your own standards, how then do you live? Hilary Burde appears to be one of her brutish but brilliant male egotists, yet he still suffers intensely because of a long-ago auto accident that killed his mentor Gunnar's pregnant young wife who was at the time Hilary's first love. That accident also ended an academic career that could have rescued himself and his sister Chrystal from their painful, slum-bound existence. We all know the rigid, Wittgenstein-like arrangements this "accidental man" employs to retain his sanity and deprive himself of pleasure at the beginning of the novel. However, by the end these structures—the most dazzling, original features of *A Word Child*—have collapsed. What will Hilary do without the ritual of his separate "days," the significant other who populated them, and without his ironed handkerchiefs?

The ambiguous closing of *A Word Child* has left many readers puzzled as to Hilary's future. At first Murdoch seems to be tying things up in the manner of a Shakespearean comedy with a dash of *King Lear*. There is a spate of deaths or exits, mysteries resolved, reconciliations, marriages, secrets told or wisely kept, and a wedding-party. Only one loose end remains, Hilary. Are we now to imagine that he goes on with a life of "double-intensified eternal damnation"? Or that he marries Tommy? That he becomes a kind of monk? Or is it none of the above?

In my view we are nudged toward the conclusion that Hilary follows Chrystal into domesticity.

It is a very Dickensian Christmas Eve after all, and the church bells are pealing exuberantly, announcing the birth of the baby Christ and the new possibility of redemption from sin. In addition, we are led to believe that Hilary, who has already found a better job, may find some appropriate form of expression for his talent in languages and therefore a creative, wholesome means for the transmutation of his guilt. Perhaps he will become a dedicated teacher like the inspiring Mr. Osmand. We *know* as his confidants that he has written the best penitential autobiography since Pip's *Great Expectations*. We may assume greater direction in Hilary's life since he is alive and writing with genius. He does not merge with the fog as the ultimate drop-out or total "underground man" that he has threatened to become in his darkest moments. All autobiographies, fictional or actual, are unfinished by definition. The writer has to be living to have finished the manuscript, though there are cases like *Lolita* or Murdoch's *The Black Prince* where the writer's death necessitates an editor's summation. We must assume then that Hilary—somewhat mended psychologically and spiritually—is following up on his lucid introspections at T. S. Eliot's church. He is acting out in some sense the prophetess Agatha's pronouncement in the poet's verse play *The Family Reunion* on another haunted Orestes-figure, the departing Henry:

> Success is relative:
> It is what we can make of the mess we have made of things. . .
> (II, iii, 47-48)

Certainly we know early on, even if Hilary does not, that such a humble, reconstructive goal is the only way he can make his suffering fruitful.

Hilary is finally listening to the "wild bells" ringing in the new era of the "fuller minstrel," the "larger heart," the "kindlier hand" after years of the pointless "grief that saps the mind." This is the incapacitating grief experienced by the "I" of Tennyson's great poem

of spiritual torpor *In Memoriam* (CVI). Not only has he learned that "'Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all" (XXVII), but he has ceased to engage in purposeless mental self-flagellation over his sins. He is no longer "the fool that wears the crown of thorns" (LXIX). To continue the Tennysonian strand, Hilary may yet—like Lancelot in the *Idylls*—"die a holy man." Dark, agonized Hilary has much in common with that self-divided knight. There is his "impure" love for Anne (Guenevere) and Lady Kitty (Elaine) and also his "betrayal" of Gunnar, the unhealing, sterile "king" of Murdoch's Pre-Raphaelite Oxford/Camelot. Hilary's pain-crazed runs in the park and his infernal rides on the Inner Circle are highly evocative of Lancelot's episodic mad wanderings. He too fails on a kind of Grail-quest, becoming a gentleman and a scholar. Hilary, though, is redeemed by saving Gunnar and then by his cleansing plunge into the freezing river (a kind of purgatorial voyage to Carbonek, like Lancelot's) that makes spiritual rebirth more possible.

Meanwhile, Hilary's attacker—depicted throughout as a winter-king, whose touch kills all near to him—gets credit for the attempt to save his perfumed lady. But she dies of hypothermia as symbolically as Tennyson's "lily maid" ("The Lady of Shalott," IV, 147-48). Hilary gets the legendary barge, *not* a funereal one, a scow with a miraculously handy trailing rope, a token of grace abounding. Murdoch bestows such upon sinners who cooperate with opportunities for salvation.

Hilary is further redeemed when he sets free those he has held captive, particularly the "seers"/good fools of this novel, Arthur (a Merlin of sorts) and Chrystal. He does his best to atone for the losses of Clifford and Mr. Osmand, and he releases the spirit of Anne, now just a confused young woman in his mind, to her peace. The "lost boys" of Hilary's apartment have already gone off to other adventures. Only Scottish Thomasina, a benevolent enchantress, remains to claim Hilary for another life—to break the spell, not to seal it. Hilary himself has already found the charm that unlocks hell on his unintended, joyous LSD "trip." "To forgive is to be forgiven."

Psychoanalysis could never help Gunnar or Hilary. Their stagnation in the past does not constitute a psychological block. It reflects rather a mutual *spiritual need* to forgive and to be forgiven. Hilary has made substantial progress by the novel's end, somewhat illuminated, able to forgive and pity others, but carrying a good deal of narcissistic self-damnation yet to be overcome. Gunnar, to the contrary, merely exits, ignorant as ever.

Perhaps Hilary has learned that marriage, parenthood, and quiet domesticity are not only a "good life" but the "best life" that most of us can achieve in a sorry world. That is what Eliot's Buddha-like psychoanalyst in *The Cocktail Party* advises all except the saintly. It also seems to be a recurrent theme in Murdoch. Perhaps then Hilary will join the general move to the country with Thomasina. The country was the "paradise" of his childhood imagination where love could exist, where he would no longer be denied admission. Hilary's new life may now begin, as his life as a "word child" did, with *Amo, amas, amat*. If he can love and be loved, Hilary is saved—or at least salvageable. He can now be a "word *man*," an author, and a more complete human being.

Manhattanville College

REVIEWS

☐ *Understanding Elias Canetti*. By Richard H. Lawson. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991. 133 pp.

Elias Canetti remains largely unknown to the English-speaking public despite his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981. A reader of Iris Murdoch's novels might well have wondered about the figure to whom she dedicated *Flight from the Enchanter* in 1965. Richard H. Lawson's *Understanding Elias Canetti* serves as a fine introduction to this underknown, enigmatic writer, and offers a good indication, as well, of why Murdoch so respects the man and his work.

This polyglot polymath, whose "language of intellect" is German, has lived in London since 1939 and became a British citizen in 1952. Canetti was a friend of Iris Murdoch's in her youth, and she has since championed his works. She has said of his career that he "has done what philosophers ought to do, and what they used to. . . . He has shown the interaction of 'the mythical' with the ordinary stuff of human life." This is the intersection between that novelist and philosopher that characterizes Murdoch's career as well. The range of their writing offers yet another point of similarity. His major works include a novel (*Die Blendung* 1936, translated as *The Tower of Babel* and *Auto-da-Fé* 1946 and 1947), plays, three volumes of an ongoing autobiography, and a study on the nature of crowds (*Masse und Macht* 1960, translated as *Crowds and Power* 1962). In short, Canetti has proven himself as wide-ranging and prolific as Murdoch herself.

Canetti's career stubbornly resists easy classification. He writes in German, but has placed himself in a German-speaking tradition more by choice than by necessity. Born in Bulgaria in 1905, reared in England, Vienna, Zurich, Frankfurt-am-Main; he lived in Austria until 1938 and has made his home in England since 1939. These peregrinations have left their linguistic traces—he learned to speak, in order, Ladino, Bulgarian, English, French, and finally German. Considering that he was born in the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire, the number of his languages is not surprising. What might be surprising is the fact that Canetti writes in the language he acquired last, and he writes it with the accuracy and distance of a beautifully assimilated but still "foreign" language (Joseph Conrad comes to mind).

It has been suggested that Canetti may have served as a model for those many "figures of power" who recur in Murdoch's novels. These characters are often, like Canetti, Central Europeans of uncertain provenance, Jewish, polyglot. Misha Fox of *Flight from the Enchanter* is just such a figure of power, a compelling still point and center to the emotional and moral hurricanes he occasions and controls.

The whole theme of power is, of course, one of Canetti's central concerns. Born into a Sephardic Jewish family in what was part of the sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire, he spent much of his adulthood in Vienna, but was forced to leave by the growing tide of Austrofascism. The early rumblings of political turmoil and unrest in the 1920s and 1930s make themselves felt in Canetti's works. The 1922 assassination of Walter Rathenau, a brilliant Jewish politician of the Weimar Republic, constituted the first act in what was to become the systematic persecution of Germany's Jews. It set Canetti thinking about the nature of mass movements and mass consciousness. Nearly forty years of research and work would culminate in *Crowds and Power* in 1960.

In a 1962 review of the English translation of this work, Murdoch notes the book's organizing theory, the interplay between "command" and "survival." All command hides a death sentence. It is a recognition of the commander's power over the person who is compelled to obey. Because of the nature of command, its recognition of one person's power and the other's powerlessness, it leaves a sting in the person who obeys. It is natural to want to pass stings down to others, to put them under command as one has been under command oneself. We might see the power figures in Murdoch's novels as sufferers who make others suffer, passing the sting of their suffering down the line. But rather than seeing Canetti as a model for those characters who wield power, it is perhaps safer to suggest that Murdoch connected Canetti to a concern with questions of power, a concern she herself explores through those cosmopolitan Central Europeans.

Murdoch has termed Canetti's novel *Auto-da-Fé* "one of the few great novels of the century." This novel, set in an unnamed city that resembles Vienna in the early 1930s, explores the fate of one monomaniac brought into collision and struggle with other monomaniacs. The main character, Peter Kien, is a Sinologist who lives happily with his 25,000 volume library as his sole company. He falls into an ill-advised marriage with his housekeeper, whose competing mania is acquisitiveness. She seduces Kien by her assiduous (and feigned) concern for his books. This unpromising union ends much as could be expected from the collision of two monomaniacs. Kien is driven to even greater lunacy and dies in a conflagration fueled by his precious books.

This bare outline reveals the central themes of blindness, self-absorption, and isolation, all concerns explored in Murdoch's novels as well. Each character is a kind of monad complete unto itself, isolated by obsessive compulsions, dipping into reciprocity only rarely, and at great risk to itself. But in this satiric, biting view of modern society, "all are punished"; there seems to be no room for correction, growth, or conversion, and in this Canetti's novel seems quite different from Murdoch's works.

After reading Lawson's introduction to his life and works, the reader will surely be compelled to admire, with Murdoch, an oeuvre which the Nobel Prize Committee celebrated for its "broad outlook, a wealth of ideas and artistic power"; there remains, however, something chilling and formal to Canetti's work, and while admiration can be compelled, warmth toward it cannot be.

Christine Ann Evans, *Lesley College*

☐ *Sound and Sense: Musical Allusion and Imagery in the Novels of Iris Murdoch*. By Darlene D. Mettler. New York: Peter Lang, 1991. 169 pp. $34.00.

"Nothing is more beautifully and acceptably self-assertive than good singing," remarks the narrator of *The Unicorn*. Yet reactions to singing, and to music in general in Murdoch's fiction, can also be very emotional. Speaking to Harold Hobson in 1962, Murdoch remarked, "I know very little about music. I like to hear the few things I know over and over again. I

have no intellectual grasp of music and it attacks my emotions directly. Tears will roll down my cheeks at practically any piece of music. It affects me with a sort of desolation. This shows I don't understand it." She adds for good measure that the only films she has time for are Danny Kaye's. Speaking twenty years later to John Haffenden, she adds that her "darling mother, who is still alive, has a marvellous soprano voice—Dublin . . . is a great singing city." Indeed her mother had professional teachers both in Dublin and London, and Dame Iris herself loves to sing. Roger Lewis recently recounted Christmases during which "we sang carols; another time it was music-hall numbers and Dame Iris' charming shebeen-soprano soared across my kitchen table in a rendition of *Jane on the Plane* [surely *Jane in a Plane*?]" ("A Dangerous Dame: Iris Murdoch at 70," *Telegraph Weekend Magazine*, 8 July 1989, pp. 16-19).

Darlene Mettler has consulted none of these sources, but has much of interest to tell us nonetheless. Her monograph study succeeds despite itself. Her subject matter is not an obvious one. Murdoch has many times recorded her interest in art history and her desire to be a Renaissance art historian (see, e.g., Haffenden). She envies painters, paints herself, and her novels are full of visits to pictures and themes from Renaissance iconography (for example Apollo and Marsyas). Dora's visit to Gainsborough's picture of his two daughters at the National Gallery in *The Bell*; Jake's visit to Hals's *Laughing Cavalier* in the Wallace collection in *Under the Net*; Paula and Biranne's final meeting by the Bronzino in *The Nice and the Good*: for those who love London and Iris Murdoch's novels, these help make London itself a magical city. A study of artistic allusion seems at first sight more pressing than one of music, not to speak of the fact that music was the art-form most beloved and envied by the Symbolists, with whose ideas Murdoch has had an urgent quarrel. In *The Sovereignty of Good* the running analogy is between literature and painting, rather than with music.

Mettler's book inspires the unfashionable reflection that a critical book is only as intelligent as its author, not as its critical premises or apparatus. Theorists would have us believe that we need only the right technical gadgetry or gimmickry to succeed. Yet it turns out that a book with an unfashionable premise may not be damned at all while modish theories can lead to unreadable guff. Mettler writes well because she responds sensitively to the novels. After two introductory chapters, she singles out eight novels for detailed discussion. Her account of Dora's growth in *The Bell* follows on from Byatt but it is more detailed and probing, and perceptive, helping one to understand the book better. She is good on the role of sleepiness in *The Time of the Angels* (where there is music from *The Sleeping Beauty* and also "Frère Jacques, dormez-vous?"), which connects sleepiness to the terrible and destructive solipsism that is the book's subject matter. I learnt much also from her analysis of *Turandot* in relation to *Nuns and Soldiers*, and also much from her comparison of Tim Reede with Papageno from *The Magic Flute*, à propos the same novel. The discussion of the relationship between *The Philosopher's Pupil* (my least favorite among the novels) and the Sonnets on the one hand, and the fictitious opera "The Triumph of Aphrodite" on the other, has much illumination in it. Lastly, and despite not having discovered the Hobson interview, Mettler arrives at similar conclusions on her own to those Murdoch expresses in that interview. That is, Mettler notices how often music *upsets* and *distresses* Murdoch characters: Hannah in *The Unicorn* listening to Denis sing "O what if the fowler my blackbird has taken?" breaks down and causes a Dostoevskian *skandal*; Bradley in *The Black Prince* has to leave Covent Garden and vomit from excess of emotion during *Rosenkavalier*; Theo suffers on listening to Beethoven's late quartets in *The Nice and the Good*. Murdoch often gives her own characters something of her own emotional generosity and responsiveness, and Mettler has some interesting comment on and analysis of this species of sensitivity.

If the test of a good novel is that it allows space for its readers to disagree, then the sign of a good critical study is that concomitantly it is worth arguing with. I find much here that is stimulating, and much to disagree with. Firstly, some minor instances. Mettler's greatest strength is her ability to find parallels between the plots of Murdoch's novels, and the plots of the operas which often figure within them. The parallels comment by implication, she argues, on the larger containing plots. Considering this, it is odd that she misses the parallels between *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* and the novel at whose conclusion it figures, *A Fairly Honorably Defeat*. Both works concern erotic substitutions, and have a prettified demon (Nero, Julius King) in them. When Bradley finally accepts his loss of Julian at the end of *The Black Prince*, and signals his acquiescence by commenting on the Marschallin's renunciation of Octavian, this might be thought to betoken Bradley's healing surrender to contingency. Mettler, however, maintains that Bradley is showing his need for order and control. The moment is poignant because of the painful change Bradley has suffered. At the end of a good discussion of *The Nice and the Good*, Mettler notes that the formerly ubiquitous cuckoo gives way to the

owl, but finds "no historical associations" attaching to the owl's sounds. This misses how *Shakespearian* Murdoch's use of allusion often is. The displacement of the cuckoo by the owl is precisely what happens at the end of *Love's Labours Lost*, where it suggests the equivocal nature of all erotic longing in a different manner from that of the cuckoo, heralding as it does the coming of winter. We might also compare the use of Bottom's song in *A Severed Head*, in a discussion of adultery between Alexander and Martin. Murdoch here is Shakespearian in another sense. At its best allusion works for her so effortlessly and so happily that it can make critical exposition look heavy-handed. Mettler on occasion misses the broad stroke and the obvious in pursuit of symbolically *exact* parallels. I recall how the audience laughed at the mention of *Gotterdämmerung* at the Criterion theatre production in 1963-64 for no grander reason than that Palmer and Antonia are at that moment presuming to act like Gods, a form of hubris Murdoch, like Dostoevsky, fears; and also because Martin's situation feels increasingly apocalyptic.

This brings us to the heart of the matter. Mettler records Murdoch's saying to her that her use of musical allusion and imagery is "instinctive," not deliberate. Precisely. Yet little is made of the observation hereafter. Mettler's reading is New Critical or Symbolist. She believes that all within the perfected art-work is secretly irradiated with intention, and is taut with the concealed symbolic design which it is the critic's duty to unmask. This would make Murdoch resemble Joyce. Yet even Joyce's underpinnings only work in this way because his novel is alive in another dimension. In any case, Murdoch is a very different kind of writer from Joyce, actively opposed to Symbolism, her own included, and most alive in those felicities she arrives at involuntarily and by as it were serendipity. The best readings of Murdoch for this reason come not from Nabokovian sleuths but from those rare beings willing and able—against current fashion—to honour her love of the sheer abundance and oddness of the visible world we share. Detail in Murdoch, like detail in the Russians and perhaps Shakespeare, need point no further than to itself to be revealing. The hair-dresser's in *Under the Net*; Rain's car in *The Sandcastle*; the dolmen in *The Unicorn*; the azalea and later the starlings and kingfisher in *The Good Apprentice*: what these are rife with is, as it were, not symbolic intent, so much as ordinary magic. Murdoch's delight in contingency becomes our own, and her world is filled with a reverence for things-in-themselves (music, too) which is ultimately religious, turning us into poets as we read, delighting anew at the mysterious otherness and thereness of things. This is very different from a Symbolist approach in which all must be bullied into serving the author's secret purposes, and the critic becomes a secret agent, revealing conspiratorial connections.

Finally, two quibbles. The book is carelessly proofread. We read of Razanov not Rozonov, of Belson not Belsen, of obstensibly, of Ennistone without its final "e," of "simplistic" for "simple," of terelyne for terylene, of the composer Scarlotti and the writer *John*-Paul Sartre; and the date given for the publication of *The Good Apprentice* on page three is one year out. More importantly perhaps, if scholarship is to be a species of conversation among fellow-lovers of the objects of scrutiny, then it is necessary for critics to read each other if only to avoid duplication of effort. Among the sources of which Mettler appears not to have heard are *The Sovereignty of Good* and *The Fire and the Sun*, and indeed any Murdoch essays apart from "Against Dryness." Among criticism she gives no appearance of having either heard of or read A. S. Byatt's second 1976 monograph for the British Council, *Iris Murdoch*; of Richard Todd's *Iris Murdoch: The Shakespearian Interest* (which was published in America) or of his *Encounters with Iris Murdoch*, the record of a conference on Murdoch's work in Amsterdam in 1987 at which Murdoch was present, and her replies to papers recorded; she is also ignorant of the works both of Angela Hague and Deborah Johnson, as she is of my *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist*. These are wholly unnecessary self-limitations. Perhaps the existence of this *News Letter* should make it less likely that future Murdoch critics will be so egregiously ill-informed.

Peter J. Conradi, *Kingston University, London*

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY: MINUTES, ANNUAL MEETING

4:00 p.m., Saturday, 28 December 1991
San Francisco, California

Once again the international Iris Murdoch Society met in conjunction with the annual Modern Language Association convention. This year there was no board meeting; Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, the Society's founder and current President, called the annual meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in her room at the San Francisco Hilton. Also present were Dennis MOORE and Thomas J. SCHORLE.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: HEUSEL presented the report submitted *in absentia* by Secretary-

Treasurer Cheryl BOVE. The Society's bank balance as of 18 December was $1,262.65, reflecting one debit (a withdrawal of $49.60 for a cashier's check to the University of Alabama, for postage expenses related to mailing the Society's most recent *News Letter*) and two credits ($31.17 in interest and $30.00 in membership dues). The report did not indicate the current number of members. MOORE moved approval of the report; motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: HEUSEL moved passage of the December 1991 minutes as published in the Society's most recent *News Letter*; motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Ongoing Reimbursement of Loan: HEUSEL pointed out that each year the Society has approved a payment of $25.00 to Dean Thomas Mullen of Wake Forest University, who generously provided a personal loan of $150 to pay the fee involved in applying for tax-exempt status. SCHORLE moved approving such a payment, bringing the balance of the loan to $75; motion passed unanimously.

Correction of Information Sign-up Sheet: Group agreed that annual membership dues for a couple are $15 rather than $5.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Time and Date for 1992: Group discussed advantages of scheduling next year's board meeting and annual meeting on the second full day of the MLA's annual convention. MOORE moved that those meetings take place at 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., respectively, on Tuesday, 29 December, in New York City; motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Regarding *News Letter*: Group discussed excellent quality of Society's most recent *News Letter*. MOORE proposed resolution expressing Society's gratitude for excellent job done by *News Letter* editor John J. BURKE, Jr.—and encouraging him to continue the column featuring Dame Iris's responses to members' questions. HEUSEL moved passage of the resolution; motion passed unanimously.

Proposal for 1992 Special Session: HEUSEL reported that John BURKE has expressed his willingness to submit a proposal again on the topic of Murdoch and androgyny. She also said that David Gordon, author of an award-winning essay in *Twentieth-Century Literature* on Dame Iris's fiction, has agreed to prepare a paper for such a panel. Group gave its blessing to John BURKE, should he be willing to do the paperwork required for trying again.

Generating Proposals for 1993 Special Sessions: Group discussed advantages of trying to publish in the Society's *News Letter*, during 1992, some descriptions—possibly general, possibly specific—of special-session topics that we might discuss at our December 1992 annual meeting. Circulating such suggestions in advance of the next annual meeting could help stimulate involvement by more members in the process of proposing one or two special sessions for 1993. The group discussed several possible advantages:

encouraging the Society's members to begin participating *before* the MLA convention (perhaps in the form of writing letters, which could appear in a subsequent issue of the *News Letter*);

broadening the range of ideas for proposals to be discussed at the annual meeting;

providing more opportunities for people attending the annual meeting to participate in thoughtful, thorough discussions of such proposals; and

possibly beginning to accumulate, in advance, some of the details one must turn in with such a proposal (the MLA's deadline for submitting proposals for a special session is 15 February—only six short, and typically rushed, weeks after the MLA convention).

HEUSEL emphasized that the topics and possible proposals to be discussed at next December's meetings would not in any way be limited to any list included in the *News Letter*. The group brainstormed a number of possible descriptions to include in the *News Letter*:

"Fiction and Non-Fiction in Murdoch and A. S. Byatt"
"Spatial Relationships in Murdoch and A. S. Byatt"
"Jewish Voices in Murdoch and A. S. Byatt"
"Homosexuality in Murdoch" or
"Degrees of Homoeroticism in Murdoch"

MOORE made a motion for approval in principle of publishing such descriptive material in the *News Letter*, in order to encourage more involvement on the part of members; motion passed unanimously.

Announcements of 1992 Meetings: Group discussed distinct advantages of circulating announcements of the 29 December 1992 meetings prominently—possibly in the Society's *News Letter*—before Thanksgiving, in order to reach members with that reminder before the busy season that typically begins by mid-November.

Honorary Memberships: HEUSEL reported, on behalf of the Society's Vice President, Peter CONRADI, that Antonia Byatt has expressed interest in being an honorary member of our Society. MOORE mentioned the reference to Dame Iris, in the cover story of the 26 May 1992 *New York Times Magazine*, as "her [i.e., Byatt's] idol." HEUSEL presented motion on behalf of CONRADI, *in absentia*; motion passed unanimously.

Dues: HEUSEL emphasized that all members, be they current, potential, or lapsed, to send 1992 dues to the Society's Secretary-Treasurer Cheryl BOVE (at the Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306). HEUSEL pointed out that the notice of the 1991 meeting in San Francisco, mailed out to everyone on the Society's mailing list, contains a convenient form on which to provide up-to-date detail regarding mailing address and whether one is a new or renewing member.

Adjournment: At approximately 5:20 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member
Department of English
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036

NEWS ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

Cheryl Bove (Ball State University) has been especially busy. She has completed work on her monograph on Iris Murdoch which is to be part of the series called Understanding Contemporary British Literature. The volumes in this series, which are ever so handy and helpful, are published by the University of South Carolina Press. Cheryl is also at work with John Fletcher (University of East Anglia) on the definitive bibliography of Murdoch's writings which is soon to be published by Garland.

Peter J. Conradi is scheduled to be in Spain this November. He has been invited to deliver a paper on Iris Murdoch and Platonism at a seminar outside Madrid. The seminar is being sponsored by the British Council and is concerned with the moral imperative in post-war British writing. Among those expected to be in attendance at this very attractive three-day event, Iris Murdoch and John Bayley.

Peter Baldwin had let us know that the Delos Press will be reissuing "Existentialists and Mystics" in late 1992 or early 1993. We are told that the total print run is likely to be about 250 copies, with three variant bindings. Approximately 40 in the run will be printed in full leather; 70 quarter-bound in buckram; the rest in wrappers. The leather and quarter-buckram editions will be signed by Iris Murdoch herself. Interested parties can contact Peter Baldwin at The Delos Press, 11 School Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 9ET, U.K.

Louise Walthall Horton has written from the Rocking Horse Ranch in Texas to say that she has received much kindly advice from Iris Murdoch over the years. She has recently turned over some of her letters from Iris Murdoch to the University of Texas Archives at the Eugene Barker Texas History Library. In 1991 she published *A Map for a Journey* which can be described as "an epic lyric." She is now at work on a full-length novel to be entitled "Retrieval."

Jeffrey Meyers served as Jemison Visiting Professor at the University of Alabama in Birmingham during the spring semester 1992. His interview with Iris Murdoch appears in the *Denver Quarterly*, 26, No. 1 (Summer 1992), 102-11. It may be of interest to our members that in this interview Iris Murdoch describes the warm and loving relationship she had with her father as a child, and that she seems to be pointing to this as the seed of her later career as a novelist.

We have received word that Peter Lang has published *Agencies of the Good in the Work of Iris Murdoch* by Diana Phillips (University of Antwerp). It is described as paying special attention to the influence Plato, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone Weil, Gabriel Marcel, and the linguistic philosophers on Iris Murdoch's work. Phillips chooses five novels as representative of that work—*The Bell*, *The Unicorn*, *Bruno's Dream*, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, and *The Black Prince*—and examines these in depth. We hope to have a review of this book in our next issue.

We have also learned that Peter Lang will be publishing a book on Murdoch by Jack Turner (University of South Carolina) which is described as "a Freudian look at an anti-Freudian." Should be interesting.

We are told that Iris Murdoch will be appearing on 14 October at an Autumn Literary Festival that is to be held at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. The events of the Festival will take place at the Arthur Miller Center. Others who will be participating include Antonia S. Byatt, Julian Barnes, Susan Sontag, and Margaret Drabble.

Peter J. Conradi is now head of English at Kingston University, London.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews, and bibliographical information. Please address all materials to:

John J. Burke, Jr.,
Department of English
Box 870244
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWS LETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the *News Letter*, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10; couple, $15; student/retiree, $5) to:

Dr. Cheryl K. Bove
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0460

The Iris Murdoch Society would like to thank SAMLA and the Department of English at the University of Alabama for their support. We would also like to extend personal thanks to Bob and Chris Bell, Lisa Hammond Rashley, and Alice Smith for their assistance in preparing this issue of *IMNL*.

Join us in New York City, 27–30 December!

Iris Murdoch News Letter

University of Alabama
Department of English
Box 870244
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

Please Place Stamp Here

Iris Murdoch News Letter

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Summer 1993 • Number 7

University of Alabama, Dept. of English, Box 870244, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

MURDOCH APPEARS IN PROUST FILM

INTERVIEWING IRIS MURDOCH FOR *MARCEL PROUST: A WRITER'S LIFE**: A REMINISCENCE

This film was broadcast nationally in the USA on PBS, 30 April 1993.

At about the time I was conceiving the idea for a documentary film on Marcel Proust, *The Good Apprentice* (Viking, 1985) was published. Proust figures interestingly in the plot of that novel. Willy Brightwalton is a Proust expert. Clever, but lazy, he never manages to finish his great book on the author of *Remembrance*. He also dislikes intellectual conversations which he dreamily breaks off by murmuring his favorite saying, "Ah, well—*tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse*." Edward, the young protagonist, who is studying French, has also read Proust and is supposed to read him again. Unexpectedly coming across a volume of *Remembrance* in a library, he undergoes an involuntary memory experience during which he sees the seaside town of Balbec from the novel reappear before him. This quintessential Proustian experience makes him realize that he lives, in a sense, in the world of that novel. This makes him aware of an added dimension to his being: "Intimations of other places, of elsewhere—of freedom. He felt as he read it a kind of invigorating self-reproach and a new sort of power. There too he lived, he himself. He was there." Murdoch also pokes fun at what we might call Proustomania. Willy goes to California to lecture on Proust. "I was lecturing on Proust and met some pretty good Proustians, terribly funny, they called it a Proustathon." At the end of the novel, after an incredible number of twists and turns in the various subplots with which Iris Murdoch dazzles her readers, Edward has found himself again. Cured of past troubles, he is ready to proceed with his life. One of the things he vows to do is read *Remembrance* once again.

I was convinced by what I had read that Dame Iris's knowledge and appreciation of Proust was deep and sincere and that she would be an ideal contributor to the film George Wolfe and I were planning. I was sure she would be able to explain certain difficult concepts in a lucid and succinct manner and would provide our audience with a credible assessment of Proust's achievement as a writer of fiction. Her enthusiastic admiration could help us achieve one of the major goals in making the film: attracting new readers to Proust.

We were delighted when she agreed to appear in our documentary. Six of us arrived in Oxford in early June 1989 on a cloudy, drizzly day to film the interview: Sarah Mondale, our director; Sarah Patton, our co-producer; two French cameramen; an English grip; and myself. Sarah Patton's parents and Iris Murdoch have mutual friends, a fact that no doubt influenced her decision to grant us the interview.

Dame Iris had suggested that we meet in her husband's office at Saint Catherine's College at Oxford University. The name of the college and pictures we had seen of Oxford summoned up visions of a

grand building of medieval architecture. As it turned out the building was a modern one, like thousands of nondescript academic buildings in the States.

She had originally committed one hour of her time to us but valiantly stuck it out until we had completed the interview. Filmmaking is such a technical undertaking that a great deal of time is spent waiting to get the lighting set up, lenses and angles selected, microphone adjusted, etc. We did have one mechanical failure: the battery in the camera went dead and had to be replaced. This required reshooting one segment of the interview. She could not have been more gracious and more patient. During stops for technical adjustments we chatted about filmmaking, Proust, novels, biographies, the theatre (in London the stage adaptation of *The Black Prince* was playing to critical acclaim), and life in Oxford.

We had of course come prepared with a list of tough questions for her. Tough in the sense that they were large questions, difficult to answer in sound bites or in short sentences, that could be inserted into a film comprised of many other elements. Dame Iris more than lived up to our expectations and provided us with many moving, wonderful observations about Proust and his novel and about literature in general. Two of my favorite quotes from the film are these: "Proust writes like an angel. His is a marvelous eloquence. And he's very funny." And "You're delighted that such a thing [as *Remembrance*] can exist and that it has got the kind of internal coherence that it has and that it can deal with all these matters and relate them to each other in a comprehensible, intelligible way which causes the most intense pleasure which one does take in great art."

Here are some other gems that we unfortunately did not have room for in a sixty-minute film:

> I think Proust is a great romantic writer. Like Shakespeare, Proust has got this vast interest in things and people and the jumble of human life—and the capacity to be funny and tragic at the same time.
>
> I think *Remembrance* is about love and the failure of love and the great variety of human attachments that people have. I mean that you are differently related to all sorts of different people and they're real for you in different ways. So there's a tremendous variety of characters who relate in very different ways to the narrator and to each other—and it's a wonderful tapestry and a wonderful tangle.
>
> A great writer like Proust creates an enormous space in which all his characters move and the poetic, casual elegance of his writing is enchanting.
>
> The lightness of ordinary life and the dreadfulness of suffering all have to cohabit—and they do in a great novel.
>
> I believe in salvation by art. One very potent source of salvation, I think, is reading great literature where one is introduced not only to marvelous people but to problems of good and evil. I mean the presence of good and evil in great books and the way in which the idea of truth is handled and the truthfulness of the book itself. There is a tremendous difference between a great book that gives you a feeling of truthfulness and an inferior work which is something of a fantasy or a book in which you are simply indulging in the egotism of the writer himself. In the great works one has a feeling of seeing the deep realities of human life, and particularly the morality, the problems of good and evil. Proust deals with these problems. The moral feeling is carried partly, of course, by the good characters, like the mother and grandmother, who I think are really wonderful characters.

William C. Carter, *University of Alabama at Birmingham*

*If you wish to obtain a videocassette of *Marcel Proust: A Writer's Life*, please write to Wolfe-Carter Productions, Inc., 3601 Westbury Road, Birmingham, Alabama 35223.

REVIEWS

☐ *Understanding Iris Murdoch*. By Cheryl K. Bove. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993. 216 pp. $29.95.

Cheryl K. Bove's *Understanding Iris Murdoch* has just been published in the University of South Carolina Press's Understanding Contemporary British Literature series. Intended for students and what series editor Matthew J. Bruccoli calls "good nonacademic readers," Bove's book manages to chart the difficult course of discussing intelligently one of the most complex and intellectually demanding novelists of the twentieth century in a way that remains accessible to the reader encountering Murdoch for the first time.

Bove's first chapter, entitled "The Modern Realist," provides the necessary overview of Murdoch's philosophical and religious views about language and

its fallibility as a means of communication. After discussing the breakdown in the function of language in the novels and the resulting "severe linguistic alienation" of the characters (12), Bove details Murdoch's pragmatic moral philosophy, one which "one could live by" (15). She also draws attention to Murdoch's insistence on the need for the individual to move beyond ego boundaries in order to achieve spiritual awareness. This more advanced spiritual state—an increased apprehension of the "otherness" of those who surround us, combined with the realization of the interconnectedness of all phenomena—is one that Murdoch encourages her readers to seek.

Chapter two, entitled "Moral Philosophy and Aesthetics," contains intelligent, informative summaries of Murdoch's philosophical writings, including *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), *The Sovereignty of Good* (1967), *The Fire and the Sun* (1977), and *Acastos* (1986). Bove looks at the important recurring ideas in the moral philosophy and does a particularly good job of distilling Murdoch's interpretations of Plato's ideas about the dangers of art, a task that any reader of *The Fire and the Sun* will appreciate. She goes on to comment on Murdoch's use of Platonic ideas in her own aesthetic theory, which claims that great art can enlarge the consciousness and spiritual awareness of the individual.

When Bove turns to the fiction she chooses to discuss what she deems to be the major novels in chronological order, devoting four chapters to Murdoch's development as a novelist. Chapter three, "Early Major Works (1954-1962)," focuses on *Under the Net* (1954), *The Bell* (1958), and *An Unofficial Rose* (1962). Chapter four, "Major Novels of the Middle Period (1968-1973)," looks at *The Nice and the Good* (1968), *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), and *The Black Prince* (1973). Two novels, *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) and *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), are examined in chapter five, "Later Major Works (1978-1980); chapter six, "Latest Works (1983-1989)," discusses *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), *The Good Apprentice* (1985), *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987), and *The Message to the Planet* (1989). Bove's analyses of the novels are incisive, cognizant of critical opinion, and as detailed as possible in such a format.

Murdoch's plays and less critically acclaimed novels are dealt with more briefly in chapter seven, "Other Novels and Plays," which contains a cursory look at *The Sandcastle* (1957), the novel and dramatic versions of *A Severed Head* (1961; 1964), *The Red and the Green* (1965), *The Servants and the Snow* (1970), *An Accidental Man* (1971), *The Three Arrows* (1972), *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974), *A Word Child* (1975), *Henry and Cato* (1976), the three-act opera *The Servants* (1981), and the dramatic version of *The Black Prince* (1989). In her last chapter which focuses on specific works, Bove uses a generic approach to analyze Murdoch's remaining novels. Chapter eight, "The Gothic," treats *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *The Unicorn* (1963), the novel and the play *The Italian Girl* (1964; 1968), *The Time of the Angels* (1966), and *Bruno's Dream* (1969). These are seen as displaying Murdoch's unique perspective on that genre. Bove's conclusion explores Murdoch's evolving religious beliefs—her replacement of God with the concept of goodness, her adoption of Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist ideals, and her more recent interest in "eccentric religious figures who accept a universal form of various doctrines" (191). She also looks at her continued insistence that great art seek truth and mirror reality whenever possible because of its ability to effect a change in moral consciousness.

Bove's *Understanding Iris Murdoch* is a welcome addition to the Murdoch critical canon. As one who has tried to teach Murdoch's novels to undergraduate and graduate students with varying degrees of success, I can say without reservation that this is a book a Murdoch scholar can happily recommend to those not yet ready for the intricacies of Dipple or Conradi. The critical insights that emerge in what by necessity must be generalized discussions of Murdoch's work make the reader want to hear more from Cheryl Bove.

Angela Hague, *Middle Tennessee State University*

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☐ *Agencies of the Good in the Work of Iris Murdoch*. By Diana Phillips. Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1991. (European University Studies: Ser. 14, Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature; Vol. 241) ISBN 3-631-44206-8

Diana Phillips identifies two opposing critical views toward the place of "philosophy" in Iris Murdoch's novels. On the one end of the spectrum stands that group of Murdoch critics who views the activities of the novelist and the philosopher as quite separate. In their view, the moral world portrayed in Murdoch's novels remains irremediably messy and "muddled" despite her work in moral philosophy. The tools available to the moral philosopher are held oddly in abeyance by Murdoch the novelist. On the other end of the spectrum is that group which sees a clear and unproblematic continuity between Murdoch the philosopher and Murdoch the novelist. These critics

make no apologies about using her writings on moral philosophy as blueprints for making sense of the *seeming* moral muddle of her novels.

Phillips sets out to chart a middle course between these two opposing responses. She wants to maintain a connection between the moral philosophy and the novels but she also wants to assert the central place of specifically *novelistic* strategies when moral philosophy plays out in the fiction. Phillips's middle course is well suggested in the following two statements:

> The question arises to what extent and, more importantly, by means of which narrative techniques, the concept of Man which Murdoch proposes in her theoretical essays, figures in her fiction. In other words, how her literary and philosophical writings thematically converge. (90)

> . . . [I]f we take "viewpoint" to mean concept of Man, then the concept of Man which can be distilled from the novels is not a literary variant of the concept the author has arrived at as a philosopher but *is* her concept of Man. Whereas the philosophical essays thus put forward a vision and develop it in a systematic way, Murdoch's fiction "dramatises" or "enacts" the same fundamental vision and, in this way, clarifies it in a more imaginative, a less circumscribed way. (93)

In her early chapters Phillips lays out the theory that will underpin her study of Murdoch's novels. In the first chapter she refers to reader response theory (Iser, Fish, and Scholes, among others) and structural approaches to the novel (roles of narrators and focalizers) to set the stage for what will constitute a central part of her focus: the reader's role in constructing meaning in the novels; the narrative strategies that invite or disinvite identification with a specific character; those interstices in which distance and discriminations are invited, even demanded of the reader. The "freedom" of many of Murdoch's characters, revealed in their deviation from familiar patterns of behavior, and the clear reluctance on the part of the "implied author" to judge their actions, stand as a challenge and invite the reader to engage in a process of moral inquiry structured by the novel.

> Less delineation also implies harder work for the reader as he tries to figure out what is going on, fighting the need for the imposition of patterns created by his own ego . . . [T]he difficulties of the artist and the reader in letting the characters go their own way, mirror the difficulties any individual experiences when trying to accept and respect the uniqueness and elusiveness of both other people and things. (14)

In chapter two Phillips explores Murdoch's "philosophical roots." For her they are both the linguistic philosophy of her university training and the existentialism of the post-War years. She examines them with care while insisting upon the points at which she demurs and diverges from these and the very different thing Murdoch's own philosophy has come to represent. While Phillips's discussion here is set out with admirable clarity and succinctness, she does not tread new ground.

It is not until the third chapter of Part I, entitled, "Love, Death and Art as Agencies of the Good," that she offers other "roots" to Murdoch's thought—Simone Weil and Gabriel Marcel—acknowledged by Murdoch but not before explored at this length. Phillips draws parallels between the philosophies of these two "religious" thinkers and Murdoch's own view of true morality, which entails "vision and imagination rather than . . . decision and action" (68). The concerns explored by Weil and Marcel prove central, in Phillips's view, to Murdoch's oeuvre: the role of love in moral life; the troublesome place of "suffering" as either dangerous consolation or privileged view of the woof and warp of reality; the ultimate "unselfing" that is death; great art as both a mode of unselfing and a privileged view of the "real" world separate from all "personality" and "daydream." She focuses the rest of the book on these concerns, in chapters entitled "Romantic Love Versus Spiritual Love in *The Bell* and *The Unicorn*," "Love and Death in *Bruno's Dream*," "The Complementarity of Good and Evil in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*," and "Love and Art in *The Black Prince*."

Phillips's discussion of these various novels is deft and convincing. The following assumption informs her reading of all of them: "in the final analysis many of [Murdoch's] characters do share a fundamental seriousness and a deeply-felt desire to acquire a better understanding of themselves and of others in spite of their shortcomings" (315). Murdoch explores those aspects of human character that promote or impede this desire in all of the novels, following the various characters as they either make progress in their quest or fail in their attempts. In keeping with the concerns posited in the first chapter of her study, Phillips then studies as well how the reader is invited through the narrative strategies of the novels to come to a new understanding of these issues. As the characters searching for the good falter, grope, and learn, so does the reader with them.

I have a few minor reservations about this admirable book. As Phillips often quotes Sartre, Marcel, and Weil in the original French without offering English translations in the text or in footnotes, some of the interesting points she makes will not have the same impact on the reader who does not have a good working knowledge of French. There are some errors and oversights (a critic is referred to as *Raymond* Barthes rather than *Roland* Barthes on page 24 and in footnote 64 on page 36; in my copy page 311 is bound out of place, directly after page 308). And a decade at least of agitation against "sexist" language must have had its effect on me. I found it jarring to see constant references to "man" and "man's nature" rather than "human" nature.

Christine Ann Evans, *Lesley College*

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY: MINUTES, ANNUAL MEETING

4:00 p.m., Tuesday, 29 December 1992
New York City

Once again the international Iris Murdoch Society met in conjunction with the annual Modern Language Association convention, and once again the meeting was in midtown Manhattan. This year there was no board meeting; Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, the Society's founder and current President, called the annual meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in her room at the New York Hilton. Also present were Nancy SCHAUMBURGER, David GORDON, Thomas SCHORLE, and Dennis MOORE.

MINUTES: HEUSEL moved passage of the December 1992 minutes as published in the Society's most recent **News Letter**. Group noted lingering typo on most recent membership recruitment circular: price of a joint membership is $15, rather than $5. SCHAUMBURGER seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT: HEUSEL presented the report submitted *in absentia* by Secretary-Treasurer Cheryl BOVE. The Society's most recent bank balance was $1,254.96; the report did not indicate the current number of members. MOORE moved approval of the report; motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

STATUS OF LOAN: HEUSEL pointed out that Dean Thomas Mullen of Wake Forest University has generously informed the Society that we need not finish repaying the personal loan of $150 he had made to cover the fee involved in applying for tax-exempt status. (At each of the past three annual meetings, the Society had voted to send him a payment of $25, so that the balance he is "forgiving" is $75.) HEUSEL agreed to write him a letter expressing the Society's gratitude.

NEW BUSINESS

MEETING TIME AND DATE FOR 1993: Group discussed advantages of again scheduling board meeting and annual meeting on the second full day of the MLA's annual convention. MOORE moved that those meetings take place at 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., respectively, on Wednesday, 29 December, in Toronto; motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION REGARDING NEWS LETTER: Group discussed excellent quality of Society's **News Letter**, including most recent issue. HEUSEL moved passage of resolution expressing Society's gratitude for excellent job done by **News Letter** editor John J. Burke, Jr.; motion passed unanimously.

PROPOSALS FOR 1993 SPECIAL SESSIONS—AND BEYOND: With SCHAUMBURGER's permission, HEUSEL read aloud an excerpt from her 28 November 1992 letter, listing possible panel topics, and SCHAUMBURGER agreed to inclusion of that passage in the minutes, like so:

> [Addressed to HEUSEL] You asked for any further ideas for panels or sessions in addition to those published in the recent **News Letter**, all of which I found interesting and worthwhile. I suggest any of the following: Dickens and IM; Wittgenstein and IM; Tennyson and Wordsworth and IM; the nature of time in IM; the "good life" in IM; Nabokov and IM; the stage in IM; animals in IM; unusual hobbies in IM; paintings and sculpture in IM; the sense of place in IM; humor in IM; "food, glorious food" in IM; Coleridge and IM; Hardy and IM; Tolstoy and IM; Dostoevsky and IM; Chekhov and IM; the Holocaust in IM; fairy tales in IM; orphans and exiles in IM; "genius" in IM; marriage in IM; Bergson and IM; Christian and Buddhist issues in IM; T. S. Eliot and IM; Arthurian myth and IM; visions of hell in IM; the nature of heroism in IM; museums and monuments in IM; extra-rational modes of perception in IM; Forster and IM; the question of "ordinary life" in IM; popular culture in IM; the sibling bond in IM; Kipling and IM; Jungian "sensation types" and IM; "wanton boys" in IM; water in IM; "moments of

being" in IM; Elizabeth Bowen and IM; Patrick White and IM; friendship in IM; obsession in IM; healing in IM; languages in IM; memory in IM; IM and the Pre-Raphaelites; "IM: The Last of the Great Victorian Novelists?"; "therapies" false and true in IM; finding "one's work" in IM; "good" and "bad" chance in IM. The possibilities, because of Murdoch's formidable intellectual range, are endless. (I have not suggested the obvious topics, such as Murdoch and Shakespeare or Plato, or topics on books which have recently been published, such as Canetti, though these topics also still offer some fascinating unexplored areas.)

Group toyed with idea of a panel on the diversity of Murdoch's characters, so many of whom come from non-British cultures and so many of whom embody various sexualities.

Group then focused on advantages of submitting two proposals for the 1993 MLA. Group also discussed whether John Burke might resubmit the proposal on the topic of Murdoch and androgyny that the MLA turned down for this year's convention. GORDON confirmed his willingness to participate on such a panel. Following more discussion, he volunteered to contact Burke to encourage resubmission, and SCHORLE agreed to contribute a paper as well, depending on the status of the proposal from a year ago. Group expressed its hope that we can indeed try this panel again—and then discussed a second possible proposal for the 1993 MLA.

What about proposing a panel involving Dame Iris's new book on philosophy? SCHAUMBURGER circulated a copy of Alisdair MacIntyre's 3 January 1993 review of Dame Iris's *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, in the *New York Times Book Review*. Brainstorming names of potential panelists, GORDON suggested Jonathan Lear, a philosopher at Yale, who considers himself a Platonist (and who admires Murdoch's work); HEUSEL suggested James Edwards, a philosopher at Furman University. After considerable stimulating discussion, SCHAUMBURGER agreed to assemble a proposal, with this tentative composition: a paper by GORDON, discussing Murdoch's fiction vis-à-vis Freud; a paper by HEUSEL, discussing Murdoch's fiction vis-à-vis Wittgenstein; a third paper, possibly by either MacIntyre or Lear (SCHAUMBURGER will approach the former, and if he declines, GORDON will approach the latter); and, possibly, a respondent (SCHAUMBURGER will approach Diana Phillips, at Antwerp). Group urged SCHAUMBURGER to serve as chair, and she agreed.

GENERATING PROPOSALS FOR 1994 SPECIAL SESSIONS: Looking ahead, MOORE pointed out that next year's MLA convention will, in effect, be on the eve of Dame Iris's seventy-fifth birthday. SCHAUMBURGER noted that 1995 will be the one hundred-twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens—and that Dame Iris is honorary Vice President of the Dickens Fellowship. Wheels turned audibly in member's respective heads; group discussed possibility of staging a session in 1994, on the eve of that anniversary; further, group agreed unanimously with GORDON that it would be wonderful to get Dame Iris to come. SCHAUMBURGER volunteered to begin working now on a proposal for such a dream panel for the 1994 MLA, along the lines of "Murdoch and the Dickens Connection." Tentative timing would involve having a draft ready for the Society's membership to discuss at the December 1993 meeting; group agreed on the advantages of publishing a draft in the Society's **News Letter**, in advance of that 1993 meeting.

DUES: As is the custom at these meetings, the President emphasized that all members, be they current, potential, or lapsed, need to send next year's dues to the Society's Secretary-Treasurer Cheryl BOVE (at the Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306).

ADJOURNMENT: At approximately 5:20 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Moore
Board Member
Department of English
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

A NEW COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

Our members may be aware of the new series Critical Essays on British Literature being published by G. K. Hall under the general editorship of Zack Bowen of the University of Miami. Lindsey Tucker's *Critical Essays on Iris Murdoch* joins other distinguished volumes in this series. Tucker's volume contains twelve essays in addition to her introduction.

There are four essays in the first part of the collection, characterized as General Treatments of Murdoch's Fiction. The first is entitled "Myths, Mystery, and the Mechanisms of Determinism: The Aesthetics

of Freedom in Iris Murdoch's Fiction" by William Slaymaker. It is followed by "The Shakespearean Ideal" by Richard Todd; "Iris Murdoch's Questing Heroes" by Deborah Johnson; and "The Contracting Universe of Iris Murdoch's Gothic Novels" by Zohreh T. Sullivan.

The second part of the volume is devoted to essays on individual works. It begins with "The Reader's *Flight from the Enchanter*" by Thomas Jackson Rice; that is followed by a piece by Peter Conradi on *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*; then "The Comedy of Contingency in *An Accidental Man*" by Angela Hague; "Circularity versus Progress in the Religious Life: A Study of *The Bell* and *Henry and Cato*" by Elizabeth Dipple; "Iris Murdoch's Conflicting Ethical Demands: Separation versus Passivity in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*" by Dorothy A. Winsor; "Released from Bands: Iris Murdoch's Two Prosperos in *The Sea, the Sea*" by Lindsey Tucker; "The Problem of the Past in Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers*" by Margaret Scanlan; and finally "New Directions: Iris Murdoch's Latest Women" by Cheryl Bove.

Our readers will undoubtedly recognize that most of these essays have already been published, either as articles or as parts of books. Only the essays by Rice and Bove are appearing for the first time. Having these essays in one location, though, is always helpful. We welcome Lindsey Tucker's new collection which joins other recent and valuable collections by Harold Bloom and Richard Todd.

THE NEW ICONOCLASM?

We have also received an advance copy of Jack Turner's book *Murdoch vs. Freud: A Freudian Look at an Anti-Freudian*, newly published by Peter Lang out of New York at a price of $35.95. It looks interesting. Turner claims all the books on Murdoch so far have in one way or another been sickeningly "celebratory." They do little more, as he would have it, than pay tribute to her "readability." Turner wants to read her novels too, but not for the stories they contain. He wants to find out instead what they reveal about Murdoch's "well hidden neuroses." As you might suspect, Turner's ultimate goal in this study is not at all celebratory. It is rather an exercise in determined irreverence. There is nothing terribly wrong with that, but it is a little cheeky. We hope to have a full review of Turner's book in next year's issue.

EYE ON THE PRESS

As expected, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* received a good deal of favorable attention in the press. As many of our members may remember, Murdoch's newest book on philosophy received a rousing send-off last fall from Peter Conradi in the pages of **IMNL**. Two especially interesting reviews with interviews also appeared in the British press. The first by Bryan Appleyard was published on 3 October 1992 in *The Times Saturday Review*. Appleyard appeared to be much interested in Dame Murdoch's views on religion, and felt that with this latest book she has in effect become "our Tolstoy." A second piece by Michael Kustow appeared in *The Guardian* on October 8, 1992. His piece includes an interesting and possibly revealing aside on how *Acastos* came to be dedicated to himself.

Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals later received an especially noteworthy review in America by Alasdair MacIntyre. It appeared in the 3 January 1993 issue of the *New York Times Book Review*. MacIntyre, as many will know, is himself the author of *After Virtue* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981), a much discussed and widely praised book on moral philosophy. He has some sharp-eyed observations to make about the connections between Murdoch's novels and her philosophical writings. He also pays special attention to her quarrel with Wittgenstein over the nature of inner consciousness and notes how she draws upon the work of Katsuki Sekida, a Zen Buddhist, for her own account of the moral foundations of our inner lives. On the whole, MacIntyre found Murdoch's new book to be "a salutary and needed reminder of the intellectual and moral power of the Murdoch version of Platonism."

A report has it that IM has just delivered the manuscript of a new philosophy book to Chatto. Be on the lookout.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

John J. Burke, Jr.
Department of English
Box 870244
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWS LETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December, 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the **News Letter**, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10; couple, $15; student/retiree, $5) to:

Dr. Cheryl K. Bove
Secretary/Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0460

The Iris Murdoch Society would like to thank SAMLA and the Department of English at the University of Alabama for their support. We would also like to extend personal thanks to Bob and Chris Bell, Peter J. Conradi, Lisa Hammond Rashley, and Nan Smith for their assistance in preparing this issue of IMNL.

Join us in Toronto, 27–30 December!

Iris Murdoch News Letter

University of Alabama
Department of English
Box 870244
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

Please Place Stamp Here

Summer 1993 ❦ *Number 7*

Iris Murdoch News Letter

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Summer 1994 • Number 8

University of Alabama, Dept. of English, Box 870244, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

BOVE TO BE NEW EDITOR OF *IMNL*

Cheryl K. Bove, assistant professor of English at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and currently secretary-treasurer of the Iris Murdoch Society, will be taking over as editor of *IMNL*, effective January 1, 1995. Cheryl's credentials for this post would be hard to equal. She is one of our most knowledgeable students of Murdoch as her publications would indicate. Earlier this year she and John Fletcher (University of East Anglia) published the definitive bibliography of work by and about Iris Murdoch (Garland, 1994), a scholarly work that is not likely to be surpassed any time soon. She is also the author of two books dealing with Murdoch's fiction, *Understanding Iris Murdoch* (South Carolina, 1993) and *A Character Index and Guide to the Fiction of Iris Murdoch* (Garland, 1985). In addition she has published several articles and encyclopedia pieces concerning Murdoch, including the essay "America and Americans in the Novels of Iris Murdoch" which provoked an animated and memorable response from its eminent subject. This revealing moment occurred during the discussion recorded in *Encounters with Iris Murdoch*, ed. Richard Todd (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), pp. 78-82.

Cheryl comes originally from the West. She was born in Salem, Oregon, but she was brought up in Aurora, Colorado. She later moved to Indiana with her husband Tony where they raised their three sons, Tony (now 27), Tom (now 25), and Jim (now 20). After finishing her undergraduate education at Marion College she began work on a Ph.D. at Ball State in nearby Muncie, Indiana, writing a dissertation on the importance of aesthetics and moral philosophy in Iris Murdoch's fiction. She has been an assistant professor at her home institution since 1984. During the spring semester 1995 Cheryl will be on leave from Ball State while she serves on a faculty exchange at Westminster College in England, now associated with Oxford University. She is certain to be a top-notch editor, and we wish her all the best as she takes over as the *News Letter*'s third editor.

MAJOR NEW REFERENCE WORK NOW AVAILABLE FOR MURDOCH SCHOLARS

☐ *Iris Murdoch: A Descriptive Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography*. By John Fletcher and Cheryl Bove. New York and London: Garland, 1994. xviii + 915. $130.00.

This past spring Garland has published what promises to be the single most valuable reference work available to Murdoch scholars, a book that should be in all college and university libraries, and one that many will want to have in their home libraries as well. The breadth and the depth of what John Fletcher and Cheryl Bove have recorded for us is breathtaking. Their aim, they tell us in their introduction, was "to provide an account of Iris Murdoch's entire writing and publishing career," no small feat

in itself since that career now encompasses twenty-five novels, several works of philosophy, three plays, at least one book of poetry, and seemingly countless interviews in print and on TV.

John Fletcher was primarily responsible for the research on and descriptions of primary materials. These entries are marked with an A and followed by a number. These include—most interestingly—listings of the numerous translations of Murdoch's books into other languages, including of course such major languages as French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and Japanese, but also translations into languages such as Catalan, Slovene, Estonian, and Bulgarian. These alone give us a startling picture of the worldwide appeal of Iris Murdoch's work. The listing of other work by Murdoch begins in 1933 with her contribution of a 13-stanza poem to her school's magazine and ends with listings in 1993 showing her signing an advertisement demanding justice for Tibet and reviewing a book teasingly subtitled *The Swimmer as Hero*.

The second section of the bibliography is primarily the work of Cheryl Bove. It begins by listing the interviews Iris Murdoch has given, starting in 1955 and ending with one that was conducted by Diana Phillips and published in *The English Review* in February 1992 and another that was taped at the University of East Anglia. Next there is a listing and annotation for all the books and journals devoted entirely to Iris Murdoch, beginning with A. S. Byatt's *Degrees of Freedom* which was published in 1965 and ending with Bove's own *Understanding Iris Murdoch*, published by University of South Carolina Press in 1993. There is a separate section for books devoted in part to Murdoch, one for dissertations and theses on Murdoch, and one for brief references to her or her work.

Working scholars will likely find the next few sections of the bibliography especially helpful. The list of articles on or devoted to Iris Murdoch begins with a piece by Leslie Fiedler that was published in the summer of 1956 in the *Partisan Review*. It finishes with a piece by Arthur Green concerning previously unpublished details about Murdoch's Irish roots, to be published in 1993 by *Jesuit Studies*. Bove's annotations are almost always illuminating and helpful.

In homage to Marshall McLuhan's electronic world, there is then a section listing occasions when Murdoch has been the subject or topic of programs on radio and television. This is followed by the longest section of all, which is a listing of reviews of works by or about Iris Murdoch. This section is particularly valuable for its listings of the contemporary reviews of Murdoch's novels, allowing us to gauge her critical reception almost from the beginning and to watch her reputation grow and develop before our very eyes. The book finishes with a listing of the principal bibliographical sources employed by the two authors, and then four appendices, one of which lists all the manuscripts and correspondence known to the authors, where they can be located and often a physical description of an individual item.

As I hope this detailed description will indicate, this is truly an extraordinary book. It should be enormously helpful to working scholars. It is certainly a tribute to its subject. That two people would have put so much time, thought, and care into what can only be described as a truly outstanding work of diligent scholarship is a truly wondrous thing.

John J. Burke, Jr., *University of Alabama*

CONRADI TO TAKE NEW POST AS EUROPEAN EDITOR

Peter John Conradi, currently head of the English department at Kingston University just outside London, has agreed to take on the post of European editor of *IMNL*. Peter has been performing informally in this role for some time now, serving as our eyes and ears on the other side of the ocean, and supplying *IMNL* with valuable bits of information and copies of items on Murdoch that have appeared in the British press.

Peter's name will already be familiar to many of our readers if only for his signed contributions to *IMNL*. He is the author of the highly acclaimed *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist*, originally published in 1986, reprinted in 1987, and then published in a second edition in 1988. Peter has published numerous articles and reviews, including pieces in *Critical Quarterly*, *Twentieth Century Literature*, *ELH*, and an especially fine essay on Iris Murdoch and Dostoevsky in Richard Todd's collection *Encounters with Iris Murdoch* (Amsterdam, 1988). Peter has held academic appointments in the United States (University of Colorado in Boulder, 1978-80) and in Poland (Jagiellonian University, Cracow, 1990-91). He earned his Ph.D. at the University of London where he wrote his dissertation under the direction of A. S. Byatt.

❦

MURDOCH FEATURED AT CHICAGO CONFERENCE

The 1992 publication of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* continues to stimulate interest in Iris Murdoch's work. One piece of evidence for this was last spring's conference held at the University of Chicago, May 11, 12, and 13. The topic of the conference was "Picturing the Human: Metaphysics, Morality, and Religion in the Thought of Iris Murdoch." There were nine invited speakers. Included in that number were moral philosophers, religious thinkers, theologians, and even a couple of literary critics. Murdoch herself was present at the gathering, and we are told she offered "some unscheduled introductory remarks" on the first full day of the conference.

A divinity school might seem like a strange setting for someone with religious views as unconventional as those of Dame Murdoch, but welcome her they did. We are told that some sessions had as many as two hundred people in attendance. Iris Murdoch was undoubtedly welcomed so warmly because those in attendance recognize that she takes their concerns very much to heart.

BOOK REVIEW

☐ *Platonism and the English Imagination*. Edited by Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. ISBN 0 521 40308.

This rich volume will be welcome to specialists in every area of English literature. It is a collection of short essays by various hands on the influence and transformations of Platonism in English imaginative writing. Though the emphasis is on "English" and "Imagination," several sections illuminate the traditions, such as the Neo-Platonisms, pagan and Christian, of the Greco-Roman world, of twelfth-century Chartres and of Italian humanisms, by which Platonism was transmitted to our culture. It is organized by periods—antiquity, the early Christian period and the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Seventeenth Century, the Eighteenth Century, the Nineteenth Century, the Twentieth Century—with a general introduction to each area and chapters on major authors and movements. The writers discussed include Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Pater, Yeats, Virginia Woolf, Eliot, Auden, and Murdoch. (Gerard Manley Hopkins is accorded only two suggestive sentences in the introduction to the nineteenth century, but he should have had an essay to himself.) The thirty chapters offer the experience of many rather than one Plato.

The editors, Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton, have chosen their contributors well, and they in turn have been well served by them. They include distinguished scholars writing on their own fields: Janet Bately on King Alfred's translation of Boethius, Jill Kraye on "the transformation of Platonic love" (from its embarrassing homosexual origins) "in the Italian Renaissance," Pat Rogers and Richard Jenkyns introducing respectively the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Others extend their territory. Anna Baldwin, who has written an important book on *Piers Plowman*, contributes a learned account of Milton's progress from Platonic dualism to Plotinian "emanationism." Janet Coleman, who has produced trenchant work on the literature and philosophy of the late Middle Ages, here analyzes the Christian Platonism of Augustine. Stephen Medcalf, who more often writes on medieval and specifically religious authors, demonstrates how Shakespeare's disillusioned Troilus draws on the *Euthyphro* and splits the unity affirmed in the Sonnets and *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. A. D. Moody, who has written a major book on Eliot, contributes here on Pound. Some of these essays have their own oblique relevance to Murdoch: the Neo-Platonism rather than Platonic cosmos is the background to the demonism of *The Time of the Angels*. Virginia Woolf's feminist reaction to Plato described by Brenda Lyons contrasts with Murdoch's relative lack of interest in this subject.

The volume closes with an essay on Iris Murdoch by Peter Conradi, author of the excellent *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist* (2nd ed. London: Macmillan, 1989). Conradi is obviously one of the best Murdoch scholars for this purpose. His book illuminated her novels in terms of their Platonism, a source and energy oddly neglected by pioneering critics such as A. S. Byatt. Like other contributors he seems to have found the restriction of space imposed here an enabling discipline. He presents an overview of her fiction and philosophy cogently and lucidly.

While part of the appeal of *Platonism and the English Imagination* lies in its range and variety, some themes inevitably recur. Sanctity and art are among them. The mystical aspect of Plato's thought was influential in Neo-Platonism, easily Christianized and, as Andrew Louth here argues, was still vibrant in the religious experience of Middle English writers in a Western Europe that had long lost its knowledge of Greek. In the Renaissance Plato was seen as *Moses Atticus* and a character in Erasmus

"can hardly help exclaiming 'Saint Socrates, pray for us.'" With the nineteenth century we come close to one of Murdoch's main concerns, the place of the moral and the spiritual in a godless world. She indeed argued in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* that Plato lived, like us, in a world that was being demytholgized. While Jowett's Platonism was suspected of cloaking agnosticism, agnostics such as Mill treated Plato as a kind of "alternative Scripture." For Ruskin, "all the merely moral virtues may be found in [Plato's] writings defined in the most noble manner, as a great painter defines his figures, *without outlines*." Ruskin's sentence, linking, as it does, art and morality, and suspicious of images of the self, seems particularly to anticipate Murdoch's Platonism. Many early Neo-Platonists, such as Sidney and Spenser, endeavored to rescue art from Plato's strictures by claiming it as an *improvement* on life, closer to the ideal, rather than as a mere imitation of an imitation. For Murdoch, however, art is rooted in the contingency and muddle of life, and is therefore particular and provisional in its truth-telling. In her novels art can calm and inspire like a vision—Dora in front of Gainsborough's daughters. It can also seduce and console like a fantasy. Some of her artist-figures—paintings, clothes, film sets, porcelain—are dismantled, destroyed, scattered, sold throughout her work.

Conradi emphasizes the centrality for Murdoch of two myths: the flaying of Marsyas and the Cave of the *Republic*. Marsyas, rival and victim of divinity, is artist, egotist, and soul in the purgation of unselfing. His nemesis Apollo, alias Loxias, actually befriends the Marsyas figure Bradley, the narrator of *The Black Prince*. For Conradi one of Murdoch's most striking achievements is the synthesis of Plato and Freud. She incorporates Freud into the myth of the cave, interpreting the fire as the egotism whose energies resemble and distract from the sun. The cinema—source of art, dreams, stardom, money and machination in *Under the Net*—serves as a comic but compelling modern image of the cave. Love, too, is multivalent, as Plato emphasized in his two Aphrodites, Urania and Pandemos: Eros is both the force that enslaves the prisoners in the cave but it is also the force that liberates. Together with the myth of the cave, Conradi sees the erotic dialogues, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, as the most powerful influences on Murdoch. She asks, "What is goodness or what is a good man like? and what is the place of love and desire within the quest for goodness?" These were the dialogues most vital to Renaissance Platonists. Spenser celebrated marital love as the basis for the ascent to heavenly love and beauty. Later Shelley translated the *Symposium*, and in *Epipsychidion* loftily used it to justify his infidelity to his wife. The erotic range of Murdoch's characters also has a philosophical basis, as Conradi argues persuasively. She Freudianizes the Cave as the unconscious, the realm of substitution ("Anyone will do to play the roles") and compulsive repetition. Yet love can also inspire pilgrimage out of the cave and the self. Rather than the absolutist Plato of Popper and, recently, of I. F. Stone, Murdoch's Plato is a pilgrim. He is by turns dialogic, developing, discarding earlier myths, celebrating imperfect versions of eros as images of the ascent to the Ideal, philosopher of provisionality.

Priscilla Martin, *University of London*

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY: MINUTES, ANNUAL MEETING

4:00 p.m., Wednesday, 29 December 1993
Toronto, Ontario

Icy Toronto, Ontario, site of the Modern Language Association's convention, was also the site of the 1993 annual meeting of the international Iris Murdoch Society. Again this year, there was no separate board meeting; Barbara Stevens HEUSEL, the Society's founder and current President, called the meeting to order at 4:00 in her hotel room. Also present were Thomas SCHORLE and Dennis MOORE. HEUSEL began by relaying greetings from Dame Iris, who has told HEUSEL recently that she feels very good about this Society.

MINUTES: HEUSEL moved passage of the December 1992 minutes as published in the Society's Summer 1993 *News Letter*. SCHORLE moved approval, MOORE seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT: HEUSEL presented the report submitted *in absentia* by Secretary-Treasurer Cheryl BOVE. After briefly discussing the number of members and the dollar amounts involved, the group voted unanimously to approve the report: MOORE's motion, SCHORLE's second.

OLD BUSINESS

PROPOSALS FOR MLA SPECIAL SESSIONS: No proposal for a 1993 session materialized; HEUSEL reported that, in January 1993, Nancy SCHAUMBURGER had found it necessary to turn the work of assembling such a proposal back over to someone else. HEUSEL, who had already begun teaching spring semester courses at University College, London, corresponded with David GORDON

and with Dennis MOORE, both of whom had participated actively in the discussions about such proposals. Consensus was that the only practical way to proceed was to work toward assembling proposal(s) for the following year instead.

Regarding 1994 proposals, the group then discussed two possibilities, the first of which would involve reviving a proposal for a panel on Murdoch's fiction vis-à-vis that of Charles Dickens. (As had been agreed at our Society's 1992 annual meeting, the timing for such a topic seems particularly propitious: 1994 will mark not only Dame Iris's 75th birthday but also the 125th anniversary of Dickens's death.) HEUSEL said that Nancy SCHAUMBURGER had apparently already done some valuable legwork toward such a panel. Moreover, HEUSEL expressed her willingness to contact officers of the Dickens Society to ask if they are interested in participating, if only by identifying prospective panelists. SCHORLE expressed his willingness to do the necessary paperwork: submitting a notice in early January for inclusion in the *MLA Newsletter*, and then actually assembling the description of the proposed panel (a summary description, an abstract of each paper, participants' names and academic affiliations, and so on). The group energetically discussed numerous possible titles, settling finally on **"Iris Murdoch at 75: A Dickens for Our Times?"** Group also discussed this draft wording for the 35-word "blurb" that can appear in the *MLA Newsletter* notice: "Is Dame Iris the last great Victorian novelist? This panel will address that myth, on the 125th anniversary of Dickens's death." Discussion continued, revolving around the need to coordinate timing.

The second possibility was resubmitting a proposal on *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. HEUSEL agreed to check with David GORDON about the possibility of his turning in such a proposal this year.

NEW BUSINESS

MEMBERSHIP: MOORE moved that the Society encourage the President to name two membership chairs, one within the US and one outside, with Peter CONRADI, the Society's Vice President, presumably continuing to serve in the latter capacity. SCHORLE seconded, and motion passed unanimously.

MEETING TIME AND DATE FOR 1994: Group discussed possibility of continuing to meet on the second full day of the MLA convention. SCHORLE moved, and HEUSEL seconded, that the 1994 board meeting and annual meeting be at 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., respectively, on Thursday, 29 December, in San Diego; motion passed unanimously.

ESSAY AWARD: MOORE proposed that the Society establish a prize honoring scholars who produce thoughtful, stimulating scholarship on Dame Iris's writings. In the time-honored spirit of "That's a good idea—do it," SCHORLE recommended that MOORE chair an *ad hoc* committee to work out the details and present them to the Society. In agreeing to do so, MOORE emphasized the importance of hearing from as many members of the Society as possible. Group discussed various possibilities: would such recognition include any monetary reward, or simply glory? would we present one each year, or perhaps biennially? would we be able to find a donor, an "angel" for whom we might name the prize in recognition of his or her generously contributing the money for such awards? would we consider papers presented at academic conferences, as a way of helping nudge young scholars into working on Murdoch, or would we limit our consideration to scholarship published during a given period? Emphasis of this portion of the discussion was on finding ways to make this idea work.

DUES: HEUSEL emphasized that each and every member needs to send next year's dues to the Society's Secretary-Treasurer.

ADJOURNMENT: At approximately 5:24 p.m., the meeting adjourned and members braced themselves to head back out into the icy Toronto wind.

Respectfully submitted,
Dennis Moore
Board Member
Department of English
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the *News Letter*, please send a check in payment for the yearly dues (individual, $10; couple, $15; student/retiree, $5) to:

Tony Bove
Secretary-Treasurer
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
1716 Timberview Drive
Marion, IN 46952

The Iris Murdoch Society would like to thank SAMLA and the Department of English at the University of Alabama for their support. We would also like to extend personal thanks to Bob and Chris Bell, Lisa Hammond Rashley, and Dan Waterman for their assistance in preparing this issue of *IMNL*.

NEWS ON THE PUBLICATION FRONT

A major new book on Iris Murdoch's fiction should be making an appearance shortly. Barbara Stevens Heusel's "Patterned Aimlessness: Iris Murdoch's Novels of the 1970s and 1980s" is scheduled to be published by the University of Georgia Press this coming spring. This is the first book to dwell on Murdoch's considerable achievements over the last two decades, and the first to take into account the new directions in her thinking that were registered in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). Barbara focuses on Murdoch's responses to the work of several philosophers, particularly Kant, Wittgenstein, Sartre, and Derrida, examining the philosophical and psychological patterns that she believes underlie Murdoch's stories. At one point or another she examines all the novels that Murdoch published during the 1970s and 1980s, but she pays special attention to *An Accidental Man* (1971), *The Black Prince* (1973), *A Word Child* (1975), *The Sea, the Sea* (1978), *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), and *The Message to the Planet* (1989). Even a brief description of Barbara's new book points to the promise of a major step forward in Murdoch studies. We congratulate her on her achievement, and we encourage all our members to be on the lookout for her book this coming spring.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews and bibliographical information. Please address all material to:

Cheryl Bove
Editor, *IMNL*
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0460

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Join us in San Diego, 27-30 December!

Iris Murdoch News Letter

University of Alabama
Department of English
Box 870244
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0244

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Iris Murdoch News Letter

Autumn 1995 -- Number 9

Ball State University, Department of English, Muncie, Indiana 47306

In 1993 Dame Iris was given honorary Doctorates by Universities of Cambridge, Ulster and Kingston, in the UK, and by the University of Alcala de Henares in Spain.

DAME IRIS MURDOCH'S ADDRESS
To Kingston University Humanities Graduates, The Barbican, London--November 4, 1993

I am very glad to be here, and very grateful for the honour which has so kindly been given to me. And so pleased to see so many young people (and an army of loving friends and relatives!) about to receive their honours, to whom this speech will mainly be addressed. It won't be a long speech, I hope.

The word "University" has a world-wide significance. "University students" are to be found everywhere in the world, and are assumed to have certain characteristics, such as being very romantic, often found in operas, but also of being virtuous and noble and hard-working. A University is a unique special place where young people are enclosed--or incarcerated, some might say--for a period of years in a particular *privileged* environment where they also undergo, or complete a change: the process of becoming adult. This unique enclosure should also be a happy place, where one learns how to deal with adult friendships--friendships which will often endure for the whole of one's life--how to deal with the other sex--and also, how to *think*. This is the precious time for acquiring that particular talent: the ability to **think**. You are now scholars, you will soon be scattered about, perhaps all over the world. Also soon you will be moving on into the next century, the twenty-first century. We are suddenly aware of its proximity, very delightful, perhaps very alarming, the twenty-first century.

I want to speak now about this present century, the twentieth century, the old dusty, damaged twentieth century, and about things which might be learnt from it as we look back. The beginning of this century, in the West, was a period of hope, even self-satisfaction: civilisation, rationality, freedom. Britain, Europe, America: leaders of the world.

Then out of the blue came the *First World War*. My father fought in that war. I was born just after it. Well, then there was a slow period of recovery, the League of Nations, now surely it was quite impossible for there to be another equally terrible war. The nineteen thirties--cheerfulness began to break in, this was the jazz age, which I remember so very clearly, when, in my view, the *best pop songs* of the century were being sung. Then suddenly, Hitler, Holocaust, a far more powerful demonstration of a pure evil. After that of course, less hope, more anxiety, more fear, more exhaustion, but at least the United Nations. The middle of the century.

We in the West by now were less confident, we were not masters of the scene, we were people among others, people in danger, aware of horrors beyond our control--war, terrorism, starvation. Science bringing good things, but also bad things. New lethal weapons available everywhere. Also a new concept, a *warning*: **ecology**. Our scientific skills endangering the whole being of our world, our plants, our animals, and *us*. And suddenly too we are aware of the whole universe and in it the fragility, and loneliness of our poor little planet. A time of amazingly fast change, a time of technology.

In the second half of this century the term "technology" has become general, and the great value of all kinds of technology has become evident--but there are its dangers as well. To come nearer home: television can provide us with all sorts of innocent amusement, valuable information, education, news, politics, animals, sport; but also with pornography and scenes of hideous violence. Also *continuous* television--child back from school, sits down to watch,

stays there: where is *reading* now, where are *books*, what will happen to books in the next century?

I add here a special warning of my own. The "word processor". Of course this machine is of enormous value, in innumerable situations; it is now indeed *essential*. But what about literature, what about prose style, what about philosophy, what about poetry, what about many kinds of serious thinking and reflection? Is not the old slow fountain pen more suited to many creative modes of thought? Are children to grow up with machines, gazing at screens? And what about personal letters? Are love letters now being written with word processors? Even hand-writing itself is in danger. Every civilised person ought to possess handsome clear hand-writing, they ought to *like*, even admire their hand-writing. I am afraid all this must begin to sound rather didactic. And I should say that I do not possess television, type- writer or word-processor.

Looking back again upon our, my century, here I venture to add another comment of my own. A notable feature is a change in the situation of religion in the West. In the *previous, nineteenth* century in Europe, America and other parts of the world, traditional Christianity was taken for granted. Increasingly in the second half of this century it has tended to lose its position, its status, its power, and fundamentally, for many people, its *believability*. I myself do not believe *literallly* in a personal God, the divinity of Christ, or life after death. But I do believe in what Christianity stands for, its lessons of virtue and love, and the teaching of its great mystics--[and I do believe] in keeping the Christian story, what it has meant to us through so many centuries--and as, for instance, the Buddhists keep the figure of Buddha as an icon of perfection. Here, I think, we may indeed learn from *other religions*, who are more able to retain the holiness of their God and their gods in a new *non-literalistic* era. Surely the teachings of Christ, in this profound and truth-bearing form, should not simply disappear because old *literal* beliefs are no longer accepted. This is a personal view--and I know this is very dangerous ground--and so I shall leave it here. I am just taking a chance to say something which I *think*, to a lot of nice intelligent young people.

A danger in a technological age, full of technological pleasures, is a lapse into a kind of sleepy determinism. This is just what a University education is framed to prevent. You are going out into the world to all sorts of jobs and encounters and adventures. You will put to good use what you have learnt before. And you will not have forgotten the arts, by which you have also been enlightened. Good art, very difficult--music, painting, poetry, literature in all its forms--these must be practised and protected. Also finally, I would like to say a word for the *novel*. In the middle of this century it was declared that the novel was dead. Now it is evident that the novel, in all its various splendid forms, is very much alive! Please do not let it be lost in the hurly-burly of the next century! After all, anyone can try to be a novelist, and should not be discouraged by a first attempt.

There is so much to do in the world, working and playing, looking after yourself, looking after others, looking after your children, looking after the planet.... You are soon going to step into the next century. We, who wave you onward, say also: **The best of luck!**

[**Editor's Note:** We appreciate Dame Iris's permission to print the full text of her address as time constraints did not allow presentation of the entire speech to the graduates.]

Sir Malcolm Williamson
writes about his adaptation of *A YEAR OF BIRDS*

[Sir Malcolm Williamson's musical adaptation of *A Year of Birds* for soprano (Alison Hagley) and orchestra premiered on 19 August 1995 at the Royal Albert Hall in London. He wrote about his experiences in adapting *A Year of Birds* especially for *The Iris Murdoch News Letter*.]

Iris Murdoch has emphatically stated that her philosophical writings do not relate at all to her novels poems, plays or other occasional writings, but I believ that she is referring to structures not content.

When I had lived closely for quite eight years with the set of twelve tiny poems (none longer than ten lines) with the title, already a precise metaphor, "A Year of Birds", I recalled a sentence of C.V. Wedgwood in a

Hawthornden Prize speech: "These are poems that you hold in your hands and caress."

In over three decades of friendship I was careful never to ask Iris about her work in progress until the BBC offered me a commission to compose a large work in any form that I chose. It took some daring to ask Janet Stone, widow of the great wood-engraver who may be one model for Otto Narraway in *The Italian Girl*, for permission to use the volume in which each Murdoch poem faces a Reynolds Stone bird. I then asked Iris, who knew my music for poems of Borges. She replied: "Yes. In fact, yes in italics!"

The symphonic cycle in three-movements for soprano and orchestra is inscribed for Iris's mother. Deny it though she may, Iris herself is a delightful mezzo-soprano, so a dedication to her mother was appropriate. The movements each use four poems and, while the prologue and epilogue flank the work, the musical bass of both is drawn from the plough in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. The submerged quotations range from far and wide, e.g. in *January*, the line "Or ride transparent in the sky" could have been written only by a scholar of the *Phaedrus* (248); *April* and other poems are lightly brushed with the sheep-shearing scene in *The Winter's Tale*; *September* with Homer; *June* recalls the aerial battle of the third *Georgic*. Most remarkably in *December* comes the line: "And Jesus Christ has come again to heel and pardon", where the Pythagorean concept of reincarnation in Nature and Humanity is interwoven with the Christian Nativity and Immolation as well as with Dame Julian of Norwich and Iris's beloved Simone Weil.

I let these poems wash over me to absorb their beauty and while bells of recollection may have rung in the memory there was easy evidence of the great poet simultaneously in conscious control and flowing lack of awareness of all but a central idea. I fail to understand the circularity of time as Iris elsewhere correctly insists on it. But as I wrote the music I discovered it to be so. This great poetry obliges a time-artist into a temporal-spatial dimension.
In contemplating the mighty novels and other works of Iris Murdoch I can but commend to the serious reader who wishes better to understand the IS of Humanity and of the Spirit this tiny cycle where, *multum in parvo*, one is led to discover, or at least seek a deeper truth which awaits in her thought. From Eros to the tiny, hapless shrew-mouse of the harvest field, Iris Murdoch endows every spirit, every creature with human reality.

--Malcolm Williamson

[Reprinted below is Sir Malcolm's programme note for the symphonic song-cycle which appeared in the *BBC PROMS 95: The Centenary Season*, pp. 7-8.]

Malcolm Williamson (born 1931)
A Year of Birds --*symphonic song-cycle for soprano and orchestra to poems of Iris Murdoch*
BBC commission: world premiere
I *Winter to Spring*
II *Spring to Summer*
III *Autumn to Winter*

Alison Hagley *soprano*
A Year of Birds

For many years, when launching into a large-scale work, I have taken as companion one of Dame Iris Murdoch's masterly novels, pacing my reading to my composing. She and her husband, Professor John Bayley, have also been my close friends for years. However, I had never considered a collaboration until the best sort of commission came my way. When Sir John Drummond asked my publisher Simon Campion to offer me a Prom commission, Simon asked Sir John what nature the new work should assume. He said, "Whatever Malcolm wishes to write".

This freed me to turn in new directions. With earlier works, including opera and ballet, I had been examining in music (often in a Hegelian sense) human and superhuman problems--man to man, God to man, the death of God and the life of man. Iris, asserting that time is circular, poses questions in her work, and her answers are richer quest ions. Thus the twelve tin poems, with their Reynolds Stone wood-engravings companions--one for each month--indicate cyclic time. One might say that January's inland seagull of the prologue is the phoenix of the December robin which is the epilogue--like the white vultures on the summer snows of Mount Kilimanjaro.

An earlier Prom commission, *Next Year in Jerusalem*, caused some murmurs of resentment, since I am a Jew of the spirit but not of race; but there is something sanifying about being resented. A few years later, when the Drummond commission came, it gave me the courage to telephone Iris to ask if I could set her cycle *A Year of Birds* to music. There was not a second's pause before the great lady replied, "Yes--in fact yes in italics!".

So I put pen to paper with excitement. Iris had been my reading companion during Next Year in Jerusalem with *A Word Child*. Now it was *The Good Apprentice*.

April Cantelo, for whom I have written all my soprano roles, lives, as does Iris, in Oxford. We gave the complete work a private performance there, albeit with piano. The pianist felt much happier after receiving the green light from the poet, herself a mezzo-soprano, and daughter of a fine soprano, Irene Murdoch, to whose memory the work is lovingly dedicated.

A Year of Birds is in three symphonic movements: *Winter to Spring, Spring to Summer* and *Autumn to Winter*, with four poems in each. Enfolded in the music, which (if it matters) is monothematic, are a prologue, epilogue, and, between the November and December songs, the autumn hurricane for the orchestra as I experienced it in 1987 when caught in a plane between New York and London.

A musical analysis can be as misleading as those from critics who persist in telling us that neither God nor Beethoven invented the bird, but that it was Oliver Messiaen. While revering that master, I prefer to believe that Messiaen invented God. The musical influences on the cycle, as on Reynolds Stone's superb illustrations, are Hesiod, Pindar, Sappho, Vergil, Shakespeare and Murdoch herself, from whom I continue to learn about structure, rhythm and melodic imbalance--a subtler skill than balance, and one that mirrors Plato. The tetrepodes laced between the songs are the turning-wheel of changing nature, too fast, too slow and too capricious to be measured.

c --Malcolm Williamson

Orchestral Score Available

Full orchestral scores of *A Year of Birds*, music by Malcolm Williamson, will be available from January 1996, at 45 pounds sterling each from: Campion Press, Music Publishers, Sandon, Buntingford, Herts, SG9 0QW, U.K. (Telephone: 01763247287; Fax: 01763249984). Vocal scores are in preparation for publication.

FRAGMENTS OF IRIS MURDOCH'S VISION: *JACKSON'S DILEMMA* AS INTERLUDE

--By Elizabeth Dipple

"Who are you both getting married to?"
--What Benet doesn't quite say, in *Jackson's Dilemma*

It seems to me that Iris Murdoch's surprisingly short (249 pages in the English edition) new novel, *Jackson's Dilemma*, can be approached only through the indirect, crooked routes through which it is narratorially presented. Since that remarkable novel, *The Sea, The Sea* in 1978, Murdoch has eschewed her uncommon talent for corrupt male first-person narrative. Instead, her more recent novels use a voice she presents with great expertise--third-person restricted narration, in which the constraints placed on the narrator push the reader further and further into deep interpretive activity. There is, however, no question that, as decoders and participators in her novels, we are nudged in certain directions, and specific characters, through both speech and thought, impose a Murdochian system of values recognisable to readers of her philosophical work--especially *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, but with significant excursions into earlier works like *The Sovereignty of Good* and *The Fire and the Sun*. As a result, criticism of her work has fallen into the repetitive habit of winnowing out the ethical components at the expense of the novelistic achievement. I too have been guilty of this tendency.

If one tries to decipher *Jackson's Dilemma* within this limited but no doubt worthy ethical agenda, not much can be done with it. Indeed, if this novel is perceived carelessly or conventionally, it feels like a parody of so much of what this remarkable writer has already achieved, and provides Murdoch's negative critics with the usual grist for their frivolous mills. It is easy to criticize Murdoch's eccentric use of the comma, her

ritual of putting the particular words used by her characters (from whom the narrator keeps a substantial distance) in parentheses, the overblown eruptions of tears, the typifying of characters (the artist, the religious and/or the mystic, the student, the pointless woman, the languorous would-be intellectual, the saint, the charmingly fey child, etc.), the dinner-time symposia, the quasi-philosophical chatter, the gleeful gossip. My own instinct is to think that Murdoch, always so intelligently self-conscious about her work, does in fact puckishly present parts of this novel as self-parody, and has a rather wonderful time doing so. But this is only part of the complex game that constitutes this novel.

The driving force behind the work is clever--so clever that it raises the question of whether it could ever be achieved, by anyone. I remain in doubt about this--but it interests me that she could conceive of, and here play out this complicated diversion or interlude so ingeniously.

The dust jacket tells us portentously about a bridal supper whose happy aura of expectancy is shattered by a strange happening. The bride (who is still in London) has a letter--really just a scrawl--delivered at the end of the celebratory pre-nuptial evening, saying that she can't go through with the marriage. Widespread pain, anguish, tears and more tears follow. In fact, one is increasingly stuck by the incommensurability of it all: this is the reaction to a tragedy of huge dimension--not to the unfortunate circumstance of a cancelled wedding, a bitter but small event that happens often and always sadly. So what *is* going on?

Well, something deeply Shakespearean surely--and within the novel's handling of this multivalenced subject lies the nerve and inventiveness of this amazing novelist.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius in spite of her father's approval (and hence that of Athenian society dominated by Theseus) of Demetrius over his rival, Hermia's beloved Lysander. Hermia persists and is told that if she fails to follow the paternal plan, she is doomed "to death, or to a vow of single life." Marian, the nay-saying bride in *Jackson's Dilemma*, acts as though she is under Hermia's sentence or doom, until the intervention of Jackson clarifies what she cannot. A sense of ambient tragedy can be injected by remembering that as Shakespeare was working on MND, he was also writing *Romeo and Juliet* with its plangent sense of devastation through the unscrupulous interventions of the older generation. Marian (the Robin Hood heroine) also has a sister named Rosalind who, like her avatar in *As You Like It*, cross-dresses until she too educates, then wins her love, and dons her female garb Mildred, a religion-obsessed character whom the modernist Dorothy Richardson would have dubbed IR (imperfectly realized), compares Jackson to Caliban and to the Prospero of *The Tempest* during the novel's denouement: Owen, her painter friend, had earlier identified him as Ariel. In other words, Murdoch takes her novel through the history of Shakespeare's comedic experimentation--from the early MND to AYLI at the turn of the century, to the greatest of his romances and his last completed play, *The Tempest*. This is a huge and daunting project. That the last play has been central to Murdoch's work for a long, long time is obvious: she began early with her magician-Prosperos and then developed the theme with terrifying originality in such novels as *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), and *The Good Apprentice* (1985). Nor is he absent in the other late novels.

In *Jackson's Dilemma,* however, a peculiar set of questions is imposed upon the fiction by the authorial hand guiding the only partially aware narrator: What i Shakespeare were in fact a novelist instead of a playwright? What if the interstices between speeches in his plays had to be filled out by the novelist's entering into the minds and thoughts of the characters? What if the web of action had to be melded together b the subtle glue of the story-teller's art? What can the novelist do with the material of Shakespearean comedy, which is so bizarre, so unreal, so stained by the romance tradition--and yet so compelling that as we read or watch the plays we forget the anti-realist basis of it all because so much of what is said or enacted feels plausible at some level of the mind? The outcome of these conditional questions would, I think, if one were to regenerate (or re-genre) Shakespeare's art, would have to be something very like Murdoch's novel. She is constantly aware, in *Jackson's Dilemma* that in spite of the tight, conventionalized patterns of

dramatic structure, Shakespearean comedy, at the same time and with immense implied pain in every phrase of its development through his career, picks up and broods upon the subterranean pit of tragedy that lies beneath it and that leads to its self-compromising problematics. In our time, when most readers' sense of genre is so scant, it can be very hard to grasp and ponder the extent of what Murdoch is daring to do here: how she page by page, step by step, recognizes and deals with this enigma of composition.

On the one hand, then, Murdoch is writing a Shakespearean comedy for us, as a novel. In doing so, she parodies the technical demands of the genre: young lovers, star-crossed contingency leading to a deep peripeteia, comedic closure with lots of marriages (two of them--between Edward and Anna, and even between Tuan and Rosalind--are weird and unsettling: see the epigraph to this essay), the promise of fecundity (babies are expected), harmonic happiness, the brittle, imposed magic of it all. As Edward (the jilted bridegroom, then the happy husband) says to himself half comically and half desperately during the pages of closure, "Oh God have mercy on us" (237).

On the other hand, she is also recalling the Romance tradition, that repository of tale-spinning ideas from which Shakespearean comedy and much of his tragedy ultimately came, through Thomas Lodge, Robert Green, the *Hecathommithi*, etc.--that is, the fairytale lore of kings, queens, princes, princesses and their never-neverlands. Adieu, realism. This is no materialist world of working for a living or dealing with the socioeconomic problems of the day--there are too many kings and princes, with their seigniorial lands and houses for that. Edward, although Cornish, owns the beautiful Hatting Hall near London (both fiancees, Marian and later Anna, echo Jane Austen's Elizabeth Bennett in thinking that to be mistress of Hatting would indeed be something); Benet has Penndean, the house and estate joined by a bridge to Hatting and inherited from his uncle; Cantor, the Australian bridegroom of the bolter Marian, shares vast "Down Under" lands with his brother and is very rich--a postcolonial prince, so to speak; even Tuan, whom everybody assumes is very poor (although how he could be considered so with a three-bedroom flat in Chelsea is beyond me--but these characters are very, very rich, as kings and princes ought to be) turns out to be a Scottish millionaire through his Jewish grandfather's paper-making business. Murdoch used the Romance tradition significantly in *The Green Knight* (1993), etching the novel sharply against the 14th century death-oriented poem, *Gawain and the Green Knight*. But in that novel her focus retained a fragmented sense of the real London. Here we have the romantic Shakespearean source material bought wholesale and transported into the last few years of the twentieth century--just to see how we can look at it, if we can indeed see it in these latter days, and whether it can be dealt with within a new chronotopic experiment.

Yet this novel is called *Jackson's Dilemma*, which sorts ill with the Shakespearean felicity imposed by its structure. Because Jackson, as he says repeatedly to Benet, "can do many things," and in fact fixes the plotted action when it tends toward breakage, we have to look elsewhere for his dilemma. To a significant degree, that perplexity also underlies Shakespeare: Benet's Uncle Tim, the former owner of Penndean and spiritual master of all who knew him in life (he is dead when the action of the book commences), was fond of quoting Othello's response to Brabantio's soldiers who would arrest him at the beginning of the play: "Keep up your bright swords, or the dew will rust them." When Tim was dying, he suddenly conquered his fear, and said, "I see, I see." Tim, whose real name was, tellingly, Timaeus, seems to have his finger on the pulse of the universe, appearing to Jackson and Benet in their unlike ways to have seen the mountains or the truth of things, but they remain uncertain as to how much he knew before that dying moment. Unlike Jackson, however, Tim was convincingly a person in this strange, ontologically centered world: the wealthy owner of Penndean, a soldier, an old India hand, an uncle, a loving participant in the lives of others. In many ways, trying to solve his mystery is as engrossing as confronting Jackson's. What he does, however, is provide a reading list for Jackson, and perhaps for the novel itself: Shakespeare and his modern avatar, Kafka are at the center--with the adventure stories of life in the experienced world, written by Conrad, Stevenson, Kipling, Dostoevsky, Dickens, Kenneth Grahame, T.E. Lawrence, Dickens, Lewis Carroll, all implicated somehow in the aura of the classical world that includes not only Plato but also Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*. Tim's wide taste mixes profound but

unspecified spiritual knowledge with insight into people he meets in the world (he finds Tuan on the train, instantly recognizes Jackson, takes up the Canadian heroines Marian and Rosalind when they were children) or reads about the fictions he loves.

Jackson, unlike Tim or anyone else in the novel, is wholly other. Attempts characters make to identify him tend toward the mythic: Caliban, Ariel and Prospero are culturally legendary, but Jackson's greatest affiliation is with the long vagaries of rabbinical and Christian angelology. Murdoch hasn't hesitated in the past to introduce Christ as a character--in the veridical vision of Anne Cavidge in *Nuns and Soldiers*, in the person of Tallis Browne as the High Incarnation in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, and in aspects of Peter Mir, the apocalyptic Green Knight in the novel of that title. Perhaps we can see Jackson momentarily as the man of sorrows acquainted with grief of Handel's *Messiah* and of Isaiah 53.3 (Mildred talks of his suffering, and says she has seen the stripes on his back). I would venture, however, that he reflects the troubled history of the angels and Murdoch's long-standing interpretation of them in our time, first examined in *The Time of the Angels* (1966), and now a shard of her concentrated thought. Jackson, like Spencer, the superannuated and much loved horse, is ancient: he dwells in *aevum*, the medieval term for angelic time: he has no real history like the other characters in *Jackson's Dilemma* consisting of parents, family, or a *terminus ad quem*--an origin and end. His name Jackson is therefore both given and surname, and he can't answer what his age is, landing on 43 only because of its plausibility. He acknowledges himself as a Messenger, which is what angels are in both their Greek and Hebrew roots (*aggelos* and *mal'ak*). He can create visions around his person (as in an "interlude" Benet has in Venice, when some shape-shifting, shadowy being dogs his steps. This strange being goes in Benet's vision from being a monk to a Renaissance dandy with gloves and lace ruff, to a haunting, suffering face). Those who come in close contact with him are somehow bothered with him--so that Marion's Cantor, her Norwegian Australian golden boy, changes appearance entirely and becomes duskily Spanish or Greek in his presence. He seeks out Benet (and Tim) especially, as though he has a specific message for him, and shadows him until at last an equal relationship is established. In *Corinthians*, *Jude*, *Job*, and *Ezekiel* (to name only the chief sources), angels are depicted as free to make moral choices, sometimes untrustworthy, requiring supervision, occasionally incarcerated. At the same time, God's transcendence means that they are needed as divine mediators. All this kind of allusive material lies in the background of Jackson's being, and his dilemma springs from it.

What task do the great angels have in the broken civilization of the late twentieth century? What task did Shakespeare, himself almost divine in Murdoch's apprehension of him, set for himself? How can religion and art mirror or mediate the experiences of happiness, pain, and above all, remorse? Again and again in this novel, characters are associated with remorse in a repetitive mantra: Remorse, remorse, the pages of the novel whisper. Only the great poet Holderlin can cope with it: "*Wo aber Gefahr ist, wachst das Rettende auch.* (Murdoch translates this as: But where danger is, rescue is ready too). This "all shall be well" doctrine intrinsic to Julian of Norwich's mysticism and to Shakespearean comedy underscores the viability of human life in the face of cruelty, guilt and suffering. But Jackson has only this fairy-tale society to live in and deal with. He ministers to the rich, while he only thinks about the poor. No orders come from the God who has transcended into nothingness, nothing can ease him from the sense that his most "precious jewel" (God? Tim? Does it matter which one?) has gone into death. The end of the novel is therefore the dilemma of the spiritual life and of the artifice of its overarching Shakespearean structure: it can't work, it can't be done, not even the angels know how to act.

Much is made of Heidegger in this novel, especially of his theory of concealment and his demonic appropriation of the Pre-Socratics and of the great modernist poets, Celan and particularly Holderlin. Jackson demonstrates, in his confusion and total exhaustion, the miserable concealments present behind the vocalized structure of this regenerate and highly experimental comedic novel. There are, however, three characters (Murdoch rather likes triads) who are part of the narrator's incomplete broodings on the compositional process and its relation to the spiritual. First, Owen, a painter who is obviously more than the simple sum of his parts, who keeps a room on the fifth floor full of junk--the messy stuff of contingency

represented by Kafka's mischievous Odradek. For Murdoch as for Kafka this junk is very much part of the intractable materials of life and art. Second, Benet, who needs the consolations of form and keeps trying to yank things into a proper comedic closure. His imagination is, however, made passive and limited by a longing for conventional forms (if Marion won't marry Edward, then Benet in his pedestrian, let's-get-this-thing-finished way decides that Rosalind must, and is duly amazed when the peripeteia works in another way). Third, Jackson himself, who represents the originality and spirit behind any real work of art--the sort of thing that made Shakespeare transcend his materials. Jackson knows that effecting a plot closure isn't enough, even though one can dwell adequately within its aftermath. Murdoch's narrator works with these three contradictory and intractable symbols of the storyteller's art, and in doing so lays bare the bones of the structural problematics inherent in a wished-for integrity.

As in the case of the passive individuals of the Brotherhood in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, most of the characters, and even the narrative voice, are reactive rather than active. The dramatis personae are incapable of commitment and action until jostled into it by a superior energy: Jackson has to push Marion into Cantor's arms and order Benet to carry on with his studies of Heidegger and Holderlin. Edward manages to move himself to marry Anna, but he goes to propose with the air of someone who is either about to commit suicide or carry out a murder. The lassitude of these characters, their drifting idly within the contingent, is allowed by the narrator, and as the book moves about through its area of closure, the minds of the characters are reported as more and more without mooring, afloat but barely so in a contingent universe that belies the happiness of the marriage-ridden ending.

As Murdoch broods on her subject, she allows the imperfectly realized Mildred to link the fragments of this ultimately splintered ending. I quote only parts of her long, wandering rumination on Jackson:

> ...he has the stigmata, he was beaten like Christ was beaten, he is damaged, like the Fisher King in disguise, he is afraid of being caught up with by those who know his shame, and how he was found in a cardboard box in the rushes beside the river. Uncle Tim found him and nursed him like a wounded bird, like Prospero on his island with his secret sin, suffering agonies of remorse...of course Caliban was his son by Sycorax, Jackson is Caliban.... Shakespeare too felt remorse, his great soul was filled with remorse, like Macbeth, like Othello...and the Indian Rope Trick, and Kim running over the housetops, and the Angel of the Annunciation, and yes, I shall hold...the Holy Grail. (232)

In the flotsam and jetsam of this enormously confused internal monologue lies the center, the task, the puzzle, and the achievement of this strange and fascinating novel.

--Northwestern University

REVIEW OF CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *JACKSON'S DILEMMA*

The original headings under which reviews of *Jackson's Dilemma* were to be grouped were "commendatory," "dismissive," "ambivalent". This soon had to be extended on either side with columns for "ecstatic" and "downright rude". The exercise became impossible when the whole range of responses was frequently to be found in one review. This ambivalence typifies reaction to *Jackson's Dilemma*: reviewers are simultaneously charmed, affronted and bewildered. Antonia Byatt, writing in the *Sunday Times* (2-10-95), writes a review as enigmatic as the novel itself. She has the sense that the whole novel is an Indian rope trick: "there is no story and no novel." Julie Myerson in *The Independent on Sunday* (8.10.95) is one who found the book "irritating" and "melodramatic" yet was stunned by the "heavenly enchanting passages," and while David Robson of *The Sunday Telegraph* (8.10.95) trivialises it by sending it up as a pastiche of P.G. Wodehouse, he proceeds to describe it as "a romantic comedy of rare tenderness". Only one reviewer, in fact, was wholly unqualified in his antipathy. Hugo Barnacle of *The Independent* (7.10.95) failed to make "the remotest kind of sense" of the book or to progress beyond a perception of it as naively written, improbable and "a cruel parody of Iris Murdoch". Other responses, whilst quite as antagonistic, were tempered with, at best an exhilarated sense of wonderment, at worst a grudging admiration. D.J. Taylor in *The Guardian* (13.10.95) begins in contrary vein: here is "an original and dangerously self-engrossed mind merely uncoiling

itself," and, like many other reviewers, he criticises her implausible approximations of English life, the other-use of italics and her dialogue which he suggests resembles "melodramatic crescendos". But the magical transformations which reform Dame Iris's characters affect her reviewers too, and Mr. Taylor ends his review by suggesting that her dialogue is, perhaps, after all, "a bright expressionist shorthand for real thoughts and feelings". Several critics were keen to tackle the problem of dialogue. Polly Devlin in *The Tribune* (22.10.95) suggests that the persistent italicising and gothick dialogue is intended as a "device to stop a skimmed reading and make the reader enter a transfigured world with a willing suspension of disbelief in one kind of reality and compliance with another". And Kate Kellaway in *The Observer,* (1.10.95) while acknowledging it as unbelievable suggests that the strained syntax is "in sympathy with the state of the characters' lives" and awards it dignity and power "because this is what the heart would say if the heart could speak". Lorna Sage in *The Times Literary Supplement* (29.9.95) comments that the imperfections of the book, in any case, simply do not matter. Murdoch's prolific writing has always been a gesture against a quest for perfection, she suggests, and her own view is that Murdoch no longer bothers about realism. She detects in this novel a conscious air of self parody; of "serious mischief" and sees Murdoch as "doing a very good job of sending up her world".

A few speculate as to whether *Jackson's Dilemma*, is, in fact, a very special achievement: she has "reached the no-man's land she's after. She can pass from outer to inner and inhabit eternity," writes Penelope Fitzgerald in *The Evening Standard,* (16.10.95) while Caroline Moor in *The Spectator*, (7.10.95) who finds the book "irresistible--the literary equivalent of baked Alaska," suggests that this is "the distilled quintessence of her art".

--Anne Rowe, Kingston University

INTERVIEW WITH DAME IRIS MURDOCH

(Oxford, England, May 1995) by Nancy Schaumburger

NS: Thank you so much for this contact, particularly when you're busy in your preparations for going abroad. You are Honorary Vice President of the International Dickens Fellowship, and your fiction seems to reflect a strong enthusiasm for Dickens. Would you say that his fiction has influenced you?

IM: I am, I think, not *specially* a follower of Dickens. I revere him. I like his work and think he is, in England, *the best*. I've read all of Dickens, mostly as a child. I don't think he particularly "leads me." I'm not aware of great influence.

NS: You and your husband share a deep love of Kipling, especially *Kim*. Is it Kipling's uncanny "higher knowingness" that you most admire, his understanding of Eastern ways of thought, or other aspects of his work?

IM: Yes, all that. I can't offer any clear replies--Kipling, yes, I daresay, though I just *love* him. My father loved him--he was also keen on Dickens--I was exposed to all that as a child. More people should read Kipling. There are moments that one keeps--Kipling is one place where I'm attached.

NS: "Fragments that [you] have shored against [our] ruin"?

IM: Yes, that's it.

NS: Many of the characters in your fiction seem to be stuck in some catastrophe in the past, such as Hilary in *A Word Child*, or they are trying to re-create some idyllic moment, as in *The Sea, The Sea*. This dilemma of the unintegrated past can seemingly be resolved only by a series of blows in the present. Do you think that many people in reality experience the suffering or delusion of failing to live in "the Now"?

IM: To look at the situation in terms of past, present, and future--one can't make things into a scientific arrangement--I wouldn't set out to do that. The characters are so individual--they come to their own solutions. "Living in the present" is a rather vague concept--it can be all sorts of things. I live in the novel I am writing. But also in other places.

NS: Some of the characters in your fiction seem to postpone living until some ideal point in the future, such as Bradley Pearson in *The Black Prince*. Many people in reality also exist in the hypothetical future. What effect does this imbalance have upon them, do you think?

IM: I wouldn't pursue conclusions in that way. The characters are all so unlike each other and each has a wonderfully colorful background. It's not that sort of activity or being. They're all individual and different.

NS: Reviewers have made a great deal of your occasional use of so-called "impossible" phenomena, such as flying saucers.

IM: Why not flying saucers? In their place! Just read the books.

NS: I do, I do.

Many characters in your fiction seem to be seeking a relationship with a philosophical *guru*, such as Kim's Tibetan abbot, who will clarify everything to them. These pursuits usually fail. Do you think everyone in reality is a kind of *chela* who must become his own *guru* in some fashion?

IM: Everyone, no. The image, which I like, is so, for some (such as me). I constantly re-read Kipling, Hardy, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Henry James, etc., etc. --and one may feel an attachment. But they are often different. Kim's abbot is *sui generis*. One would have to consider each case individually. Obviously, there is some spiritual progression, some advancement towards truth, in a novel.

NS: The personality and work of both T.S. Eliot and Ludwig Wittgenstein seem to be prominent in your fiction, especially in *A Word Child*. Did you know either writer personally?

IM: I met both of these, but never got near them. No influence, I think. I've read and admire Eliot. I used to admire Wittgenstein--now I do *not*. I keep TSE.

NS: Did Wittgenstein seem to you a tormented man?

IM: Tormented, yes. Wittgenstein is a very long story. He was leaving Cambridge as I was arriving. He frightened a lot of people--he was not a god-like person. I have mixed feelings about his work--I didn't get on very well with his views.

NS: Many of the characters in your novels seem to conclude that the enjoyment of attainable earthly delights, such as swimming, good food, and friends may be the best one can make out of the "muddle" of our complex existence. Would you consider that a fair comment?

IM: Not really. They're all different--various and individual. They all reach their own conclusions. Each one is unique.

NS: Some of your novels seem to cry out to be staged or filmed. We've heard rumors that *The Black Prince* may be filmed soon. Could you comment on this possibility and what degree of artistic control you would have?

IM: Yes. I've probably got it written down somewhere that some people do want to treat it in that way. It has been staged in London, of course. In the past, as with *A Severed Head*, their treatment has been sensible. I can imagine situations in which I would say "No--you've got it all wrong"--but that hasn't happened yet.

NS: If the world begins and ends with *amo, amas, amat*, which seems to be the case in your fiction--

IM: I don't remember putting in *amo, amas, amat*. What *amo, amas, amat*, eh?

NS: I fear you may be pulling my leg. In *Bruno's Dream*, for one example, as Bruno poignantly recollects his daughter Gwen's pigtails brushing over her Kennedy Latin primer of long ago.

How does one get through all the distractions and illusions to the healing truth of that slippery conjugation *amo, amas, amat*?

IM: All my characters are so very different. As for love, that's a tricky business. In a story, there's an advancement in pursuit of that truth. There are many failures and errors in this pursuit.

NS: Margaret Atwood has said that English should have as many words for the varieties of "love" as the Eskimos have for "snow." Would you agree?

IM: I have met Margaret Atwood briefly and much like. I'm afraid I can't pick up the charming jest. Human beings are so extremely various. What has to be looked at is "the scenery," the background. I don't

think one could say *this* is it--one can't collect love. One definition would be misleading. Love is so extremely ambiguous. To rely on love is quite a risky business.

NS: Among Dickens's novels, his "favorite child" was *David Copperfield*--

IM: Yes, I would follow that.

NS: Do you have a "favorite child" among your own novels?

IM: I like the last three. *The Book and the Brotherhood*, for instance.

NS: We are all dying to know when your 26th novel will be published. When do you expect?

IM: It is finished, but I can't say when I'll let go of it. I'm not quite ready to say anything more about it now.

NS: Not even the title?

IM: No, not yet.*

NS: Do you consider yourself "the Dickens of the twentieth century," or something quite other?

IM: Not the Dickens of the twentieth century! We're all different, writers. Me, very little, not a Dickens!

NS: How did you react to the V-E Day celebrations in Hyde Park?

IM: I was very moved by V-E Day (I wasn't in the crowds). I recall how I was at that time working in the Treasury, and could see Big Ben from the window.

NS: Would you say that A.S. Byatt is your *chela*?

IM: No. I adore A.S. Byatt. She's a great girl and a great pal--not my *chela*. I wouldn't presume to be her teacher--she has a light of her own. I love A.S. Byatt. I have no *chelas*.
What courses do you teach?

NS: Modern British Women Writers, for one, including a good deal of your work, of course.

IM: Yes, a very interesting group. One likes to hear that the books are being read.

NS: Of that, you may be sure!
--Manhattanville College, Purchase, N.Y.

* See review of *Jackson's Dilemma*, p. 4

SIR GAWAIN and *THE GREEN KNIGHT*

by Priscilla Martin

The late Middle Ages have been a presence in Iris Murdoch's fiction from the beginning. Her first and most lovable psychopomp, Hugo in *Under the Net*, derives his surname of Belfounder from a "tombstone in a Cotswold churchyard" found by his father on arrival in his adopted country. This spiritual ancestor, Hugh Belleyetere, proves in the fourth novel to have cast the bell, which, like Hugo, yields no one meaning to disciples. The fourteenth-century mystic Julian of Norwich is often invoked and her vision reworked in *Nuns and Soldiers*. Enchanters, unicorns and nuns figure in the titles. Murdoch defines "the subject of every good play and novel" as a "pilgrimage" from appearance to reality (*The Fire and the Sun*). Characters see themselves and are seen as knights setting off on quests. They journey through wildernesses to wilfully spellbound castles enclosing ladies of romance, such as Gaze Castle, Seegard (recalling Lancelot's Joyous Garde) and the ironic Nibletts. Hermits, priests and abbesses help them to interpret their ordeals.

It is not, however, until *The Green Knight* (1993) that a medieval text contributes to the argument of a novel as directly as *Much Ado* and *Othello* to *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. In *The Nice and the Good* the "Arthur legends" are, indeed, identified as a gap in Shakespeare, who, Mary surmises, found "that world of magic ... dangerous". The anonymous Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* conducts through the dangerous world of magic a sensitive moral enquiry. On New Year's Day Camelot is amazed by the irruption of a green knight who challenges a representative of the court to strike him and receive a return blow a year later. Gawain cuts of his head, the green knight promptly replaces it, tells him to keep his appointment at the Green Chapel and

rides off. Gawain and the court assume this is a death sentence. But a year later at a grassy mound, after a monstrous journey and a seductive Christmas at a mysterious castle, the Green Knight proves to be a genial and clement agent of justice, who rates Gawain's performance high, lets him off with a scratch to punish a small compromise at the castle and "absolves" him.

Near the end of *The Green Knight* Clement sleepily recalls this romance and tries with limited success to fit its story to their own. He finds magicians and beautiful maidens in each, but their actions are no more than a "jumble" of the poem. We might add Clifton as a kind of domestic Camelot and a pub called "The Castle" which looks like a chapel. Aleph calls Peter the Green Knight because of his green umbrella: the original Green Knight seems like a force of nature and Peter favours green as a member of the Green Party. Clement wonders if Aleph has "seen him as a sort of instrument of justice, a kind of errant ambiguous moral force, like some unofficial wandering angel." This is a precise description of both green knights. Like the Middle English poem, the novel modulates from justice to mercy (the subtitles of the second and third parts) as Peter's desire for "restitution" (a medieval Christian term rather than the secular modern "compensation") gives way to reconciliation. Like his model, he turns out to be benevolent and, moreover, an unofficial Christ-figure in dying in place of Clement. Official Christianity signally fails its adherents in this novel, Bellamy and his mentor Father Damien. Living in the modern West, Peter is a Jewish Buddhist who gives up his legalistic claim for retribution and regards "hatred and revenge ... as shadows". "It's more like Plato," says Sefton, surely speaking for her author, who has effected another synthesis of Plato, Freud, Buddhism and Christianity.

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* Murdoch writes: "No one would call ... *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* tragic." That is part of its appeal for her. "Ricardian poetry" is often characterized as untragic, anti-heroic, circular, bringing its creatures back from their quests and pilgrimages to their starting-points, such as Gawain's Camelot, viewed with a new humility. Although Gawain's judgement on himself is harsh, the Green Knight is tolerant ("here yow lakked a lyttel, sir ... for ye lufed your lyf -- the lasse I yow blame" 2366, 2368), and the court adopts his "token of untrawthe" (2509) as a badge of honour. As Bellamy reflects at the end of the novel: "don't be miserable thinking you can't be perfect, isn't the *Bhagavad Gita* about that"? Also, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which holds this realism in tension with the command to be perfect Murdoch's formal version of this paradox is the tension--here beautifully resolved--between realism ar myth.

--St Edmund's Hall, Oxford

BLOOM CANONIZES MURDOCH

[John J. Burke, Jr. continues the discussion of Murdoch's place in the Western Canon and invites you response]

Harold Bloom is once again where one can't help suspecting he most likes to be, at the center of a storm of controversy. The most recent book *The Western Canon: The Books and the School for the Ages* (Harcourt Brace, 1994) has ignited its own bonfire of the vanities. The title alone might lead someone to expect trouble with feminists, Marxists, and other assorted multi-culturalists. Arguing on behalf of a list of books that ought to be read by everybody, especial when the vast majority of those books were written b white European males, dead and alive, might seem to be the quintessence of chutzpah. It is at the very leas a politically incorrect gesture in a politically correct age. But the real controversy comes not out of Bloom's main argument about the Western Canon but from the appendices to the book (pp. 531-67) where he lists all the writers he believes should count.

Bloom's main argument is about the Western Canon itself dominated by the towering figure of Shakespear ("38 plays, 24 of them masterpieces"). His picture of the Western Canon, and especially of the twenty-six writers that he argues matter most, is largely a familia one. However, Bloom's reasons for ranking writers the way he does have just enough tang to them to make him ever the fascinating critic that he is. Still, t real heat generated by Bloom's book comes from the appendices to his main argument, particularly Appendix D. That appendix contains a list of 557 writers and 843 works from the twentieth century. These are the writers and the books of our own era that Bloom believes are most likely to last into the ne century and beyond. His list includes writers who liv or lived in Italy, Spain, Catalonia, Portugal, France,

Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Scandinavia, Latin America, the West Indies, Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, and other writers yet who have written in such languages as Serbo-Croat, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, modern Greek, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Arabic. Readers of this newsletter may be pleased (or relieved) to learn that Harold Bloom is still willing to grant Iris Murdoch a place in his Western Canon. Her name appears in the list of 80 writers from Great Britain and Ireland who count or who ought to count. There are two titles listed after her name, *Bruno's Dream* (1969) and *The Good Apprentice* (1985).

Harold Bloom is of course entitled to make whatever choices he wants to, but I dare say that his choices in this instance will come as a surprise (and perhaps as a shock) to most students of Murdoch. They are almost certainly more accustomed to seeing other titles mentioned as exemplifying her best work, among them *Under the Net* (1954), *The Bell* (1958), *The Unicorn* (1963), *The Nice and the Good* (1968), *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), *An Accidental Man* (1971), *The Black Prince* (1973), *A Word Child* (1975), *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), and possibly one or two other titles from the 1980s.

The Good Apprentice certainly has its fans. Bloom himself reviewed it in *The New York Times Book Review* shortly after it was first published in the United States. There he maintained that Murdoch had with this new novel crossed over the line into greatness, and he pointed to Edward Baltram as the reason. Edward was, in his view, the first time that Murdoch had succeeded in creating a truly sympathetic protagonist. That is an interesting observation, but it is also a questionable one. First of all, there can be some question about whether Edward is at the end fully as sympathetic as Bloom makes him out to be. There is an even more serious question about whether Edward really is the novel's protagonist (we have been told, it's supposed to be Stuart Cuno). Still, Bloom does have a point. Edward's initial moral crisis, precipitated by his overwhelming sense of guilt over his role in the unexpected death of his close friend from a bad drug trip, succeeds in drawing us into the story more rapidly than the opening of just about any other Murdoch novel. Its ability to engage us in some of the more difficult moral questions in our times seems good enough reason for thinking well of *The Good Apprentice* and for assigning it a fairly high place in the Murdoch canon.

But what are we to make of *Bruno's Dream*, Bloom's other choice of the best or near best among Murdoch's twenty-five published novels? To be sure, *Bruno's Dream* has good things in it, but so does each and every novel that Iris Murdoch has ever published. Those who have read *Bruno's Dream* may be likely to remember--and may even be haunted by--the bed-ridden character of Bruno Greensleave himself, the spider lore, and the use of water (a Murdoch favorite) as signifying ambiguously both destruction and salvation. But even granting all that, *Bruno's Dream*, virtually from the moment of its publication, has never been one of the favorites. It was considered by the Murdoch-reading public to be, like *The Time of Angels* (1966), belonging to a dark (and largely unpleasant) period in her life. So far as I know, *Bruno's Dream* has never been on anybody's list of the best work by Iris Murdoch.

Bloom's list in Appendix D, it seems to me, leaves students of Murdoch with a couple of obvious questions: Is it possible that Harold Bloom knows something about Iris Murdoch and her accomplishments that somehow or another has escaped the rest of us? If so, what is it? Or do we really believe that *Bruno's Dream* and *The Good Apprentice* represent the best of Iris Murdoch's life-long work as a novelist? If not, why not?

--University of Alabama

IRIS MURDOCH ESSAY PRIZE

The Iris Murdoch Society Announces a Biennial Prize of $200 for Original, Published Research

A Biennial Prize of $200, with framed certificate, will be awarded for the most distinguished scholarly article on the writings of Dame Iris Murdoch. The international Iris Murdoch Society, sponsors of the Prize, welcome self-nominations and nominations from colleagues and from journal editors. The inaugural prize will be announced on Dame Iris's 78th birthday, in July 1997: each article nominated for this first award should be original research, published in English in an academic, refereed journal appearing in the calendar years 1995 or 1996. Send cover letter and three copies of the nominated article, postmarked by

January 31, 1997, to Barbara Stevens Heusel, President, Iris Murdoch Society, Department of English, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri USA 60068.

Dennis Moore, chair of the *ad hoc* Essay Prize Committee, welcomes any member of our Society who has suggestions to contact him by December 1, 1996. Shortly thereafter, a notice of the prize announcement will be sent to the editors of more than two dozen journals that have published articles on Murdoch in the past decade. His address is: Dennis Moore, Associate Professor, Department of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-1036; e-mail: dmoore@english.fsu.edu

In addition to Moore, the committee members are Cheryl Bove, John Burke, Frank Day, David Gordon, Barbara Stuart, and Richard Todd.

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY MEETING AND SESSIONS AT THE CAROLINAS SYMPOSIUM ON BRITISH STUDIES

The 1996 Society Meeting will be held in conjunction with the Carolinas Symposium for British Studies. Attendance at the Annual Meeting held at the Modern Language Association Conference has declined for the past few years; further, we have been successful in obtaining only one Iris Murdoch session at MLA in the past eight years. In an effort to provide a forum for members' presentations and discussion, we have contacted Dr. Jacqueline Gmuca, president of the CSBS. She has taken our request to the symposium board members, and they have graciously offered us at least one of their sixteen sessions on a regular basis; we may arrange for more sessions if we have sufficient response.

The site of the CSBS rotates among American universities in the Carolinas; recent sites have included North Carolina State University, East Tennessee State University, and James Madison University. The 1996 Conference will be held on 5-6 October 1996 at Coastal Carolina University, with accommodations at a resort hotel in beautiful Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Shuttle transportation will be provided between the hotel and the university. We hope that the timing of the symposium, early October (as opposed to the week following Christmas), and the location (usually southeastern United States), will be more convenient for the membership, and we welcome the opportunity for providing a regular session for papers from the membership. The Carolinas Symposium would like some indication of attendance in order to hold a sufficient number of rooms at the hotel; therefore, a line indicating your interest in attending the session is included with the membership renewal form. The hote accommodations will be available at a reduced rate for symposium participants. A positive response does NOT commit you to reserving a room. Further information will be sent to those indicating an interest in attending the conference.

CALL FOR PAPERS IRIS MURDOCH SESSION AT CSBS

Papers are invited for an Iris Murdoch Society session (and perhaps as many as three sessions) at the Carolinas Symposium on British Studies to be held at Coastal Carolina University, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on October 5-6, 1996. Papers should have a maximum reading time of twenty minutes (about ten pages, double spaced). Submitted abstracts will be blind read by committee members. Please submit THREE copies of a 300-500 word abstract of your paper with the title listed on the abstract page. Omit your name and any other identifying materials (other than title) from the abstract. A cover sheet should include the following: the title of the paper; your name, affiliation (if applicable), address, home and work phone numbers, and e-mail or fax numbers. Submit abstracts and cover sheet to: Cheryl Bove, Department of English, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306. Submission deadline: April 1, 1996. If you have further questions, please contact Bove at the above address or by e-mail: 00ckbove@leo.bsuvc.bsu.edu

REVIEWS

***Degrees of Freedom, The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*, by Antonia Byatt. Published by Vintage, 1994. UK 6.99**

Degrees of Freedom was first published by Chatto & Windus in 1965. Reviewers wondered about Byatt's publishing an extensive critical work on a writer as yet in the middle of her career whose popularity appeared

to be on the wane. None the less, the work was acclaimed because it tackled the question of what fiction could do in the context of current philosophical ideas and offered hypotheses in the light of which other literary experiments could be critically studied. Byatt claimed to write from the point of view of one writer trying to understand how another writer works, but *Degrees of Freedom* was also applauded for reflecting the honest attempt of the ordinary reader, the reader who reads for pleasure, to get to grips with the ideas of a professional philosopher. That it does this so lucidly and accessibly is the book's greatest strength. The fact that it has been out of print for some years has been a loss to Murdoch scholars and lay readers alike. The original *Degrees of Freedom* consisted of a brief introduction followed by a discussion of each of Murdoch's first eight novels, which takes the study as far as *The Unicorn*. It was completed by a chapter entitled *The Art of the Novels* which attempted to define Murdoch stylistically and to measure her achievements against her ambitions as a writer.

The title of the new vintage edition is unfortunately misleading. It retains the original title and sub-title which implies that it still deals only with criticism of the early novels. In fact it has significant additions which a re-worded sub-title could usefully have indicated. The original *Degrees of Freedom* is reprinted here without modification and the additions to the original text include reviews and pamphlets written by Byatt since 1965. These (much shorter) articles are on nine other novels and are followed by her two British Council Pamphlets, entitled *The Writer and Her Work*, the first written in 1976 and its postscript of 1986. The final chapter comprises an essay by Michael Levenson entitled *The Religion of Fiction*, which indicates the nature and extent of Murdoch's influence on Byatt's own writing. A very useful and comprehensive bibliography of critical studies (compiled with the help of Peter Conradi) follows this, and last comes some welcome publicity for the *Iris Murdoch News Letter* which has engendered a flurry of inquiries, including one from Australia and one from Belgium.

Degrees of Freedom is invaluable both as a preparatory text and as an aid for the serious Murdoch scholar. While Byatt familiarises the reader with some basic concepts: "crystalline;" "journalistic;" "dryness;" she skillfully advances to a scholarly explication of Murdoch's theorising on how far the novelist's vision of truth should belong, in essence, to the real world, c whether it should be crystallised by form into a shape which discards the contingency of the human situation Byatt explores not only how this attempt at authorial freedom is worked through by Murdoch herself, who trying to create a "house fit for free characters to live in," but also by Murdoch's characters, who make bids for freedom by defying or embracing the moral, emotional and cultural constraints which life imposes upon them. Byatt suggests the influence of Camus, Sartre and Simone Weil and the extent of their authority in Murdoch's thinking [criticism now recognizes the limits of this point of view in connectic with Camus and Sartre]. Unfortunately, essential illustrative quotations from each of these writers, are reproduced only in French. I recall as an undergraduate being unable to translate adequately, and still remember the frustration. For students, Byatt's explications of the significance of symbols which are at best slippery, at worst baffling, are inspiring (the gypsy in *The Sandcastle* comes to mind) She explains and illustrates how they marry (or, in the case of the gypsy, fail to marry) with the ideas, and become organic, integral parts of the novel's realism. The chapters on *The Bell* and *The Unicorn* contain some of the most lucid and enlightening criticism I have read on either book and throughout Byatt has the tireless patience to support every contention by illustrating it in operation. She achieves what, surely, every critic hopes for; she induces her readers to retur to the texts as enlightened explorers.

The two excellent British Council Pamphlets were written with foreign readers in mind but serve as a concise synopsis of some of Murdoch's fundamental concepts which reward any new reader. The earlier pamphlet briefly but succinctly defines terms, reveals influences and moves on to illustrate how they operate in the fiction. (There is some overlapping with earlier material but it is minimal and unobtrusive.) The 1986 Postscript looks at various shifts in emphasis and explores the use of myth and magic and how they relate to what Byatt sees as Murdoch's hope for a revitalised, demythologised religion that she believes t be significant within the more recent novels of this period.

In the short Foreward to the vintage edition Byatt acknowledges that time has modified her views and that on re-reading she is dismayed at her own "solemn Leavisite insistence on making judgements" of tone and texture which is "too carping...absurdly censorious". She remembers an enthusiasm for Murdoch's work which fails to reveal itself in her writing. This concession is a necessary one. The structure of many of the chapters takes the form of a detailed analysis of the plot; (which I found useful as a student but somewhat tiresome now) followed by an invariably acute analysis of the nature and origins of the ideas around which, Byatt suggests, Murdoch sets the story. But her commentary frequently tends to proceed to catalogue its failings. The short final bursts of applause appear to alleviate conscience rather than provide balance of opinion. The tendency to over-criticise becomes least productive in the otherwise excellent chapter, *The Art of the Novels,* where Byatt finds herself out of sympathy with Murdoch's "embarrassing attempts at eloquence and lyricism"; "unsuccessful rhetoric and philosophical shorthand". There is some justification for Byatt's trenchant approach in that, as I have said, she approaches Murdoch's work as a writer trying to find out how another writer operates and her criticisms are perhaps more keen in the light of this. Byatt justifies her approach by suggesting that Murdoch's *idea* of the novel is important and her achievements are so considerable that the things she does with less considerable success warrant as much attention as those achievements themselves. The end result, unfortunately, is that Murdoch appears to be judged, here, rather too much on her inadequacies as a writer and not enough on her merits. The two British Council Pamphlets are refreshing by comparison because Byatt puts all her spontaneity as a writer, and enormous energy as a critic, into dealing more justly with Murdoch's achievements without relinquishing her right to be critically judicious. Peter Conradi and Elizabeth Dipple later largely redressed the balance in Murdochian criticism with their more overt enthusiasm for Murdoch's triumphs and sympathy with her failings.

The nine later reviews and lectures are very much shorter than the chapters on the original eight novels. None the less, they cut right to the heart of Murdoch's ideas and the energy in these shorter pieces, for the most part, as with the British Council pamphlets, is directed more productively to penetrating ideas than measuring achievement and produces some useful, incisive criticism. Byatt's patience and diligence with the early novels reaps rewards and provides a means to pentrate the most densely complex later novels, such as *The Black Prince*, in less than ten pages and yet still provide an acute guide to some of the philosophical ideas that underpin it. Byatt is able to do the same in only four paragraphs with *The Book and The Brotherhood* . Incisive though they are, however, these pieces are a mite reductive, and somehow, the brevity and tone give the impression that this may be a critic who simply knows her subject too well and tires a little.

Byatt does not consider Murdoch to any great extent as essentially a comic writer; her discussion of *A Severed Head* in particular, misses the black comedy. Peter Conradi provides the insight into Murdoch's Platonism that remains also largely unacknowledged in this study. Finally, at the risk of sounding like the pot calling the kettle black, I have a quibble about the book's editing. Two "Irish Murdoch's" in the short Foreward is unforgivable and proof reading oversights that beleaguered the original text have not been eliminated. Some long sentences, albeit spontaneous and ardent, remain, occasionally cumbersome and difficult.

The new *Degrees of Freedom* ends, however, triumphantly. Byatt describes how the Levenson essay, *The Religion of Fiction* "surprised and excited" her. One can immediately understand why. It has the ability to be an essay on one writer which, within the context it is set, serves as an equally revealing and explanatory document about another. Levenson suggests that "Murdoch has been [Byatt's] literary mother," and his article goes on to illustrate, not always consciously, ways in which Murdoch's ideas have infiltrated Byatt's thinking and writing. Byatt ha he suggests, "the urgent literary imperative to make struggle against fantasy"; her imperative that a writer must tell 'all' includes "not only the bad moments whe we know ourselves to be beasts among the beastly bu also the moments of shivering insight when we feel th we float like angels under the eye of the winking mystery". And on religion: "her point is not to confir religious truth but to enlarge religious sense which locates value not in the infinite but in the yearning for

the infinite, not in God but in the search for god". The evidence speaks for itself. The reader recognises how deeply and productively one writer's striving can support and inspire another's. This is both a touching and a fitting ending to Miss Byatt's book, which pays tribute both to Murdoch and to Byatt herself.

--Anne Rowe, Kingston University

Morals and Writing (1940-1990) Editors: Mercedes Bengoechea and Ricardo Sola. Servicio Des Publicaciones Universidad de Alcala, (UK, 1995)

This book is the transcript of the conference held at the Universidad de Alcala de Henares during November 1992. While most of the papers are reprinted in Spanish, four are reprinted in English. The conference papers are divided into three sections: *Nature of Good and Evil in Post-War Fiction; The Moral Condition of Britain During the 1980's* and *Morals, Politics and Writing*. The papers printed in English are poorly edited, but there are some excellent pieces. *Iris Murdoch and Plato*, by Peter Conradi is based on his article *Iris Murdoch*, subsequently published in *Platonism and the English Literary Imagination*, by Cambridge University Press (this was reviewed by Priscilla Martin in the last edition of IMNL). There follows *Philosophy and Morals: A Conversation* between Iris Murdoch, John Bailey (sic) and Peter Conradi. The conversation picks up on Conradi's paper and Murdoch talks at length about her connection with Plato and in particular the importance to her of the image of the cave.

As with all transcripts of actual conversations, this one meanders unpredictably, but there are some high spots of which the following synopsis gives only a flavour. Murdoch talks at length of her fears regarding the waning of the influence of traditional Christian iconography in the West, and how she is saddened by the fact that people no longer have adequate pictures with which to meditate about good and evil. John Bayley talks of how writers' moral weaknesses are as much an important part of their talent as their moral strength and suggests women are such good novelists because they are naturally divided beings and their emotions sometimes override their intelligence. He cites George Eliot's treatment of beautiful women as an example: she makes sure that beautiful women have a very bad time in her novels because she was herself unattractive. But only because she was bad as well as a great genius, he suggests, do we respond to her as we do. Murdoch replies that there is a certain amount of trickery in art ... the artist hides his imperfections and she mentions how Plato thought that art that contained the bad could portray the wrong path. Peter Conradi suggests, finally, (referring to the character of Julius in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*) that low motives are not irrelevant - "they're the stuff out of which the thing is created" and they have to be "fully understood". Murdoch agrees ... "and forgiven", she suggests.

Dame Iris is referred to by other speakers but only two more papers are printed in English. Peter Conradi, in his paper entitled *The Grand Inquisitor: Negation and the Modern English Novel*, defends the modern English novel against the charge of being unintellectual: "We are seen as empiricists, frightened and discomforted by theory, confusing ideas with ideology". He argues that moments of piercing truth and palpable insight in many twentieth century English novels are moments of negation. After discussing E.M. Forster, William Golding, Muriel Spark and Angus Wilson, Conradi finally deals with the Grand Inquisitor, Julius King who represents the Devil in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and whose "heartless questionings of the conditions of our existence teach[es] us something real.... The conflict [he] engenders in us cannot be resolved intellectually ... [he] stands for the principle of *psychomachia*, of that internal strife within the soul, within which morality is kept alive and out of which art, which addresses the moral, is always engendered". D.J. Enright in his paper *Miscellaneous Immoralities* discusses whether literature shapes life or merely reflects it and quotes as an ideal the wonderful passage from *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*: "Art is informative and entertaining, it condenses and clarifies the world ...". One year after the conference, Dame Iris was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the Universidad de Alcala and a *Laudatio en Honor De Iris Murdoch* is given in Spanish by Dr. Ricardo J. Sola Buil.

--Anne Rowe, Kingston University

NEW PRIMARY: Additions to Fletcher and Bove

by John Fletcher

Although our bibliography* was published as recently as 1994, several books falling within the primary section have appeared since then, and it is the purpose of the present note to record and review them against an eventual revision and updating of that section.

The first two items we knew about, since their publication had been announced when we went to press. The essay "Existentialists and Mystics" appears as A1112. That entry, drafted in the light of the information then available, can now be recast to read as follows:

> Reprinted by Delos Press, Birmingham, 1993. A note on p. [23] states: "Published in an edition of 500 copies of which 400 are bound into wrappers and 100 numbered copies are printed on Zerkall mould-made paper and quarter-bound in buckram with marbled-paper covered boards, signed by the author". Standard edition 20.9 x 14.8cm., bulk 0.3 cm., white wrappers enclosed in a blue dust jacket. Typeset by Shades & Characters Ltd., Glastonbury, Somerset. Printed and bound by Smith Settle, Otley, Yorkshire. Special edition price 65, ISBN 1 870380 16 9. Standard edition price 4.50, ISBN 1 870380 15 0.

Interestingly, Peter Baldwin felt confident enough to commit himself in the event to a print run double that originally envisaged, but he dropped the idea of a leather-bound edition. As with other Delos publications, this pamphlet is stylishly designed and beautifully printed.

The publication of *The Green Knight* was foreshadowed on p. xi of the bibliography. It has since appeared under the usual imprints of Chatto & Windus and Viking (1993), and has been followed by *Jackson's Dilemma* (1995), Iris Murdoch's most recent novel, reviewed elsewhere in these pages.

Her play with music, *The One Alone*, had been broadcast when we went to press and was mentioned on p. xi and entered under A1165 and B5143. It has since been published by Colophon Press (London, 1995) in an elegant edition of 232 copies, set in 12 point Baskerville, printed by letterpress at Libanus Press Ltd of Marlborough on Zerkall mould-made paper and bound by The Fine Bindery, Wellingborough. The standard edition (ISBN 1 874122 16 4) is of 200 copies numbered 1-200 sewn into dark green Murillo covers and signed by the author. The special edition (ISBN 1 874122 17 2) is of 26 copies lettered A-Z, bound in cloth and signed by the author, which include a holograph quotation from the text. In addition, 6 copies numbered I-VI, are for private distribution.

Though it dates from 1969 the previously unpublished two-act stage play *Joanna Joanna* was not known to us. It comes from the same stable as *An Accidental Man*, *The Sea, the Sea* and *Nuns and Soldiers*, sharing their tendency to melodrama but lacking their aesthetic complexity and moral depth. It too is published by Colophon Press (London, 1994), in an edition of 143 copies printed on Mohawk Superfine 118 gsm paper, of which 125 copies, numbered 1-125, are bound in full crimson cloth and signed by the author, and 12 copies numbered I-XII, bound in full Nigerian goatskin and signed by the author, include a holograph quotation from the text. The remaining 6 copies, lettered A-F and bound in goatskin, are for private distribution. The ISBN of the numbered edition is 1 874122 13 X and the ISBN of the lettered edition is 1 874122 12 1. The book, set in 11 point Baskerville MT, is printed by Printhaus Graphique, Northampton and bound by The Fine Bindery, Wellingborough.

There are likely to be more of these limited de luxe editions as other previously unpublished (and perhaps hitherto unpublishable) works are released for publication and as other philosophical and critical essays are rescued from the files of periodicals or from edited collections and symposia. They make most attractive collectables for bibliophiles, but they are not of great interest to Murdoch scholars and critics. What the latter would welcome is the gathering in one volume, edited by an established Murdoch specialist, of the complete essays, poems and miscellaneous pieces

* *Iris Murdoch: A Descriptive Primary and Annotated Secondary Bibliography*. By John Fletcher and Cheryl Bove. New York and London: Garland, 1994. Reviewed by John J. Burke, Jr., in the *Iris Murdoch News Letter, 8 (Summer 1994), 1-2.*

(i.e. all those items listed in our second chapter, together with anything that we either overlooked or were unable to trace). But the chances of such a book appearing in the foreseeable future are unfortunately fairly remote.

--University of East Anglia, Norwich England

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FORTHCOMING:

Full orchestral scores of *A Year of Birds*, music by Malcolm Williamson. Campion Press, Sandon, Buntingford, Herts, SG9 0QW. Available from January 1996. Vocal scores are in preparation for publication.

The University of Chicago Press will publish *Picturing the Human: Metaphysics, Morality, and Religion in the Thought of Iris Murdoch*, eds. Maria Antonaccio and Bill Schweiker, by around late summer 1996. The book is based on proceedings of the conference of the same name at the Divinity Department of the University of Chicago in May 1994. The conference figured Cora Diamond, Elizabeth Dipple, Charles Taylor and Martha Nussbaum among others. This work will be reviewed in a future IMNL.

NOW AVAILABLE:

Murdoch, Iris. *Jackson's Dilemma*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1995.

---. *The One Alone*. London: Colophon Press, 1995. A play, written originally as a radio play, available from Colophon at 18a Prentis Rd, London SW16 1QD.

---. *Joanna, Joanna*. London: Colophon Press, 1994.

---. *Existentialists and Mystics*. Birmingham: Delos Press, 1993.
Available from Peter Baldwin, Delos Press, 11 School Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9ET

Byatt, A.S. *Degrees of Freedom: The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*. 2nd edition. London: Vintage, 1994.

Gordon, David J. *Iris Murdoch's Fables of Unselfing*. Columbia and London: U of Missouri P, 1995. This work will be reviewed in the next IMNL.

Heusel, Barbara Stevens. *Patterned Aimlessness: Iris Murdoch's Novels of the 1970s and 1980s*. Athens and London: U of Georgia P, 1995. This work will be reviewed in the next IMNL.

Wijsgerig perspectief 35.3 (1994/95).
Dutch journal with entire issue devoted to Iris Murdoch. Included in the journal are essays by Diana Phillips (University of Antwerp), "Iris Murdoch's zoektocht naar het goede," and Richard Todd (Free University, Amsterdam), "Iris Murdoch: veertig jaar romanschrijven."

Mercedes Bengoechea and Richardo Sola, eds. *Morals and Writing* (1940-1990). Servicio des Publiciones Universidad de Alcala, 1995.

FIRST EDITION OFFERINGS

David Rees has available a signed copy of *The Italian Girl*, Iris Murdoch and James Saunders for 75-00 (cat. n. 306). Other available first edition titles by Iris Murdoch are: *Reynolds Stone* (signed, cat. n. 307, for 30-00), *The Good Apprentice* (signed, cat. n. 308, for 25-00) *The Book and the Brotherhood* (signed, cat. n. 310, for 25-00), *The Message To The Planet* (cat. n. 311, for 25-00), *Existentialists and Mystics*, Delos Press 1993, (signed and numbered, cat. no. 312, for 65-00, unsigned, cat. no. 313, for10-00). *Joanna Joanna*, A play in two acts, signed and bound in cloth for 65-00). *The One Alone*, a radio play broadcast in 1987 (signed, numbered copies for 30-00, special bound, lettered copies for125-00). Contact: David Rees 18a Prentis Road, London SW16 1QD tel (0181) 769 2453. Catalogue numbers are from catalogue 40. All prices are in pound sterling.

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: The Star Financial Bank balance as of 1 December was $1337.47, reflecting a withdrawal of $338.14 to the University of Alabama and Lisa Hammond Rashley for printing and publishing expenses related to the Society's 1994 *News Letter* and two credits (195.00 in membership dues and $39.15 in interest income.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Iris Murdoch Society would like to thank John J. BURKE, Jr., (The University of Alabama), for his exemplary service as *Iris Murdoch News Letter* editor these past four years. Through his efforts the *News Letter* has continually improved in quality and content, and we are grateful for his outstanding service.

Please remember to return the enclosed form denoting interest in membership and/or interest in attending the Carolinas Symposium on British Studies.

TEACHING/STUDYING IRIS MURDOCH

[Note: We are inaugurating an occasional column for those either teaching or studying Iris Murdoch's fiction or philosophy. Please contact one of the IMNL editors if you have materials for this column].

Iris Murdoch as a Special Study

[The following papers are reactions to a year long seminar on the works of Iris Murdoch held at Kingston University in 1993/94 and 1994/95].

It seems strange to think that I ever "studied" Iris Murdoch's work. Strange because my memories of the experience are more akin to spiritual progress than to other studies I have conducted. I cannot claim to have followed all the philosophical and moral complexities of her work, nor to have become a better person for it. Yet I definitely feel a great affection for the insights into myself and human nature generally which were afforded me by Murdoch's views of life. Undoubtedly, the journey I made was due as much to the study conditions of a small, highly committed and generous group of fellow students as to my own intellect and interest; such conditions applied to the works of any serious author must yield stimulating and fruitful discussion. However, my experience and, I would venture, the experiences of those around me went beyond this in a way in which I think Murdoch herself would approve. We did not become instantly and profoundly "good", nor did we necessarily ponder the contingency of life at every twist. What we did find, however, was that each of us had his or her own pace and outlook, and that the emotional journey we each had to make was entirely our own, subject to the dictates of none. The overwhelming feeling of hope in her work, the promise of truly experiencing life, still has a profound effect on me which I trust will remain. I would like to think that this feeling is what every student seeks, regardless of where it is sought.

--Joanna Strong

As a young adult browsing through my parents' bookcase, my mother would often point to a Murdoch novel: "Such wonderful characters and fascinating plots" she would say enc[illegible]. Despite, or perhaps because of her recommendation it was not until my second year as a mature student that I read my first Murdoch novel, *The Unicorn*. Naturally, my mother was right. I found both characters and plot fascinating, but there was something else, something that had to be pursued through the Special Study offered in my final year. Effingham Cooper's extraordinary experience, lost in the bogs of Murdoch's beloved Ireland, spoke of a deep spiritual and philosophical encounter that I wanted to explore. I just hoped that my tutor would, like Denis Nolan, be able to guide me through the complexity of this unknown terrain.

For two terms we had weekly lecture/seminars lasting for two hours, covering a minimum of seven books from a possible fourteen offered. As we plunged into the heart of the philosophical thought that underpins all Murdoch's novels, there were moments where I shared something of Effingham Cooper's euphoria and something of his despair. The intensity of the hard brilliant light with which Murdoch exposes the human condition is both fascinating and terrifying. It is a kind of 'fairy fire' that can be analysed in structure, but has a magic of its own that eludes definition. As her moral philosophy unfolded before us, I found myself challenged and exhilarated by the force of her notions, yet somewhat downhearted by the realisation that individual change is a painfully slow process. If at times the complexity of Murdoch's philosophy began to weigh me down, the psychological realism and true comedy of her writing drew me onwards. Studying Murdoch became a journey of discovery, revealing literary and philosophical riches encountered through her deep understanding of the tragi-comedy that is the human experience.

Studying Murdoch is quite different from reading alone, I miss my fellow travellers. Although the terrain is now a little more familiar, I miss having a guide. Effingham Cooper's words echo my own feelings: 'The big thing had gone; and yet perhaps something remained' (*The Unicorn* 173).

--Gilli Briggs

Something I find exciting about Iris Murdoch's work is the way in which she can make you examine yourself as you examine her characters. In my first real encounter with Murdoch, *Under the Net*, I complained in my journal that Jake was "irritating". Several novels later, I was well accustomed to the feeling that every character, however vile, annoyed me because they were *like me*. Murdoch's worlds are thrilling because they are acutely observed; full of moments that stop your heart, make you hoot with laughter and sniff back the tears (sometimes all at once).

When my mother told her friend that I was studying Dame Iris, the friend said, "Golly, she's hard work". Of course she is; but as the old saying goes, "a bit of hard work has never hurt anyone", especially if it helps you take a fresh look at yourself in the process. As another friend of mine put it so astutely, "She's great. Don't ask me to explain why, she just *is*". These two statements are the closest I can get to an explanation of the way in which her writing works for me.

--Hazel Winter

For me, the most important factor in studying Murdoch in depth was the possibility of beginning to understand the whole person behind the writer. Murdoch was a philosopher before she was a novelist, and still is, as evidenced in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, and it is the voice of the philosopher, apparent once one is aware of it, which animates the novels.

Not a didactic writer, Murdoch allows the reader to take what he or she wants from her novels, and it is easy to miss the subtle but, nevertheless, firm philosophic points she is making about the nature of the good man, with whom, at heart, all her novels are concerned; and possible therefore to miss totally the point. (For instance, the figure of Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is often seen as the hero - fascinating, wickedly amusing, ultimately unobtainable, and therefore desirable - rather than as the wholly evil character he is, while the real hero, as in life, Tallis Brown, is ignored.)

Although immersion in a novelist like Murdoch might seem to narrow one's vision, as the correspondences within the novels become apparent, in fact, well-directed, it can lead to endlessly wide discussion of the intellectual areas in which the novels are really set: the Platonic ideal; the loss of spiritual values and the related loss of religious vocabulary without which understanding of the concepts themselves becomes limited; the philosophic systems behind Christian, Buddhist and Platonic ideas. On this level, studying Murdoch becomes a course in moral philosophy, and one which can be applied fruitfully to other areas within an English degree.

The downside might be, I suppose, that one will never read Murdoch again as only a superb storyteller; but the answer to that must be, would one want to?

--Jane Jantet

Prize-Winning Student Essay

Congratulations to Matthew Shaw, a 1995 graduate of Ball State University, who has been working with Murdoch's use of the Apollo-Marsyas myth in *The Good Apprentice* and *The Black Prince*. He recently won first prize (undergraduate division) for his paper, "Murdoch and Marsyas: the Dynamics of Transcendence," at the 1994 Conference for the Advancement of Early Studies (CAES). He was then invited to present this paper at the Third Meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews, and bibliographical information. Please address all materials to:

Cheryl K. Bove
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana 47306

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings.

If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the *News Letter*, please contact:

Tony Bove
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
1716 Timberview Dr.
Marion, Indiana 46952

For European membership please contact:
Anne Rowe
21 Upper Park Road
Kingston-Upon-Thames
Surrey KT2 5LB
England

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Iris Murdoch News Letter
Cheryl Bove
Ball State University
Department of English
Muncie, Indiana 47306

The Iris Murdoch Newsletter

Ball State University **Issue 10 - December, 1996**

The Worlds of Iris Murdoch

--Arthur Green,
County Down, Northern Ireland

...Although Murdochland is mostly located in south-east England, biographical notes on her novels insist that she was born in Dublin in 1919, and of Anglo-Irish parents. So she gets a cautious welcome from custodians of Irish literature in English.

...Iris Murdoch minimizes her own presence in the novels however and the critics take her literally. So there is much room to explore for sociological and biographical clues. I shall take for granted that her appeal is British, Irish and international, and that the fun and intellectual excitement of her books are incomparable. Instead I want to describe her as a product of the British Isles as a whole. I also want to suggest a broader definition of Anglo-Irishness than is conventional, using the world of Iris Murdoch's novels, and of her actual family, as a text.

Although the geographical world of her novels focuses on the British Isles it also includes continental Europe, North America and Japan. In particular there are several stories partly set in France. Bastille Day in Paris is a high point in *Under the Net*. Tim and Gertrude's idyll (and nightmare) in *Nuns and Soldiers* happens somewhere in southern France. History elsewhere in Europe reverberates, but only from time to time. There are refugees from Poland and Germany and Alsace....

The United States has a strong presence: Palmer Anderson in *A Severed Head*, Russ and Bella in *Henry and Cato*, Ludwig Leferrier in *An Accidental Man* are Americans. People often go to or come from the United States, like Morgan and Julius in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and John Robert Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil*. There are Japanese references in stories like *An Accidental Man* and *The Sea, The Sea*, and one of Iris Murdoch's plays - *The Three Arrows* is set in medieval Japan. There are no Indian or Chinese resonances that I can recall, but Tibet does figure, like Japan, because of Buddhism, in *The Sea, The Sea*.

This imagined world is unsurprising. France has for many years been a common second home for the British intelligentsia, and the United States likewise. Iris Murdoch may be marginally unusual in seeming to identify more with France and with Europe. A biographical reason is that in her youth she worked in continental Europe with UNRRA, studied in Paris, wrote a critical study of Sartre, and was refused a visa to study in the USA because she had been a member of the British Communist Party. At all events, France and the United States are both major presences in the novels, as they would be in the minds of most educated people in the British Isles. The importance of Japan, and of Zen, adds something more Murdochian to the perspectives.

...In an Irish context there are Jake Donaghue and Finn in *Under the Net*; there is Tim Burke, Irish activist in the Labour Party in *The Sandcastle*, and in *An Unofficial Rose* there is the house, Greyhallock, remodeled on the 19th century by an 'Orange Vandal', a linen merchant of vast wealth from County Tyrone. *A Severed Head* has its Anglo-Irish protagonist in Martin Lynch-Gibbon. *The Unicorn* is the first novel set in Ireland although no location is spelt out. But it is clearly based on a poeticized County Clare, where people drink whiskey (spelt with an 'e' and so Irish

whiskey); there are immense cliffs, (implicitly the Cliffs of Moher); there is the dangerous Scarren (to be thought of, I suggest, as the Burren) and an airport within two hours drive (like Shannon). And I need hardly stress the particularity of *The Red and the Green*'s focus on 1916 Dublin. Anyone who knows Dublin will savour the seediness of the novel's Blessington Street, the gentility of the suburbs she describes out towards Kingstown, and the country house ambiance of Rathblane; there is also a dialogue which amounts to a concentrated Irish history, told in extravagantly Anglo-Irish terms.

With *The Nice and the Good* we seem to go to Dorset, with an Anglo-Irish leading lady, probably from Clare, as the nice but not the good. The geographical background of the novels is extremely familiar to the British Isles common reader. Only Dublin and London - in particular the ten miles or so upstream from Blackfriar's Bridge - appear as precisely described real places. But characters and events do relate to most of the main regions of the British Isles, although the social focus is naturally middle class, and naturally located mainly in London and the South East. But just as the English reader expects to understand Joyce, and the history and geography of Dublin as reflected in his fiction, so the Irish reader is familiar with the London which Iris Murdoch describes. Indeed [this reader] is relatively more familiar with the rest of Britain than the English reader is with the rest of Ireland, because of the extent to which London is the main cultural focus of the British Isles with its publishing, newspapers, and television.

So because everyone in Ireland is able to participate in British cultural life if they wish to do so, and in many ways do so whether they wish to or not, everything in Iris Murdoch is accessible to us. For example, there are the particular variations of Christian tradition with which the British Isles are familiar. In parts of Ireland we have good simple hymn singing Protestant people, like Crystal Burde from the North of England in *A Word Child*. We have practising Catholics too, like characters in *An Accidental Man* and *Henry and Cato* as well as in *The Unicorn* and *The Red and the Green*. We have practising Anglicans like those in *An Unofficial Rose*. I would like to think that Ireland had many priests and clergy who had lost their faith or changed it beyond Christian recognition, like Cato Forbes and Brendan Craddock and like many Murdochian Anglican clergy.

...An empirical example of social communication within the British Isles is the role played by people with Quaker connections in Murdoch novels. There are only about 30,000 Quakers in Great Britain and 2000 in Ireland. They are extreme Protestants. They tend to be middle class but egalitarian. Their existence is almost confined to the English speaking world. But people from Quaker backgrounds are very frequent in Murdoch novels. They appear in *An Accidental Man*, *A Word Child, Henry and Cato*, and *The Message to the Planet* and there is a major role for them in *The Philosopher's Pupil*. Iris Murdoch uses Quakerism as a label for a variety of well meaning (but often dubious) rationalist and middle class attitudes but sometimes also for a wordless undogmatic goodness which fits in with her own intellectual Platonism and interest in Zen Buddhism. These associations of Quakerism are intelligible in Ireland, as in Britain, but would not carry much resonance outside the British Isles, and parts of North America.

This bi-insular approach to Iris Murdoch's work is deliberately prosaic. But it is the basic social context for Iris Murdoch's novels. Let me take two other examples. First, the phrase 'Whitehall' is a metaphor for the UK's central government mechanism and everyone in the British Isles understands this. There are similar metaphors elsewhere, like Iveagh House in Dublin or St Andrew's House in Edinburgh or Foggy Bottom in Washington. In her novels Iris Murdoch, who once worked in the Treasury, often locates people and events in Whitehall. In *A Word Child* there are wonderful descriptions of St James's Park and the buildings of central government nearby. In several novels we meet romanticized versions of the mandarin life style, but in *A Word Child* there is also a brilliant description of the lower bureaucratic depths, as well as what is a structurally exact, rank by rank, placing of

characters in the official hierarchy from clerk to permanent secretary. Brian O'Nolan - the working persona of Myes na Gopaleen - would have found the atmosphere familiar, whereas it still differs from the more utilitarian worlds of the 'enarques' and 'cabinets' of Paris or of the Washington 'in and outers'....

Yet it is not at all conventional to stress our bi-insularity, what we all have in common. The more usual stance exaggerates differences. A standard authority on Anglo-Irish literature - writing as late as 1982 - praises *Under the Net* as Iris Murdoch's first and best novel and makes the following extraordinary judgement: 'Later novels by Iris Murdoch have tended to create complex plots, groups of characters caught in the artificialities of life in the southern counties of England and dominated by some influential person. The complex plots in these questions of identity are resolved in the simplest way - usually by violent and unexpected deaths - and the characters are hardly worth the energy that must have gone into their creation. They remain, like some of Elizabeth Bowen's novels, clever but ultimately superficial' (A.N. Jeffares). It is not possible that the author had read the brilliant series of novels Iris Murdoch published in the seventies, but I quote him for his chauvinism and incomprehension.

On the other hand mainstream British critics are inclined to minimize the Irish element in *The Unicorn* and *The Red and the Green* and to make a few routine remarks about her Anglo-Irish identity. I am thinking, for instance, of Peter Conradi. Richard Todd does say that 'her Anglo-Irish background has given her a distinct sense of bi-national identity, and it has certainly fed the striking topography of her fiction'. But I think he is mistaken in finding Irish sources for the creation of *The Sea, The Sea*, and bi-national is hardly the right description of Iris Murdoch's stance. She simply inhabits both islands imaginatively, as most of us do, although to varying extents.

Iris Murdoch writes often about enclosed societies: A boarding school; a religious community; an isolated family; Quakers; Jews or a group of Oxford contemporaries. All these are intelligent middle class groups - elites indeed. But there are also Anglo-Irish characters and they, too, are seen as members of an elite: fragmented, sometimes Catholic, as in *The Red and the Green*, but generally conforming to a conventional Anglo-Irish image. There are occasional Irish Catholic individuals like Peregrine Arbelow in *The Sea, The Sea* and Patrick Fenman in *The Message to the Planet*. But the only images we have of Irish Catholic people in general come from the good rural Denis Nolan in *The Unicorn* and the emotional Palm Sunday crowds in *The Red and the Green*. There is a similar primitive impression of Irish Protestants as a group, in their marquee near Kingstown, with whom an Anglo-Irish character reluctantly supposes he may have more in common than with the Catholics. It is a fair inference that if Ulster Protestants appeared anywhere as a group, and they do not, that Iris Murdoch would treat them in a similarly detached way. This set of attitudes fits in with the stereotypes which might be expected from the child of Anglo-Irish parents, born in Dublin in 1919 but now based firmly in Oxford. Iris Murdoch's immediate origins are "in fact" very different from what the formula suggests. Her parents were Hughes Murdoch and Irene Richardson. They married in Dublin in 1918 when Hughes, aged 28, was an Army second lieutenant and Irene was aged 19. Hughes had been a boy clerk and then a second class clerk in the civil service, first in London, then in Dublin. By the time Iris Murdoch was born in 1919, his address was in Acton and he was back with the civil service but now in London. Iris Murdoch was born at a family home in Blessington Street, Dublin, but this was because the Richardson family lived there.

The official documents show that her parents had married in December 1918 at a Dublin registry office.... There was no Murdoch witness on the marriage certificate, and it is a curious fact that Irene's father, Effingham Lynch Richardson is described on the certificate as a deceased solicitor, since the Dublin Law Society has no record of a solicitor with this name. In a census return of 1901 he had, however, appeared as a 'law assistant.'

The Murdochs are a middle class Ulster family. They farmed for about seven generations at Hillhall, near Lisburn. In the late 19th century Richard Murdoch lived at Ballymullan House and held 50 acres from the Marquess of Downshire and ten acres from the Hertford estate. His wife was Sarah Hughes and the family were Presbyterians. Richard and Sarah had a large family including a hardware merchant in Kingstown, a doctor in Liverpool, perhaps the first of this family to have secondary and tertiary education, and was the eldest son Wills John Murdoch. The name Wills no doubt originated from a family name of their landlords, the Downshires. Wills Murdoch went to New Zealand as a farmer. He married Louisa Shaw there, and in 1890 Wills John Hughes Murdoch was born at Thames, not far from Auckland. Wills and Louisa ('A girl from far away', to use the language of *The Good Apprentice*) returned very soon to inherit the family farm at Hillhall, but in 1902, after several years of mounting debt, the farm was sold, and in 1903 Wills died, aged only 45. His estate was worth roughly 1500 pounds and Hughes, who was partly educated a few miles away at the Quaker school at Brookfield, joined the civil service in London in 1906. Except for the 1914-18 war when he served in King Edwards Horse, a territorial unit with colonial connections, he remained a civil servant until he retired in 1950. In his last post he was assistant Registrar General for England and Wales, at what would later be the senior principal grade: far above Hilary Burde in *A Word Child*, far below Octavian Gray in *The Nice and the Good* or Rupert Foster in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*.

All Hughes' relations that I know of live in Ireland and are Protestants: one group stem from the Brethren of Ulster, and have strong dental and medical associations; the stepson of an aunt of Iris Murdoch was a Unionist politician there; a cousin teaches philosophy at Queen's University, Belfast, and has written a disenchanted autobiography about his youth among the Brethren; another used to run the family hardware store at Dun Laoghaire (formerly Kingstown), another was formerly Professor of Mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin. Several are or were Quakers or married to Quakers. This account is incomplete, but the extended Murdoch family comes out as a very intelligent, middle class organism, stuffed with independent minds, a model example of Protestant and British Ireland. What they are not, however, is Anglo-Irish, if that entails land owning, horses and Anglicanism. I concede that Hughes Murdoch did apparently love horses and had an outlet for this with his cavalry regiment!

The Richardsons, the family of Iris Murdoch's mother, Irene Alice Cooper Richardson, belong to a different part of the Irish Protestant community. Irene's own parents were Effingham Lynch Richardson and Elizabeth Jane Nolan. They married in 1889 and Irene was born in 1899. They were Anglicans and lived in Dublin. No record of Effingham's death has been discovered and he was missing from Blessington Street in 1911.

If we look behind Effingham Lynch Richardson we find his father Robert Cooper Richardson born at Carrickmacross, County Monaghan. He worked in the Dublin Probate Office and seems to have lived until he was immensely old. In turn Robert's father was Robert Lindesay Richardson, a Revenue officer.... O'Hart's *Irish Pedigrees* mentions Effingham Lynch and Robert Cooper, and records as Robert Lindesay's father a John Richardson of Farlough, High Sheriff of Tyrone in 1778. His wife was Hannah Lindesay, and before him there were two generations of Richardsons at Farlough. Before a further (un-named) ancestor the first entry in O'Hart's series is Alexander Richardson, in possession of Crayhallock in 1619.

Crayhallock is the large property now known as Drum Manor Forest Park, near Cookstown. At various times in the past three centuries it has also been known as Manor Richardson and Oaklands. Addicts of Iris Murdoch's novels will recognize the name of the house 'Grayhallock' in *An Unofficial Rose* and its links with County Tyrone. ...[Another] family link [is] with Farlough Lodge, near Newmills, County Tyrone, a few miles from Cookstown, which is attractively described in the *Pevsner* Guide to North West Ulster, and

belonged to Iris Murdoch's great great great grandfather, John Richardson.

During the nineteenth century the Richardsons mostly belonged to the Irish Protestant middle class. They formed a large extended family and it is striking that the family has already included two women writers, one very distinguished. The better known is Ethel Florence Lindesay Richardson who wrote under the name of Henry Handel Richardson. She was the daughter of Walter Lindesay Richardson MD, model for Richard Mahony in her *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*. Walter Lindesay was a younger son of Alexander Richardson, eldest son of John Richardson of Farlough. So Henry Handel Richardson was a second cousin of Effingham Lynch Richardson; indeed in her unfinished autobiography she refers to her strongly Protestant Irish Richardson relations, and their penchant for odd names 'such as Henry Handel and a Duke, more than one Snow and several Effinghams'. The work of Henry Handel Richardson is very remarkable, but I will only note that her novels used material from her early life in Australia and her youth in Germany. Later she lived in England, married to a Scottish professor of German. Like her distant cousin Iris Murdoch, she wrote as a member of a broad British and European cultural world.

The other literary Richardson is much less celebrated. Robert Cooper Richardson had a sister Frances Elizabeth who married Henry Fisher MD, of Limerick and Chelsea. She wrote volumes of verse (*Lonely Hours, Ainsworth's Heir*), a book about Killarney and works such as *Love or Hatred* (three volumes) and *The Secret of Two Houses* (two volumes). Whatever their quality, and all I know is that they seem to have been widely and favourable reviewed, it is interesting now that she was Effingham Richardson's aunt. It is similarly interesting that Ethel Richardson had substantial musical talents and went to Leipzig to study music before she married and became a writer, rather as her distant cousin Irene, Effingham's daughter, had had ambitions to become an opera singer before she married Hughes Murdoch. So the Richardsons had produced serious artistic talent, and had continuing artistic tastes, well before Iris Murdoch emerged to give them their great retrospective interest.

The Richardson family has a part in Iris Murdoch's literary imagination. In *The Unicorn* there are pole characters called Effingham Cooper and Denis Nolan. Effingham is English, Denis is presumably Irish and apparently Catholic. In real life Irene's father's name was Effingham Richardson, her mother's name was Elizabeth Nolan, and her grandfather was Robert Cooper Richardson, so the names Effingham Cooper and Denis Nolan seem to have biographical meaning and it is natural to suppose that Iris Murdoch wishes to see both Protestant and Catholic elements in her own family background, even if Elizabeth Nolan and her family, in spite of their family name, were Protestants.

Critics have often said that *The Red and the Green* could have been set anywhere and tend to play down its value as a historical novel. I think this is a mistake. Its locations in Blessington Street, (where Iris Murdoch was born) and on Dublin's south shore, are Richardson and Murdoch locations. The complicated Anglo-Irish Kinnards and Drumms in the novel have in several cases become Catholics (as a cousin of Effingham Richardson - also called Effingham - seems to have done). Hilda and Barnabas Drumm's mother is said in the novel to have had Richardson as her maiden name. It is natural to suppose that Drum Manor has begotten the name Drumm, and that in Iris Murdoch's imagination that is the source of her Anglo-Irish identification. Above all it is striking that Andrew Chase White, born like Hughes Murdoch in a colony, serves like Hughes as a junior officer in King Edward's Horse, and feels some pressure from relatives to marry and leave his wife pregnant before he has to go to the front line, and his likely death. In October 1918, when Iris Murdoch was conceived, an early end to the war was not expected. No one, I think, has yet considered Iris Murdoch's Irish novels as in any way central to her self image. It seems to me that they demonstrably are. But to return to Anglo-Irishness and what is meant by it. The Anglo-Irish of Iris Murdoch's novels are indeed what we conventionally mean by this term. They are affluent, they are generally Protestants, but they are

quite distinct from Ulster Protestants. Iris Murdoch has tended to identify herself with that Anglo-Irish image.... In reality her family background mirrors the whole Irish Protestant community, including Ulster Presbyterian farmers at Hillhall, an Anglican revenue officer from Carrickmacross and a medical adventurer who went to Australia. Yet the description Anglo-Irish could validly be saved for her by giving it a more universal meaning, and using it today to identify those who feel part of a bi-insular society, even a North West Atlantic society, to which everyone in Ireland may belong whatever their religion or class. To be Anglo-Irish in this sense is to reject the insular aberration which prevailed in the early 20th century. It is also to represent a point of view which is totally independent of the fate of the old Anglo-Irish class and which is more rational and attractive than any alternative.

...Her own family is a good example of the inter-relationships between Britain and Ireland, and between the various Irish communities themselves. Henry Handel Richardson related to Europe (in her case Germany rather than France) and to the wider English speaking world in an earlier generation. And Iris Murdoch herself, by instinct and intelligence, is a novelist who relates to the whole British Isles, and does not fit into the crude statist categories of British or Irish or the conventional meaning of Anglo-Irish.

...[Finally] I would like to add my mite to the praise of Iris Murdoch. First then, one direct quotation, to show her as the freest of free spirits, Ariel rather than Prospero. It is her published response to Frederic Raphael's request to talk about books:

> I read stories, also poetry, also philosophy, theology, politics. The first book I was aware of was *Treasure Island* and I re-read it at intervals. Basic diet: nineteenth-century English and Russian novels, plus Henry James, plus Proust. I like adventure stories and romances of almot any kind (not detective stories except for Raymond Chandler): anything from *Sir Gawain* and *Morte d'Arthur* and *The Tale of Genji* to *The Lord of the Rings*, P.G. Wodehouse and *Tintin*. The higher loves: Homer and Shakespeare. I need and re-visit very various poems and poets, some Greeks and Romans, English seventeenth century, all sorts of religious and love poetry, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, haiku. The philosophers I have fed most upon are Plato, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Simone Weil. I love a clear thinker and a plain speaker: Hume, Wittgenstein, Freud. Home: the *Iliad*, certain plays of Shakespeare. Fun: any good yarn.

That quotation has the jokey, liberated, learned, serious spirit which Iris Murdoch's admirers love.

[From the editors: We are grateful for Mr Green's permission to publish edited extracts from his lengthy, stimulating and very well-researched piece. In *Recontres avec Iris Murdoch* [Caen, 1978] Dame Iris recounted that, while (p. 92) her mother's ancestors are "Anglo-Irish", her father's ancestors are lowlands Scots, "farmers from County Down", "Ulster ... Puritans" to whom she [proudly] ascribes her own Puritanism. Nor is it quite true that in her fiction "Ireland" always or mainly means "Ascendancy". Her little-known - and quite long - early short story "Something Special" is set in the lovingly depicted dingy lower-middle class world of a girl brought up in a Dublin "shop" and longing for escape. It is a social world Joyce and O'Casey might have recognised.]

In Defense of *Bruno's Dream*

--David W. Beams,
Borough of Manhattan Community College

In *IMNL* 9 John J. Burke, Jr. wondered why Harold Bloom rates *Bruno's Dream* so highly among Iris Murdoch's novels. Those who agree with Bloom are bound to answer that Bruno Greensleave's dying is rendered with "passion and profundity" (Walter Allen) and that in this novel death is, in Schopenhauer's words, the "truth inspiring genius or the muse of philosophy." There is a distillation of that philosophy in the novel's mottoes "love is death" and "all is one" and in Diana's thoughts at Bruno's bedside at the end (borrowing from Gabriel Marcel): "Relax. Let them walk on you. Love them. Let love like a huge vault open out overhead." For some people the novel may have a powerfully appealing, disciplinary, homiletic

quality. Otherwise, the story, though fraudulent (the dream "begot of nothing but vain fantasy"), is immensely entertaining with showy actions like the duel with pistols on the mudbanks of the Thames and the terrific Thames flood.

But Professor Burke asked whether Harold Bloom "knows something about Iris Murdoch and her accomplishments that somehow or another has escaped the rest of us." One can only conjecture what Bloom knows, but there is no question that the allegorical *form* of *Bruno's Dream* has escaped the Murdoch critics. No one could deny that death as experienced by Bruno and Diana at the end is what Schopenhauer calls the moral and essential result of the vain, deluded, contradictory striving of life: "the great opportunity no longer to be I ... to die willingly, to die gladly ... is the prerogative of the resigned, of him who surrenders and denies the will to live...." With her conviction that ethics has been "undefended against an irresponsible and undirected self-assertion" or unrealistic conception of "will," Murdoch in this novel wrote a breathtaking allegory of the Schopenhauerian will to live, with also the Vedantic and Buddhist referents in which Schopenhauer's moral philosophy receded her. (In *After the Raj*, 1986, David Rubin calls *Bruno's Dream* the "outstanding utilization in fiction of India as a redemptive and illuminating power.")

Where we are constantly reminded of Eros and Thanatos in the novel, the key to its nondualist myth is the recognition by Bruno's son, the poet Miles, that there are "a false pair and a true pair" of the angels of love and death. In the false pair we have something like the Buddhist Kama-Mara legend where the love god Kama becomes identified with his opposite Mara (death). In the novel this is "love's enlivening and magnifying of the greedy passionate self" to envisage and even exult in suffering, separation, and pain. The firm underpinning in Schopenhauer is that the freedom of the noumenal will is everywhere checked by the necessity of the phenomenon, the *principium individuationis*. Thus in this first sense love is death in the ruthless frustration of the striving, egoistic individual (Bruno's unavailing quest for "forgiveness" like a stay of death almost, the nightmare his marriage became, his fruitless "million-times-thought" thoughts, his son's opposition, his dream of the spider God where the thread snaps, the tempestuous actor Will tied up by Nigel or made mad by Adelaide's infidelity, Miles's "black blissful death" or "rack of ecstasy" in illicitly loving Lisa, etc.) Schopenhauer says of romantic love that the will represents what has value for the species as being valuable to the individual, deceiving him into believing that love is the supreme god to which every other happiness may be irrationally sacrificed. But this deception vanishes after the attainment of the end of the species. "The spirit of the species which took possession of the individual sets it free again." Where the individual interest is concerned, sexual instinct, passionate love, is death, as Lisa will finally recognize. The other, true pair of angels is the death of desire, the abolition of the will in selfless compassion, sacrificial loving kindness making no distinction between the self and others, which, along the mystical lines of Mahayana Buddhism and Schopenhauer's ethics, is the only *real* death.

Bruno Greensleave's name is the keynote of duality in this nondualist myth, signifying the two seasons of the mortal envelope (or "sheath" or sheaths in Hinduism), the spring and autumn of human destiny ("B. Greensleave" to his fellow zoologists, he is now mainly "Bruno" to the reader). Bruno's mother and the life-calling of the spiders embody the world as will and his father and the printing works (as well as the spider's orb web) the world as idea or representation. Bruno's nubile mistress Maureen is the will to live as it takes up the individual and makes him temporarily invulnerable to the *principium individuationis* in the promissory immortality of sex, but she is a decoy of the life-experience in which Bruno is bound to his wife, Janie, the punishing necessity of the *principium individuationis*. As seductive Maureen charms Bruno by haphazardly moving bright chess forms about the board, so the "joy" of her indifferently moves the individuals Bruno and Janie to their miserable duel and knowledge of death.

The most extraordinary metaphor is that in which the twins Nigel the nurse and Will the actor, with their cousin Adelaide the maid, allegorize--both in their interplay and in their relation, as a unit, to the other characters--the *gunas* or qualities which in Hinduism underlie the phenomenal world and its impairments (and are discussed by Schopenhauer). Nigel is *sattva* (knowledge, harmony), Will *rajas* (passion, activity), and Adelaide *Tamas* (stolidity, numbing inertia). At the end, thinking of love as Nigel had expounded it, Diana asks herself, "Who had said that to her? Perhaps no one had said it except some spirit in her own thoughts" (*sattva*). Danby's affair with Adelaide is a metaphor of the disproportionate *tamas* within him, his moral lethargy, his failure really to love or act. And the flamboyant action of his unwilling duel with Will, Nigel presiding, is the near-execution of the phenomenal world from this imbalance or imperiling of the *gunas*. But Nigel in his affection for Danby preserves it and him, which expresses the attachment of *sattva* to the other *gunas* with Danby (who has himself *acted* in the duel after all, and unselfishly) so that in the river's stream of rebirths he is reborn in the will to live. By contrast, it is Bruno's destiny to die. Adelaide presides over his first or false death when the Thames, or river of life, floods the house in Stadium Street, i.e., life inflicts nescience, terror, and grotesque mortality upon the individual. But at last Bruno dies peacefully from the contrition and compassion with which he perceives the long-ago deathbed of Janie: "'Janie, I am so sorry.'"

Let me focus on one action, which is indeed the last and humblest in the novel and the kind of passage that might account for Bloom's affection for the book. As it is Bruno's spiders in which the dualistic deception originates--Murdoch draws on the Upanishadic spider-similes: "As a spider might come out with his thread ... even so from the Soul came forth all vital energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings," etc.--so, in the absolute unity of the novel, the true pair of angels, the denial of the will, is dramatized by the spider. With "the woman" whom, as he ceases to distinguish, Bruno no longer recognizes by his bedside (Diana), he has been watching a big spider casting a thread around a house fly struggling in its web on the window. Putting her hand into the web, destroying its symmetry, the woman detaches the fly into a mug and "with more difficulty captured the spider in the cup." The spider is "agitated, trying to rush up the slippery side of the cup. The woman kept moving the cup with a light circular motion against the direction of the spider, so that it kept falling back again to the bottom. After a while it was still." At Bruno's direction Diana kills the fly and reintroduces the spider to its web where it now cowers back "so as to be almost invisible."

Bruno is at once the fly, the web, and the spider. The fly in its death struggle is Bruno's body or phenomenal being. The spider's web is Bruno's mind or consciousness, the idea or representation--in the terminology of Schopenhauer's transcendental idealism--of his death; it is the corporeal object as seized and experienced by the knowing subject; it is the "diaphanous ectoplasm" in which Bruno's doomed mind and body are fusing, the pain "of the mind, or somehow of the whole being ... which vibrated blindly with the agony of consciousness." But it is the spider which is responsible for this. The spider is the universal, underlying will to live which, itself knowing no death, preys on the illusory individual (the fly) by means of the world as idea, the *principium individuationis* (the web) under which the phenomenal individual miserably lives and dies while blind immortal will abides devouring the universe. But for a moment the spider has been captive, its agitations quieted at the bottom of the cup. Diana's "light circular motion against the direction" of the scrambling spider is what Schopenhauer calls the denial or "turning" of the will away from life, by which all egoistic craving for existence is stilled in the saintly man, the striving of universal will extinguished in the only meaningful, real death. The white cross observed by Bruno and Diana on the back of this common garden spider is the unceasing crucifixion of the will to live which may yet become holy by such a turning of the will upon itself as Christ's. Now the spider is "almost invisible" in its web and the symmetry of the web destroyed, i.e., Bruno's consciousness no longer supports the veil of maya and the will to live.

As to what accomplishments of Murdoch's Bloom may sense that we have slighted, two points are to be made. The first concerns our recourse to the "ideas" in Murdoch's papers (or in other novels seemingly parallel to the one we are studying). Of course *Bruno's Dream* is consistent with her ethic of love, of vision, of knowledge and with her dissent from the picture of the moral agent as a "privileged centre of will." But clearly the ideas don't take us far into the design of the novel until it is seen that they are mediated by, or assimilated to, a larger, autonomous and *systematic* myth or structure with which they harmonize, in this case the great metaphysic of Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea*. Our second recognition, or maybe the same one, must be that, important though (in this case) Nigel's speeches or sayings may be, and Lisa's, etc., and much of the internal monologue of whichever character, the system or myth of the novel is primarily communicated by allegorical *actions* great and small.

Nigel (*sattva*) with rope binds his reckless, impulsive brother Will: "Lie still and relax your muscles and listen to me." Or with Bruno in the trying-on room at Harrod's, Maureen panics as she can't pull the dress over her head. As she waves her arms in a Shiva-like dance, "masked by the dress," Bruno pulls and the dress tears to reveal Janie gazing on them (Bruno's own inability to keep still, the irrepressible agitations of flesh tearing the sleeve, sheath, shape of his life in intimations of death). Or with Adelaide as unwilling accessory, Will steals Bruno's valuable stamp, a Cape of Good Hope triangular ("triangular" in honor of the gunas and allegorizing Bruno's continuing victimization by the will to live *within* him, as in his effort to shore up an idea of himself through his son). Or at nearly the end, Bruno still suffers a pared down dualistic world: "soup, bedpan, soup, bedpan." Any of these actions really says it all; each is a miniature of the whole myth. So it is from the interlocking of the many metaphors that the *meaning* of the novel is generated, where without this so much (Nigel's speeches, etc.) seems just riddling. For me this more abstract, allegorical dimension does not in any way detract but cohabits perfectly with the naturalistic life in the Murdoch novels.

Katabasis in Vergil and Murdoch

--Frances Mayhew Rippy
Ball State University

Plot in the novels of Iris Murdoch is almost never circular, ... but is repeatedly elliptical, sometimes with two works of art, taken from different media, as the two symbolic/thematic/alegorical foci of the novel. Both are probably already familiar to the educated reader, but in case they are not, the characters in that particular novel will, by way of exposition, discuss the art objects among themselves so that the readers too will learn of or recall them. *The Black Prince* (1973), for example, has as its foci Titian's *Flaying of Marsyas* or Perugino's "Apollo and Marsyas" in the Louvre ... and Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*. This elliptical structure is particularly illuminating in Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good* (1968), where the foci are Bronzino's "An Allegory" in the National Gallery and Vergil's Descent into the Underworld in *The Aeneid*.

The Descent into the Underworld (its classical term is *Katabasis* or *Catabasis*--a going down) is a frequent feature of classical and neo-classical literature. The epic hero, with a protective guide, visits the underworld to make sense of his past, encounter once more the dead who have shaped his present, and project himself into his future. Thus, Odysseus in Book Eleven of *The Odyssey* visits Hades, the Land of the Dead, advised by Teiresias, and more than twenty centuries later in *The Divine Comedy* Dante will visit Hell guided by Vergil. It is this most appropriate guide who provides Murdoch with a focus point for *The Nice and the Good*, and whose version of the descent into the underworld is twice paralleled at key points in that novel.

When Vergil's account opens in Book Six of *The Aeneid*, Aeneas has been told, first by the Trojan prophet Helenus and then by the image of his dead father Anchises, that as soon as he lands on the Italian shores he must visit the Cumaean sibyl, who will lead him to a meeting in Elysium with Anchises himself, at which he will learn of the future of his race. When Book Six opens, Aeneas lands on the west coast of Italy and dutifully seeks out the secret haunt of the

dreaded sibyl, a vast hollowed-out cave, containing treasures. Pressed for time, Aeneas and some of his men enter the sibyl's golden temple, the cave with a hundred passages and a hundred doors, on which Daedalus has carved various accounts, including that of the Cretan labyrinth. The sibyl greets Aeneas as one who has "come through great perils of the sea" but faces still greater dangers. He asks the sibyl to guide him. She warns him that "easy is the descent to Lake Avernus [a dark, foul-smelling sheet of water] but to retrace your steps, very few of divine origin have been able to do it." Aeneas and the sibyl then proceed to "a deep cave, wild with a vast, yawning mouth, rocky and protected by a black lake and the darkness of the groves. Over this opening hardly any birds could wing their way without harm, such was the vapor pouring from the dark throat and rising to the vault above." In a divine frenzy, she plunges into the open cave, and he follows. They descend into Hades, where Acheron, "a stream churning with slime from a vast whirlpool, boiled up and threw all its sand into the Cocytus." When Charon has reluctantly ferried them across, they meet the three-headed dog, Cerberus, lying in the cave in front of them, but he falls harmlessly to sleep when they throw him "a cake drugged with honey and sleep-producing grain." (In *The Divine Comedy*, Cerberus is guarding the gluttons in Hell, in the Third Circle, Canto VI, where they lie wallowing in the mire, drenched by perpetual rain. Vergil quiets him by hurling into his three mouths handfuls of the "miry ground"--otherwise, Cerberus busies himself by mauling the gluttons.) Aeneas and the sibyl enter the second cave and visit the abode of infants, the falsely accused, and suicides, then the Fields of Mourning (where Aeneas meets Dido, who, having slain herself when he abandoned her, still will not speak to him). The road becomes more difficult. Aeneas meets Trojan warriors, but the sybil reminds him that time is passing fast and that they have come to the place where "the road parts in two directions." On the right, the road that they must take "leads up to the very walls of great Dis [Pluto], and by this route we go to Elysium." Around Pluto's many-gated palace lie wide wastes, wan and cold, and meadows of asphodel, strange, pallid, ghostly white flowers. The road to the left "inflicts punishment upon the wicked and sends them to the hell of the damned." The sibyl describes the various sins which may lead a man to be damned. Phlegyas, "a most miserable man, admonishes all and loudly proclaims through the shadows: 'Being warned, learn justice and do not scorn the gods.'" In Elysium, "a freer air" with "yellow sand," Aeneas meets Anchises, who points out to him the souls destined to return to earth in second bodies. Aeneas asks, "O father is it possible that any souls go from here to the light of day above and again return to sluggish bodies? What a fierce desire for the light of day these miserable beings must have!" and Anchises replies, in part, "We each suffer our own expiation...." Having heard prophecies of the future of Rome, Aeneas returns to his ships and his comrades above.

The episode is one of the most famous sections of *The Aeneid*, but to underline it in *The Nice and the Good*, Murdoch has Willy Kost, a refugee scholar, teaching *The Aeneid* both to Paula Biranne (even this very episode, the Descent into the Underworld) and to Pierce Clothier.

There are two key episodes in *The Nice and the Good* that draw heavily upon the Vergilian katabasis, the second episode using very specific echoing details. The first, in Chapter Twenty-six, is the descent of the protagonist John Ducane with his menacing and untrustworthy guide Peter McGrath into the old air-raid shelters under the office and the disused subway under them, where Radeechy used to hold his black magic rites and where Ducane will discover the cryptograph which will solve the central puzzle of the novel--the murder-suicide. Details of the scene parallel the katabasis in *The Aeneid*; again, it is a slippery and perilous descent into a kind of cave, the steps sticky, slimy, foul-smelling, into a place that has seen hellish rites involving dead birds. Even the British vocabulary enhances the classical/infernal effect: the disused subway is an *underground*, the flashlight that McGrath is carrying and that Ducane wishes he had brought for himself is a *torch*.

Parallels to the *Aeneid* katabasis are even more specific and more striking in the second episode, Chapters Thirty-four and Thirty-five of *The Nice and the Good*. Near Trescombe is Gunnar's cave, a labyrinthine tidal cave, reputed to be the hiding spot of treasures but deadly at high tide when all its air space fills up with water. The fifteen-year-old Pierce Clotheir, unguided but carrying an electric torch, swims into the cave as a suicidal act of bravado. Like Aias in *The Odyssey* and Dido in *The Aeneid*, Pierce finds himself in this Hades because he is driven there by "humiliation and rejection and despair." John Ducane, Pierce's mother's friend, later to become her husband, swims into the cave in an attempt to guide Pierce back. As in Vergil's underworld, Pierce at first discovers two caverns; then there are more, labyrinthine. The water, as in *The Aeneid*, is dark, threatening, repelling. (Outside the cave are clumps of white daisies, the English equivalent of the classical asphodels.) Searching for Pierce, Ducane has a vision of the face of Pierce's mother, Mary: "At the same time, as if the darkness itself had become a screen upon which the contents of his mind could be projected physically, he saw before him with absolute clarity the sallow anxious face of Mary Clothier"--and, slightly later, "He saw Mary Clothier's face, no longer anxious but looking tender and sad. We have both died, he thought, and then could not recall who 'we' were." He is indeed finding himself in the Land of the Dead. Only by supernatural aid will he be able to save himself and Pierce. "He thought to himself, 'Strength will do it, every bit of strength I have, supernatural strength.'" He has one more vision of the pallid face of a woman, which composes itself into Mary's face.

But at two crucial points, Murdoch takes Vergil and turns him upside down, giving an opposite Christian turn to a classical concept. In *The Aeneid*, Phlegyas had loudly demanded that all listeners learn justice--the moral theme of Aeneas's katabasis. But Ducane in *The Nice and the Good* finds the opposite view of justice, that no fallible man can provide it. He has intended to reveal Richard Biranne's considerable share in the Radeechy murder/suicide and see that he is punished, that justice is done. But when he finds Pierce and they work their way up a rock chimney where they may survive drowning yet die of hypothermia, "he patted Pierce's shoulder and burrowed his hand beneath it. He thought, if I ever get out of here I will be no man's judge. Nothing is worth doing except to kill the little rat (seeking out its own advantages and comforts), not to judge, not to be superior, not to exercise power, not to seek, seek, seek. To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only this matters. All power is sin and all law is frailty. Love is the only justice. Forgiveness, reconciliation, not law." Not the lesson Aeneas, but the lesson of John Ducane.

The post-classical transformation of the katabases of *The Aeneid* and *The Nice and the Good* is nowhere more plainly seen than in the roles that the dog plays in both (and in *The Divine Comedy* between them). In *The Aeneid*, it is the fierce Cerberus, guarding, manageable only when fed the drugged honeycake. In *The Divine Comedy*, Cerberus is even fiercer and less attractive, mauling the gluttons, himself gluttonously gobbling the miry earth. In *The Nice and the Good*, however, the dog Mingo, the family pet, saves the lives of Pierce and Ducane when they interpose the warmth of his body between them in the narrow rock fissure until the tide recedes and lets them escape the cave.

In the katabases of both *The Aeneid* and *The Nice and the Good*, the protagonist must make a journey to the underworld in order to encounter not only his future but his past. Most of all, he must encounter and recognize and come to terms with himself. Both Aeneas and John Ducane, already basically good men when they enter their caverns of death, emerge from their confrontation much wiser than they entered it--and with a much clearer sense of purpose.[1]

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[1] Works Cited: *The Aeneid of Vergil*, trans. by Kevin Guinagh. New York: Rinehart, 1959; Murdoch, Iris. *The Nice and the Good*. London: Penguin, 1969.

Questioning Krishnamurti: J. Krishnamurti in dialogue with leading twentieth century thinkers including Iris Murdoch, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche [Thorsons, London and San Francisco] 1996 255 pp; paperback $15.00 and 9.99 pounds sterling.

Iris Murdoch is a writer whose work has a spiritual dimension. She considers that a vital role of art is to re-interpret the idea of religion to each successive age, and considers this task to be urgent. Three disparate utterances illustrate the point. "What one wants to find out is : how consciousness is changed and how conduct is changed" [2]. "I want there to be religion on this planet" [3]. And lastly, "Everything I have ever written has been concerned with holiness". [4]

Brought up an Anglican, she at first rejected Christianity for a brief flirtation with Marxism. Since then, she has often recorded a spiritual hunger that Christianity cannot quite satisfy, at least not before it relinquishes its dependence on "historical" myths such as the Incarnation and Resurrection.

She seeks a demythologised Christianity, or, to put the same point another way, a Christianity willing to learn from Buddhism. Christ, for her, is the Buddha of the West, an ordinary mortal who attained Enlightenment, and whose life itself is a kind of Teaching. Her own spiritual quest has thus been idiosyncratic, or passionately individual, depending on your point of view. "Up any religion a man may climb"[5] - is how one of her characters puts the matter. Murdoch's fierce integrity recalls that of other twentieth century seekers and mystics who were non-joiners - Simone Weil, refused to join the Catholic Church despite an impassioned sense of connection with it, and by whose work and life Murdoch has been long inspired and preoccupied, and Rudolph Steiner, who also saw Christ as a Western Buddha.

Or, in this case, Krishnamurti, who, at a famous meeting in Holland in 1929, with fierce courage, publicly and painfully dissolved the "Order of the Star" in which Annie Besant and his other admirers and acolytes had invested so much time and energy. Krishnamurti sought a religion free from "organisation", free from propaganda, wholly urgent, entirely personal in the sense that no one else can do the work for us, yet also entirely universal, uncompromising in its demandingness. In effect he was attacking what Trungpa Rinpoche, with whom he has another dialogue in this collection, was memorably to term "spiritual materialism". Rather as Krishnamurti gave up his Order, so Trungpa Rinpoche around 1970 gave up holy orders as a monk. Both wanted to have nowhere to hide in order to teach with greater immediacy.

"Whatever the spiritual life is, it is something you have to discover for yourself", Murdoch agrees in this interview. The meeting between these two spiritual giants must have been something to behold. "Many who knew him felt overwhelmed, deeply awed even, by a sense of sacredness and unconditional love flowing from him" records the editor of this volume. Something analogous has been noted by many who have had the privilege of meeting Iris Murdoch.

Reading a transcript is mildly frustrating. Frustrating partly because the words exchanged can represent only a fraction of the communication taking place - the language of gesture, the dynamic silences, the whole atmosphere - none of this is represented on paper. Frustrating also because, as a result. the real transaction taking place, the release of energy or wakefulness which the audience may have experienced, is also hidden from view. What we are left with is a Socratic dialogue in which both participants to some degree play both roles, protagonist and deuteragonist, with a skill and patience that are inscrutable.[6] In the

2 Interview with Michael Bellamy, *Contemporary Literature*, XVIII, 2, Spring 1977, 129-40.

3 J. Haffenden, "In conversation with Iris Murdoch", *The Literary Review* April 1983, no 58 pp. 31-5.

4 Conversation with present writer, c. summer 1984. This was in a particular context, namely a discussion of the so-called 'Crazy Wisdom tradition' of Tibet, from which Chögyam Trungpa sprang, and about whose apparent antinomianism Dame Iris had doubts.

5 Nigel in *Bruno's Dream* [1969]

early Socratic dialogues, the reader will recall that Socrates, like a Zen Master, drives his young interlocutors into what literary critics term *aporia*, and Buddhists might refer to as that cessation of 'rational' or discursive mind which can permit "waking-up" to begin.

Krishnamurti [1895-1986] was 89 years old, and survived only two years longer. Murdoch was 65. More often than not, she appears to play *ephebe* to Krishnaji's *mentor*. Part of the 'wit' of the piece is to watch how often she is willing to un-learn her own world, her own discourse, in order the better to try to enter into, understand and then learn from his. "Oh dear, thank you very much" are her last words to him, words which politely express a comical and typically self-deprecating bemusement. Whether such moving patient and accomplished negative capability as she demonstrates is actually the mark of a student, or rather of a "Master/Mistress", the reader will decide for her/himself.

I must confess to finding Krishnamurti's teaching somewhat baffling, both for the reasons that Murdoch here addresses - his determined rejection of a Path - and also because I find myself moved more cerebrally than emotionally by teachings whose power is none the less clear. Krishnamurti had lost his beloved brother when he was young, and knew much anguish. One dialogue entitled "How can one Overcome the Despair of Bereavement?" with a woman who has lost both her son and her husband, reads eloquently, with no flaws of logic, and Krishnaji speaks with the high-minded abstraction, "all passion spent" which might come from old age, from someone capable always of being "at the end". I hope - and can believe - that the questioner was none the less consoled.

The title given Murdoch's interview is "Who is the experiencer?" It circles around the questions of pressing interest to both parties. "It is in your daily life you have to be quiet", they agree. Yet how are we to reconcile 'being' and 'becoming' in the moral sphere? A religious person must feel the tension and inner division between good and bad impulses, and yet "a good man has no conflict". How can both these propositions be correct? What does it mean to speak of 'becoming good', considering that future time is an illusion, and we only ever have the present moment to perfect ourselves in? Hence discussion of a "project" - e.g. a spiritual path - which from one point of view is sheer common sense, from another point of view is nonsense. "There is no beyond, there is only here, the infinitely small, infinitely great and utterly demanding present"[7]

The contrast between these views has long preoccupied Murdoch. It represents the central difference between James and Michael in *The Bell*, the first arguing that we must be perfect *now* and that there are dangers involved in procrastination, the second pointing out that it is also dangerous to exceed our moral level, that we cannot "crank up" virtues we have done nothing to *earn*. Both characters are right, as the Abbess, who mediates between them, shows. The same conflict recurs between Plato and Socrates in *Acastos* - the first a passionate, humourless and very young moral absolutist, the latter wise, worldly and tolerant, understanding that, while Plato is right, we must none the less in life often settle for second-best, while still being drawn onwards towards the best.

Latterly the contest between Good and Second-best in Murdoch has often been illuminated by a riddling line from Kafka: "There is no way [i.e. Path], there is only the end; what we call the way is just messing about". The same sentence recurs twice in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* [142, 501], is quoted in at least two recent novels and, indeed, recurs in this interview. It seems clear that the logical austerity of Kafka's sentiment both fascinates and appalls Murdoch and, perhaps, ourselves. "You have given me the end but not the means" she argues here. How *can* there be an

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6 Videos from the interviews in this book, both of single interviews, and also extracts from all twelve, are obtainable from Krishnamurti Foundation, Brockwood Park, Bramdean, Hants SO 24 0LQ. tel 44.1962.771.525 Fax 44.1962.771.159

7 *The Philosopher's Pupil* [1983] p. 571

end without a means? She feels that Krishnamurti excludes "the element of training oneself".

Krishnamurti replies only indirectly. For him, as Murdoch sees, "You feel that we must be right at the beginning all the time". To be at the beginning, as S.T. Suzuki points out in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, is also to be fresh and awake in each successive moment; which is also to say that to be at the beginning, is to be at the end, or enlightened. Such a perception does not make for tidy or conclusive debate about *how to arrive* at the beginning and know it, as Eliot memorably put it, for the very first time.

Yet there is none the less a moment in which Krishnamurti does address her concern. How should we relate to a bad impulse - for example 'envy', which seems to impede love? This is indeed a pressing question for anyone, from any tradition, concerned with moral change. "Watch it without judgement... It is not the ending of the envy but the attention that matters" is Krishnamurti's profound reply, a reply that echoes both the Vipassyana techniques of Theravadan Buddhism and also the secret teachings of the highest of all Tibetan Yoga Tantras, *Dzogchen* [in Tibetan] or *Maha Ati* [in Sanskrit]. Both thinkers put the highest value on "real attention in which the self is not", a selfless experience which both agree can be had in the contemplation of great works of art. Krishnamurti here co-opts this attention for the work of spiritual change, though 'change' is a word he might reject. His philosophy seems to be one of fruition without path.

Murdoch, by contrast, does not reject the idea of path or pilgrimage, though she subjects the idea to intelligent scepticism. She agrees, for example, that "any means one adopts towards goodness is likely to become a barrier".

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The kinship of Murdoch's Platonism to Buddhism is both obvious, and yet still largely un-mapped. It is a kinship that bears upon this very question of the relationship between path and goal. Suguna Ramanathan's excellent *Iris Murdoch: Figures of Good* [1990] honours Murdoch's Buddhist interest, while possibly underestimating the importance of the Tibetan as opposed to the Theravadan tradition. Murdoch alludes to Tibetan Buddhism in many recent novels. Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism offers the closest practical analogy with Murdoch's Platonism. It is the form of Buddhism that does not turn its face away from the world, or from the passion and aggression our immersion in what is worldly induces in us, but which argues that these can be and must be *transmuted* or purified. There are clear parallels here with Murdoch's belief in High and Low Eros, the former arrived at through a purification of the latter. She indeed uses the word "transmutation" in this dialogue with Krishnamurti.

She argues here that the journey of transmutation, from Cave to Sun, is one of personal liberation. Then comes the equally necessary return from Sun to Cave "to liberate everybody else as well". This double movement can almost certainly be recognised by mystics from all traditions. "If I change I affect the rest", is how Murdoch glosses the matter to Krishnamurti.

The Buddhist, especially the Mahayana Buddhist, will see in this also a reflection first of the Hinayana Path of discipline, training and renunciation, followed by the Mahayana path of compassion, altruism and exchanging self-and-other. There is in this volume also a transcript of my own teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, a Maha Ati and Mahamudra master, in interview with Krishnamurti on the subject "What is Meditation?". He was at the time [1972] 32 years old, Krishnamurti was 77. Trungpa Rinpoche's agility in the verbal dance is as remarkable as Murdoch's. All three thinkers, in their utterly different ways, saw the spiritual quest to awaken the heart as dangerous, because subject to spiritual materialism, or "magic" as Murdoch puts this. All three also see it as essential.

--Peter Conradi, *Kingston University*

Iris Murdoch's Fables of Unselfing. By David J. Gordon. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1995. Pp. xii + 199. $39.95

David Gordon's name first came to the attention of the Iris Murdoch Society when an article he had published in *Twentieth Century Literature* on Murdoch's fiction was named the best article for the year 1990. His new book from Missouri expands on the insights that were first articulated in that prize-winning article. Gordon argues in behalf of the now familiar notion of Murdoch as a religious writer--an argument also made in one form or another by any number of Murdoch scholars, most fully perhaps by Suguna Ramanathan, Peter Conradi, and Elizabeth Dipple. What Gordon appears to be doing that is different is carrying that argument to a new and somewhat unfamiliar plane.

That new and unfamiliar plane adds a strong Buddhist coloration to Murdoch's notion of religion. This, of course, recalls the days when Murdoch was describing herself as a "Christian Buddhist." What she seems to have meant by this term--a term from which she seems to have distanced herself in recent interviews--is a religious stance that would combine the best of East and West. Religion, in her view, is what we most need, but not religion in its current form. Christianity, for example, cannot meet the need we have until it transforms itself into something far different from what it is today. Our best clues for how to meet the needs of the spirit in the modern world come instead from the wisdom of the East, especially from Buddhism.

Murdoch's ideas on religion are if nothing else thought-provoking. First of all, she replaces the Judeo-Christian notion of a personal God with an impersonal notion of the Good. The Good is that which drives us onward, and accounts for much if not all of our behavior, but that drive or impulse is not at all in harmony with our rational or social selves. A second challenge is her fairly straightforward rejection of traditional Christian notions about immortality. There is no afterlife as far as Murdoch is concerned, or at least no afterlife that involves rewards and punishments for actions performed in this life. It follows then that there can be no easy consolations for performing "good" actions, nor any guilt or punishment for performing "bad" or "wicked" actions. Thirdly, there is no special spiritual value to be attached to suffering. Many Murdoch characters suffer, and suffer terribly, but they do not necessarily become purer or better because they suffer. Fourthly, there is the idea of "saintliness," a form of human behavior which she likes to draw attention to in her novels. Gordon's particular contribution to our understanding of these religious notions is to draw attention to how "unselfing" leads to (or, better, can lead to) saintly behavior.

It is not always easy to see where the lines are between Gordon and his predecessors, and that perhaps is what leads to the feeling that we have seen or heard all of this before. Taking his cues from Elizabeth Dipple, Gordon points insistently and repeatedly to the story of Apollo's flaying of Marsyas as an emblem for Murdoch's notion of unselfing. In the end, though, he does little more than Dipple did to explain what it is about this mythic story that is so revealing about the ultimate truth of things, much less why we (or Murdoch) should be so admiring before an action that is so undeniably and so unspeakably cruel. Is cruelty what makes Murdoch great? Is art inescapably masochistic or possibly even sadistic? It seems to me that a major part of the business of the literary critics and scholars is or should be explication, and it seems fair to wonder why these questions were never raised much less addressed.

And I'm not entirely convinced that Gordon--or those before him for that matter--have really put a finger on what is most interesting or most significant about Murdoch's fiction. Saintliness may be an interesting and very much undertreated topic in the contemporary world, but it is hard to believe that notions of unselfing as they are described by Gordon would have very much appeal or go very far in explaining Murdoch's exalted position in contemporary letters.

It seems to me Murdoch's most significant achievements have come in the area of human

sexuality, particularly in that part of the range of sexuality that we normally describe as homosexual. Her attention to matters sexual is what has set her fiction apart from most of her contemporaries. Her willingness to treat the homosexual as a phenomenon well within the range of ordinary human experience, even when discussions of this subject were virtually taboo, more than anything else accounts for her true courage, her true boldness as a writer. If Iris Murdoch were being newly published today, she would probably be described as gay friendly. But Iris Murdoch was gay friendly long before attitudes shifted and such language became current, much less honorific.

While it would hardly be fair to say that David Gordon ignores the idea of sexuality in Murdoch's stories, it would be fair to say he tends to downplay it. In a way, I suppose, that is not too surprising. Any emphasis on sexual satisfaction is bound to collide with the idea of unselfing. But it is exactly that collision, I believe, that makes Gordon's discussions of individual novels seem so unsatisfying. Gordon, for instance, takes much delight, and rightly so, in the 1970 novel *An Accidental Man*. But our appreciation of what Murdoch is up to in that novel depends on our coming to an understanding during the course of our reading that Matthew Gibson Grey is and always has been homosexual. Understanding that fact helps us to see all his brother Austin's jealous ravings about his brother's supposed "affairs" with his girlfriends and wives as the utter nonsense they really are. Austin Gibson Grey is one of Murdoch's best fictional portraits of a male egotist, in a novel that deals far more fully with the self gorging upon itself or, if you will, with the self-selfing than it does with any notion of unselfing. Another instance occurs in Gordon's discussion of *The Nice and the Good*, the 1968 novel to which he assigns--rightly again in my opinion--one of the highest places in the Murdoch canon. Given his interest in saintliness and unselfing Gordon follows Elizabeth Dipple's lead in turning our attention away from the main story line and assigning the highest importance to Uncle Theo, a seemingly minor character on the margins of the story. For some reason--it is never clear--Theo is Gordon's idea of the highest form of unselfing. Yet he seems unwilling to acknowledge that Murdoch deliberately gives Theo the features of a classic pedophile. Theo was expelled from his monastery in India because of an incident with a young novice, an incident it is suggested that led to the young novice's suicide. Theo has returned to England, presumably in disgrace and burdened down with guilt, living as the ward of his brother and his wife on the fringes of the Trescombe community. Before the story gets very far there is almost another incident, one that would have involved the 15-year-old Pierce Clothier. How is all this to be reconciled with unselfing, much less with saintliness?

[The editors would be inclined to take a different view on this. The OED distinguishes pederast i.e. homosexual --from paedophile, a lover of pre-pubescent boys. Theo is gay, but not paedophile. Moreover, Murdoch's Platonism is not sexually puritanical but finds within Eros the roots of virtue and of vice. Now that the field of Murdoch studies is expanding rapidly, there may well be a need for a *tour d'horizon*, a revisiting in a forthcoming issue of IMNL, of major new thinking on Murdoch which would include studies, for example, by Gordon and Ramanathan.]

Well, there is a possibility, but that possibility requires that we fully understand Theo's sexuality. It becomes apparent early in the novel that Theo has settled into a comfortable homosexual relationship with Willie Kost, the former concentration-camp inmate who also resides at Trescombe. What claims Uncle Theo may later have in our eyes to saintliness--and I have some reservations about that term--have less to do with any possible return to India on his part at the end than they do with one unmistakably selfless act. Theo turns Willie over to a love-smitten Jessica Bird at a crucial point late in the story, and he does so because he believes his friend Willy stands a better chance for happiness with her than he does with him. If this is what Gordon means by unselfing, then yes, indeed, *The Nice and the Good* can certainly be considered a fable of unselfing. But it is not clear to what or to where Theo's gesture has brought him or why one would need Buddhism to make it happen. It could just as easily be a Christian act of selflessness, or a simple act of human goodness requiring nothing more than paganism.

Gordon raises some interesting issues during the course of his book, and I dare say most students of Murdoch will find in those issues plenty of fuel for further thought. Among other things, for instance, Gordon tells us that he believes Murdoch is fundamentally a comic novelist (p. 61). Fair enough; Murdoch is clearly not what we would call a tragic novelist. But it is also important to note, as Gordon does, that Murdoch's comic vision does not exclude the tragic. But why should this be so? I would like to have learned much more than I did about what Gordon thinks of this issue, of why he believes Murdoch suppresses her perceptions of the tragic in order to affirm the comic. Is Gordon really suggesting that Murdoch seeks the consolation of the comic because she cannot quite face what she so clearly sees? Or is it that like Dante she just sees more deeply or more broadly than the rest of us?

--John J. Burke, Jr., *University of Alabama*

Women Philosophers edited by Mary Warnock

Women Philosophers, edited by Mary Warnock, was published by The Everyman Library (J.M. Dent, London, Charles F. Tuttle, Vermont) in March 1996. An abridged extract is included from chapter 2 of *The Sovereignty of Good*, "On 'God' and 'good'". Warnock provides a "Chronology of Their Times" which relates to her chosen philosophers and which stretches from 1631 to 1993. Other women philosophers included in the study are: Anne Conway (1631-79); Catharine Cockburn (1676?-1750); Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97); Harriet Martineau (1802-76); The Hon. Victoria, Lady Welby (1863-1930); Mary Whiton Calkins (1863-1930); L. Susan Stebbing (1885-1943); Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985); Hannah Arendt (1906-1975); Simone De Beauvoir (1908-86); Mary Midgely (1919-); G.E.M. Anscombe (1919-); Philippa Foot (1920-); Judith Jarvis Thompson (1929-); Onora O'Neill (1941-) and Susan Haack (1945-).

The introduction provides justification for Warnock's exclusion of some well-respected women philosophers (Julian of Norwich, for example, is excluded because she relies "more on dogma, revelation or mystical experience than on argument") and for her exclusion of "feminist" philosophers: "there tends to be too much unexamined dogma ... too much ill-concealed proselytizing, too little objective analysis to allow them to qualify for inclusion among philosophical writing proper". Warnock defends her choice of contributors as deserving of the title of philosopher because they are each concerned with matters of a high degree of generality and are at home with abstract ideas. They seek truth, are interested in whatever lies behind the particular facts of experience, the details of history, and are concerned with the underlying meaning of language: "thus he or she would claim not only to seek the truth, but to seek a truth or a theory that will explain the particular and the detailed and the everyday". Warnock identifies each of the philosophers she has chosen as philosophers in the same sense as Hume can be defined as such; in the generalizing, explanatory and argumentative aspects of their work.

Warnock's introduction proceeds to provide a brief but informative sketch of the development of major issues in philosophy over the past two hundred years, and where her chosen philosophers fit into it, Iris Murdoch is among three women who Warnock suggests may "roughly be called existentialist philosophers"; the other two are Hannah Arendt and Simone De Beauvoir. Warnock acknowledges that Murdoch is highly critical of existentialist moral theory in *The Sovereignty of Good* but, rather oddly, argues that "her immersion in the real world makes it not inappropriate so to describe her". Persisting with this categorization seems mysteriously perverse. As early as 1950 Murdoch had already qualified her interest in existentialist novelists with the remark: "This fact alone, that there is no sense of mystery would falsify their claim to be true pictures of the situation of man" (*Listener*, March 23, 1950). Later she wrote of existentialism's "dramatic, solipsistic, romantic and anti-social exaltation of the individual" (*Spectator*, July 12, 1957), and John Bayley almost certainly spoke for both of them when he wrote that "the tenets of existentialism, apparently so pitiless and so searching,

have become the opiate of the sub-intelligentsia, the props on which the common reader interested in ideas can cheerfully recline" (*Tolstoi and the Novel*, p. 184). Existentialism, in fact, might be considered as Murdoch's main ideological opponent during the 1950's and 1960's. Warnock overlooks the fact that such immersion is a desideratum in Weil and in Buddhism and that Iris Murdoch has specifically criticised existentialism for its failures in this regard. A very short individual introduction to the piece from *The Sovereignty of Good* provides brief biographical detail and suggests that the central philosophical figures in Murdoch's novels are "loosely based on Wittgenstein".

--Anne Rowe, *Kingston University*

Iris Murdoch by Hilda Spear. *Macmillan Modern Novelists* series. London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995. xii + 139 pp.

Hilda Spear's *Iris Murdoch* provides a sound introduction to the novels of Iris Murdoch, with a close examination of some of the important texts. While Spear chooses to address the novels in a chronological rather than thematic order, she emphasizes recurring themes in the novels including the nature of love and truth, the problems of power, and the idea of Good without God. Spear is effective in her treatment of the novels and furthers Murdoch scholarship in this work. To date, little criticism has placed *The Green Knight* within the larger context of Murdoch's *oeuvre*. Spear devotes an entire chapter to this problematic novel and establishes a continuity in the novel's integration of myth and reality.

Other areas that distinguish Spear's study are her view that the problems that are developed in the novels are extensions of the philosophy that Murdoch was writing when the novels were being written and her emphasis on theatricality in the novels.

Beginning with *Under the Net*, a novel that Spear believes was "designed to negate the truth of Sartre's perception of character in his novels" (34), Spear traces Wittgenstein's later theories in Hugo's ideas about language. *The Time of the Angels* is seen as "a dramatic presentation of ideas that later appear in *Sovereignty of Good*, particularly in "On 'God' and 'Good'" (61), and *Bruno's Dream* reflects the ideas of "Sovereignty of Good" from the same work. Continuing the idea that the novels are an extension of Murdoch's current work in philosophy, Spear views *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, which revisits questions about morality, Good and Evil, Good without God, and the place of religion in the contemporary world, as the bridge to *The Green Knight*.

The chapter devoted to *The Green Knight* addresses the growing concern with religion within the novels, a concern that has been at the forefront of the moral debate in the last group of novels that Spear addresses, "The Mystic Novels": *The Sea, The Sea* (1978), *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), *The Good Apprentice* (1985), *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987), and *The Message to the Planet* (1989). "Philosophical arguments about the existence of God converge over one particular matter" in these novels, says Spear, the Ontological Proof of God's existence (90). Here Spear takes the opportunity to discuss the failed religious figures and unbelieving priests that abound in Murdoch's fiction, including Anne Cavidge (NS), Father Bernard (PP), and Fr. McAlister (BB). In *The Green Knight* the religious discussion takes place, for the most part, in the letters exchanged between Fr. Damien, "whose philosophy seems in many ways to accord with that of Murdoch herself" (111), and Bellamy James, who adopts the unorthodox position of the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart that is stated in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*--that Christ lives in the soul of the individual (112). In addressing the increasing (albeit unorthodox) emphasis on religion in a modern world without God that takes place in Murdoch's later novels, Spear remarks, perhaps a bit optimistically, that the later novels give hope for the existence of God.

The most innovative contribution to Murdoch scholarship is the emphasis on theatricality, a topic that Spear develops throughout her study. Many of the

essentials of her argument are seen in the discussion of *The Green Knight*. The technical ingenuities common to the earlier novels are shown here by the butcher's knife hidden in Peter Mir's presentation umbrella. Dramatic incidents in the novel include Harvey's accident on the bridge and Bellamy's rescue of Moy from the sea; however, the most striking theatrical aspect is the immense detail that Murdoch uses to produce the "spectacle" that enhances her plots. According to Spear, "We are required to see characters, places, actors as she has envisioned them. We are also frequently put in the remarkable position of viewing incidents as well as experiencing them" (116). Murdoch further creates dramatic potential by repeatedly bringing most of the characters together in one place. Earlier critics have remarked about set pieces that often involved mechanical descriptions such as the raising of the medieval bell in *The Bell* and the automobile incident on the Roman road in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, but Spear emphasizes the dramatic potential of these incidents. Even the characters of Clement Graffe (GK) and Charles Arrowby (TS, TS) are actors who play major roles in their novels and view themselves as having roles to play. In 1979 Richard Todd pointed out the Shakespearean qualities of Murdoch's novels in *Iris Murdoch: The Shakespearian Interest*; Spear continues this discussion about the later novels and shows how *The Green Knight* uses the framework of Shakespearean drama.

Spear's "Conclusion" offers a rationale for the critical reception of Murdoch's novels and discusses some of the major critical studies. While I would agree with the focusing of her commentary on critical works by A.S. Byatt and Peter Conradi, it is disappointing that Spear refers to so few secondary sources throughout her chapters and that her "Select Bibliography" is not only slim, but consists primarily of works that were published in the 1980s. Spear's limited bibliography would seem to counter one of the stated intents of this series, providing sources for "those who want to read further" (xii). In addition, Spear appears to discount much of Murdoch criticism as "academic industry" (126), dispatching rather than actually assessing Murdoch critical studies. Thus Spear's failure to assess Murdoch critical studies and her somewhat conceited dismissal of it has the consequence that she never *locates* the reader *vis-à-vis* Murdoch studies.

As for her discussion of the novels, my major concern is with a rather too neat assessment of the inverse spirituality of Henry Marshalson and Cato Forbes in *Henry and Cato* in which Cato sinks while Henry rises: "'bad' Henry has come to terms with life and is integrating himself into a family community" while 'good' Cato has cut himself off from family, friends, church and God and has committed murder" (86). It lacks credibility that a Henry who experiences an epiphany and then rejects this truth as being too horrible to bear (much like Max Lejour in *The Unicorn*) displays either spiritual maturation or integration into the community. Immediately following a scene in which he shrinks away from the horror of reality and rushes out of the National Gallery, Henry opts for riches and happiness by moving into Laxlinden Hall and marrying Colette.

Spear's work emphasizes Murdoch's major works, thus the treatment of the novels in necessarily uneven; however, some of the novels rate only one paragraph or one or two brief mentions. For example, there is almost no discussion about *The Nice and the Good, An Accidental Man, A Word Child,* or *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, novels that cannot be considered minor. I was surprised, too, that despite the special emphasis on the theatricality of the novels, no mention was made of Murdoch's conversion of three of the novels into plays (*A Severed Head, The Italian Girl, The Black Prince*) or the potential for future dramatic productions from existing novels.

--Cheryl Bove, *Ball State University*

Imagining Characters: Six Conversations about Women Writers by A.S. Byatt and Ignes Sodre, Edited by Rebecca Swift. London: Chatto & Windus, 1995. xiii + 268 pp. 16.99 in UK

This work grew out of a conversation that took place at the Cheltenham Literary Festival in October 1992

between novelist and critic A.S. Byatt and Ignes Sodre, a Brazilian psychoanalyst who practices in England. In the Cheltenham dialogue about George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, Byatt and Sodre discovered that they shared Eliot's view of art as the "nearest thing to life" (xii), a viable topic in contemporary critical debate. When Rebecca Swift approached them about the possibility of a book based on their conversations, they agreed and chose six major texts from different periods in history: Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Willa Cather's *The Professor's House*, Iris Murdoch's *An Unofficial Rose*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved.* Ostensibly the texts were chosen because they were works that the authors "found themselves going back and back to in life" (xiii), and not restricted by the gender of the author, though the sub-title underscores the exclusion and brings to mind the question. Each work is discussed individually, with emphasis on characterization and how the novel achieves reader response; then consideration is given to the relationships between these works and the development of the novel throughout history. Byatt's and Sodre's love of literature and interest in human development are apparent throughout this work.

The conversational nature of this book resembles a delightful, ideal seminar in which bright and informed participants learn from and instruct one another through their discussion. Although they do, perhaps unintentionally, enter into theoretical debate with the discussion of fairy tale motifs and their "art as life" position, Byatt and Sodre agree that they are setting aside literary theory by their treatment of the novels' characters as if they were real people. The interplay of ideas is fresh and evokes insights that result in new readings for the participants and the audience. The tone of the discussion reminds me of the "People" chapters in E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel,* where Forster sets the standards for rounded, dynamic characterization by including human and psychological aspects.

Much of what is said about the characterization in *An Unofficial Rose* has also been said elsewhere, by Byatt or other critics, particularly the division of the characters by moral status, with the forceful, clever personality traits fitting the dangerous/bad/spiritually immature characters. Chapter 5, which considers *An Unofficial Rose* (1962), acknowledges the ambivalent feelings which readers often have for Ann Peronett, relating reader frustration with Ann to the difficulty of making the nearly good figures visible (on which Murdoch often remarks). However, the conversation takes an interesting turn when discussing the change in reader expectation through the centuries. Ann was "created by a novelist who had met a long line of self-sacrificing heroines, and understands our ambivalence about them" (154). For Jane Austen, the central virtue in *Mansfield Park* is self-knowledge, and her bad characters are muddled; however, Murdoch's good characters' lives often appear muddled. Yet the issue is more complex than a simple reversal, and Byatt observes that part of the difference in interpretations has been the influence of the works that have come between Austen and Murdoch--particularly those by E.M. Forster and Henry James, and even John Bayley's *The Characters of Love*. Ann is a character who is held in her muddle by convention: "She is terrified of her own potentially violent passions" (156). George Eliot is close to Murdoch in viewing the struggle for self-knowledge as a moral issue (as in Dorothea's progress from psychological blindness to self-knowledge in *Middlemarch*) (176).

Byatt and Sodre believe that *An Unofficial Rose* represents Murdoch's reaction to the English novel, and that she may even be reworking Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, starting with something "already there and established and loved, to transform it, to work out different solutions" (189). They find parallels in characterization (with Hugh like Edmund Bertram, but behaving like Henry Crawford, and Felix like Edmund). Further, Hugh sends Miranda a set of Austen's novels, and Murdoch appears to be parodying Austen's writing style at the beginning of Chapter 23 when she writes, "The news that Randall Peronett was off, that he had left his wife and gone away, positively and definitively gone away with Lindsay Rimmer, was greeted with almost universal satisfaction" (190).

While Byatt provides sensible character analysis which focuses on realism, she tends to dominate the conversations, and the reader would like more from Sodre in terms of the psychological reality of the characters' relationships. Sodre does point out that the mother-daughter relationship between Ann and Miranda Peronett doesn't quite work psychologically. For Sodre, "it would be much more convincing to suppose that Miranda is an extremely controlling child who wants to split the parents from each other and from any other relationships, so that each parent is made to relate only to her" (172), rather than that Miranda is actually in love with Felix, the man Ann loves.

Fairy tales are a prominent element in Byatt's work, and she takes the opportunity to develop their merits in connection with *An Unofficial Rose*. Such literary and mythic parallels have often been mentioned in connection with Murdoch's work as means for enriching the texture of the associations and giving a story multiple readings. Here, Byatt and Sodre emphasize their reversals: "The fairy story says life is full of hazards and horrors and terrors and then you will be married and you will live happily ever after. The novel says life is full of energy, then you will be married and you will live unhappily ever after, or at least you will *think* you are living unhappily ever after, and you will never understand anything again" (190-91). In the fairy tale everything has a meaning. Emma Sands represents either the good or the bad fairy with her stick/wand who enchants Ann during her visit, makes her recite a spell (the names of the roses), but instead of emprisoning Ann, Emma releases her to a better life (after Ann pricks her finger on a rose thorn). Randall, as Emma's puppet, is also a fairy tale character. According to Sodre, Murdoch cleverly works the fairy tale atmosphere of Emma's flat on at least two levels: "Emma the detective-story writer delights in 'inventing' herself as a witch ... to emprison Randall in her plot; but the way Murdoch describes the flat with its green door and treasure cave inside, and most of all the unsettling moments like the 'voice in the tape' ... deliberately carry the reader into the fairytale. So that we have Emma the character as a puppetmaster, and Iris Murdoch as Emma, creating a magic world for the reader too" (179-80). In addition to Emma, Mildred and Miranda act as fairies, trying to arrange Ann's life. Emma and Mildred act the good fairy, while Miranda is the bad fairy. Emma and Lindsay together tell the 'Rapunzel' story, with Lindsay as the woman with the long yellow hair who is imprisoned by the witch Emma. The Grayhallock episode can also be Sleeping Beauty with Ann as Sleeping Beauty who is awakened by Emma to a new life that she refuses to embrace (182).

We also discover something about Byatt's own writing in these conversations. Byatt has often credited Murdoch with influencing her work, and here she admits to using an author's trick of emphasizing a single trait to develop characters in an already crowded novel, one originating with Dickens but actually based on Murdoch's repeated description of Lindsay Rimmer's long blond hair. While the character remains undeveloped, the reader has a vivid impression of Lindsay because Murdoch mentions her hair three times in a brief interval.

Byatt addresses her own creative process in Chapter 7, "Dreams and Fiction," where she describes how her dreams find their way into her novels: "I do have very clear symbolic dreams like that in which figures and landscapes are experienced entirely sensuously; yet the moment I wake up I remember the whole thing and can say what it means. But the dream forms have an intensity and complexity beyond the 'meaning' and affect my work deeply and permanently" (237). Her dream process is prominent as a problem-solving process: "You think as hard as you can about where your characters are in a novel ... why you have brought them there, where they might go, what the problems are--and then ... it is necessary to turn away and trust my unconscious to solve the problem I've set myself. I go to bed, I even go into intense sleep for half an hour--and when I wake up I have a set of very clear images, much closer to dream than to worrying thought" (237). Here Byatt makes a connection between dreams as a method of instruction that strikingly parallels the theoretical reason for teaching

fairy tales: their usefulness for thinking out a problem before one encounters it.

Byatt does make one factual error when discussing the sea as an image of erasure and forgetting in Murdoch's fiction. She says, "Both *The Sea, The Sea* and *The Time of the Angels* refer to Valèry's beautiful and mysterious line in *'Le Cimetière [M]arin'*, where the horizon and the shore are 'La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée'" (257). The earliest reference to this line is not in *The Time of the Angels*, but in *The Unicorn* (C&W, p. 52). At the end of her first day in the Gaze household Marian Taylor reads *'Le Cimetière Marin'* to Hannah Crean Smith. Murdoch uses splendid irony with this passage, which surely carries quite different connotations for the two women involved in the reading. *The Nice and the Good* also contains another echo of this work when a marine cemetery in Dorset comes into the story.

In the concluding chapter of *Imagining Characters* A.S. Byatt makes the distinction between good books and bad books: "with a really good book you do have the sense of discovering a kind of order in the world--or a frightening disorder which somebody has nevertheless had the courage or the power to order for you. Whereas bad books indulge in daydreams or fantasy" (247). She credits George Eliot and Iris Murdoch, particularly, with enlarging the "kind of people" we are "made to take account of" and notes that both do so for moral reasons (248). This idea recounts the earlier Cheltenham dialogue where the participants discovered their mutual belief in art as the "nearest thing to life" (xii), and recognizes one of Murdoch's major accomplishments as an artist who depicts truth. In the highest form of praise, Byatt remarks, "I think all the books we've discussed have revealed the world to me" (248), these conversations illustrate her point.

--Cheryl Bove, *Ball State University*

Human Relationships in the Novels of Iris Murdoch, by Malada Frankova. Marsarykova univerzita v Brne, 1995.

This monograph is probably a dissertation, which must by law (in the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany), be published in limited edition. Frankova presents the argument that there is a "clear development" in Iris Murdoch's portrayal of various types of human relationships through the course of her novels: "relationships in recent novels have become more intense with the more space and time they have gained: (79). In a close reading of the novels, up to and including *The Message to the Planet*, Frankova concentrates on five categories of relationships: artist-saint; power; incestuous; relationships where a symbol constitutes a bond between individuals; and love relationships as attention to others; she develops her points with immense attention to detail but limited analyses.

Also of interest to the Murdoch scholar are her bibliography of Czech criticism, reviews, translations, theses, and dissertations and a chapter on the Czech critical reception of Iris Murdoch's work. Here Frankova concludes that outdated and poor translations hindered the novels' popularity and that publication was limited by censorship and publishers' prejudice in the pre-1989 Communist regime. Two reasons why the novels were subject to this bias were Murdoch's frequent use of refugee characters from Eastern bloc countries and her interest in the problematic role of religion (24).

Like Spear, Frankova shows how Murdoch's moral philosophy is integrated with the ideas in her novels. This approach and the attending overview of the novels are intended to inform Czech readers who may be unfamiliar with Murdoch's work. Frankova's detailed study should further the awareness and interest in Murdoch's work both within and beyond the Czech Republic.

--Cheryl Bove, *Ball State University*

Cheltenham Literature Festival

Dame Iris and John Bayley were in conversation with Humphrey Carpenter at the Cheltenham Literature Festival on 4th October 1995. The discussion related to the recent publication of Bridget Allen's *Oxford Anthology of Food in Literature*, hence the title - "Boiled onions and corned beef," (which partly comprise one of Charles Arrowby's little feasts in *The Sea, The Sea*). The light-hearted chat centred around the significance of food in literature, and in particular food in Dame Iris' novels. Some humorous insights into the Bayley's domestic life emerged: Dame Iris, it seems, only cooked for the first three weeks of their married life when it was decided that she would relegate her talents to the washing up; a "spiritual," "noble" task, which she has resolutely undertaken ever since. Dame Iris remarks that much use is made of her

kitchen at home, for a good deal of her writing is undertaken at the kitchen table, "a good place," where she enjoys being. No-one owns up to doing the shopping but food somehow arrives; a currently favoured recipe is baked beans, mashed with chopped garlic, cloves, olive oil and fresh mint. Some long-remembered anecdotes are resurrected during the course of the interview: the source of Charles Arrowby's recipe for an egg poached in hot scrambled egg appears to have originated from the famous eccentric, Maurice Bowra, who, one evening at dinner, remarked that he had eaten this particular dish in Paris: "Is it good?" Dame Iris asked, "not particularly," he replied. Charles was made to eat it none the less. John Bayley remembered that A.J. Ayer was somewhat insulting about *The Sea, The Sea*; he said he'd enjoyed the book but not the food. Some of Charles' feasts (ideas for which, it seems, were mostly contributed by John Bayley) are remembered and relished: anchovy paste on hot buttered toast; fried kippers garnished with lemon juice, olive oil and herbs; Welsh Rarebit and hot beetroot with fried tinned potatoes; spring cabbage cooked slowly with dill. Dame Iris, however, was rather amazed by such odd combinations and has no recollection whatsoever of having eaten any such strange concoctions herself.

--Anne Rowe, *Kingston University*

FORTHCOMING

Existentialists and Mystics: Essays on Philosophy and Literature, edited by Peter J. Conradi.

To be published by Chatto and Windus in July of 1997.

"Man is the being who makes pictures of himself, and then comes to resemble the pictures"

--Chatto Publicity blurb.

Best known for her novels and longer philosophical works, Iris Murdoch is also a brilliant essayist. Some of her essays, such as "Against Dryness", her seminal polemic on fiction and philosophy, have become classics. Others - such as "Existentialists and Mystics" - deserve classic status and to be better known. She has helped to define a new climate of thought in the post-war years, by bringing existentialism to British consciousness, and subjecting it to rigorous criticism. She was among the first to champion the work of Elias Canetti and Simone Weil. Murdoch has also contributed her own original philosophical thought, in the field of metaphysics and moral philosophy, particularly on the concept of goodness. But until now her essays and articles have been, at best, scattered in anthologies, and often accessible only to persistent aficionados. ***Existentialists and Mystics*** gathers them together in one volume. It includes key evaluations of the thinking of T.S. Eliot, Simone Weil, Gabriel Marcel and Elias Canetti, key texts on the continuing importance of the Sublime, on the need for theory, and on the role literature can play in curing the ills of philosophy. This is a brilliant, enlightened volume from one of the greatest, most impassioned intellects of our time.

A provisional list of sections in this work is as follows: 1.) Prologue, Literature and Philosophy, a Conversation with Brian Magee; 2.) Nostalgia for the Particular : The Poverty of Anglo-American Philosophy 1951-63; 3.) Encountering Existentialism 1950-59; 4.) The Need for Theory 1956-66; 5.) Can Literature help heal the ills of Philosophy? 1959-61; 6.) Towards a Practical Mysticism 1959-78; 7.) Rereading Plato 1964-86 : Sovereignty of Good/Fire and Sun/Acastos.

Poems by Iris Murdoch, edited by Yozo Muroya and Paul Hullah.

The complete poems of Iris Murdoch, containing all of her previously published poetry from her earliest 'juvenilia' to her most recent verse, will be published in the spring of 1997 by University Education Press, Japan, in the form of a handsomely bound and beautifully presented hardback, limited edition collectors' item (strictly limited to 500 copies). This edition also contains handwritten manuscript variants of selected pieces (including an early draft version of *A*

Year of Birds, separate Biographical and Critical Introductions, and a full Bibliography. Once the volume is printed, it will be possible to order copies direct from the publisher in Japan. Orders may be sent to University Education Press, 124-101, Tanaka, Okayama, Japan 700, or faxed to University Education Press. The fax number from the U.K. is Japan (=0081) 86 246 0294. The price is 15 pounds sterling plus 5 pounds postage and packing or $35 (U.S. dollars) per copy. The Japanese price will be 3000 Yen. Invoices, payable by major credit card, will be dispatched together with ordered copies to the ordering party. Orders will be accepted from 1 April 1997.

Professor Yozo Muroya of Okayama University has published two monograph studies of Iris Murdoch, as well as numerous articles and annotated editions of her philosophical essays over the last twenty years; this edition came about as a result of Professor Muroya's long and ongoing friendship with Dame Iris Murdoch. Dame Iris and her husband, John Bayley, visited Okayama University in 1993. Dr. Paul Hullah has been Foreign Lecturer in English at Okayama University since 1992 and has collaborated with Professor Muroya on various publications. He is the editor of a forthcoming book, *Romanticism and Wild Places* (Edinburgh: Quadrega, 1996-7), and also publishes his own poetry.

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UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES PROGRAM ON IRIS MURDOCH'S WORK

On April 17, 1996, a University of Iowa Libraries program showcased its one-of-a-kind collection of manuscripts by influential 20th century British writers. The UI Libraries, which has a considerable number of Murdoch manuscripts in its holdings, is the only major repository for Murdoch's manuscripts in the world.

The featured lecture for the program, "Tracing Iris Murdoch's Comic Spirit Through Her Manuscripts in the University of Iowa Libraries Special Collection," was delivered by Barbara Stevens Heusel of Northwest Missouri State University. Most of the research for Professor Stevens' recent *Patterned Aimlessness* was conducted at UI Libraries Special Collections.

In the above photo, taken at this program, are Barbara Stevens Heusel, Frederick P.W. McDowell, and Dennis Moore. Professor McDowell is responsible for acquiring the Murdoch manuscripts for the University of Iowa. [photo credit: Dorothy Persson, courtesy of the University of Iowa Libraries.]

IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY

Secretary-Treasurer's Report: The Star Financial Bank balance as of 1 October 1996 was $1173.47, reflecting the following transactions:

Starting Balance	$1337.47
Interest	36.25
Dues	245.00
	1618.72
Newsletter & postage	445.25
	1173.47

In addition the Society has 198 pounds, sterling, in the Halifax Building Society account in London from European dues.

The 1996 Iris Murdoch Society Meeting took place on 6 October 1996 at the Carolinas Symposium on British Studies Conference at Coastal Carolina University, Conway, South Carolina. New Business included a decision to try to reach new membership and provide a service to Murdoch scholars by placing the *IMNL* in university libraries both in the United States and abroad. The university libraries that are currently receiving the *IMNL* are the University of Iowa, the University of Alabama, and Ball State University. Please notify either Anne Rowe or Cheryl Bove (addresses below) if the acquisitions department of your university library would like to receive complimentary copies of the *IMNL*. We can also provide back issues of the *News Letter*.

Further new business included plans to submit a panel on Iris Murdoch's Irish associations at the 1998 Twentieth-Century Literature Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

If you have questions or suggestions related to the Iris Murdoch Society, please contact the Society President, Barbara Stevens Heusel, at: Northwest Missouri State University; English Department; 800 University Drive; Maryville, Missouri 64468-6001.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome short articles (no longer than five pages), notes, news, reviews, and bibliographic information. Please address all materials to:
Cheryl K. Bove
Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana 47306

THE IRIS MURDOCH NEWSLETTER is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in December 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles and notices and keeping members of the Society informed of new publications, symposia, and other news that has a bearing on Iris Murdoch and her writings. If you would like to become a member of the Society and automatically receive the *News Letter*, please contact:

Tony Bove
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
1716 Timberview Dr.
Marion, Indiana 46952

For European membership please contact:
Anne Rowe
THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY
21 Upper Park Road
Kingston-Upon-Thames
Surrey KT2 5LB England

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The Iris Murdoch Newsletter

Ball State University **Issue 11 - Winter, 1998**

The Ontological Proof has deep roots in Murdoch's thought. "Plato's main idea" (*The Fire and the Sun)*, is discussed in *The Sovereignty of Good* on several occasions and the idea recurs in the novels. It is related to the inner world of faith, grace, belief, the rewards for moral assent and the ways these help create the world in which we make choices. "The only proof of God is the Ontological Proof and that is a mystery. Only the spiritual man may give himself to it in silence," says the spiritual Max Lejour in *The Unicorn* to Effingham Cooper, who, in the last chapter, realizes that "the vision of the good forced into being as the object of desire" he would leave to Max; Effingham Cooper is too small for it. In many novels someone adverts to it. In *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* Edgar says "if it's true love it contains its object. There's proof of God's existence like that". In *Nuns and Soldiers* Anne Cavidge ponders "could she live now by the Ontological Proof alone? Can love in its last extremity create its object?" In *The Philosopher's Pupil,* which satirizes so many of its author's most cherished beliefs, it is decided: "It's all done with mirrors like the Ontological Proof. . . . You can't have a real [response] so you fake one, like sending a letter to yourself".

One of Murdoch's 1982 Gifford lectures was devoted to a demonstration of how the Ontological Proof might work, not for God, but for Good. This paper (lecture 6, given on Tuesday, November 2nd, 1982) has never before been published as such, although the theme returns and is expanded on in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Chatto & Windus edition, pp. 392-419).

The editors wish to thank Professor Scott Dunbar for providing the Newsletter with this essay, and for proposing suitable *addenda* where the original typescript had *lacunae*. Such *addenda* appear in square brackets. We are also indebted to Professor John Bayley for permission to publish.

How to Prove the Existence of God Some Reflections on the Ontological Proof

"The limits of the ontological argument are obvious. But nothing is more important for philosophy and theology than the truth it contains, the acknowledgement of the unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality.... Modern secularism is rooted largely in the fact that the unconditional element ... was no longer seen, and that therefore the idea of God was imposed on the mind as a 'strange body'. This produced first heteronomous subjection, and then autonomous rejection. The destruction of the ontological argument is not dangerous. What is dangerous is the destruction of an approach which elaborates the possibility of the question of God. This approach is the meaning and truth of the ontological argument."

Paul Tillich
Systematic Theology, I, p. 208

"Any real proof of God's existence must be supported by experience. A proof of the existence of God is acceptable only if it is a making explicit of an experience, whereby what is implicitly experienced from the very beginning is clearly expressed through reflective consideration."

Edward Schillebeeckx
God & Man, p. 61

The Ontological argument for, or Ontological Proof of, the existence of God is different in type from the other "proofs", which rely on conceptions such as cosmic design and a first cause. These proofs interest us very little now, and not only because we have other ways of accounting for the cosmos. Why should we venerate a Supreme Being whose most convincing claim to existence and importance is that of having created an impressive machine? A demon could have created the world. What we need to prove is not just a creative force. The Ontological Proof, though often treated as an absurdity, Schopenhauer called it a "charming joke", and even Tillich says its limits are obvious, is an altogether deeper matter. As a formal argument it was put together by a Benedictine Monk, St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), who in his preface to the

Proof speaks as follows: "I do not endeavour, O Lord, to penetrate thy sublimity, for in no wise do I compare my understanding therewith; but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand."

These words may seem to indicate a limitation upon the claims of the proof. Anselm's formulation emerges from a context of deep belief, and may be seen as a clarified summary of what is already known, rather than as an argument to be put to an outsider. It may be seen too as a proof which a man can only give to himself, herein resembling Cogito ergo sum, to which it is indeed related by Descartes. Yet these reminders do not set the Proof aside, and in spite of having been apparently demolished by Kant it has continued to interest philosophers and theologians. Credo ut intellegam is not just an apologist's paradox, but an idea with which we are familiar in personal relationships, in art, in theoretical studies. I have faith in a person or idea in order to understand him or it. I intuitively know and grasp more than I can yet explain.

Anselm states the Proof more than once, the second time in reply to objections made by another monk. The formulations differ in emphasis in ways which have interested modern philosophers. For purposes of the Proof God is taken to be Ens Realissimum, aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit, that then which nothing greater, or more perfect, can be conceived. The first formulation, distinguished between what exists (or is conceived of) in the mind (in intellectu) and what exists in reality, outside the mind (in re). To exist in reality is taken to be a quality (or predicate), which is extra to that of existing only in the mind. So if we can understand the idea of God, as we surely can, then we must also understand that God exists, since if he did not he would lack one important quality, that of existence, and fail to be that than which nothing greater can be conceived.

In this formulation the idea that God cannot be conceived not to exist, and that if we conceive of him we know that he exists appears to depend upon the distinction between in the mind and in reality which posits existence as an extra quality. Critics of the Proof (most famously Kant) argue that the idea of existence adds nothing to a concept, existence is not a predicate. The conviction that God exists is contained in the believer's initial idea of God which appears in the premises. Anselm's earliest critic, a contemporary monk, Gaunilo, objects, in the spirit of Kant, that it is impossible to argue from essence to existence. He adds that in any case we cannot frame an idea or concept of God. "I do not know that reality itself which God is, nor can I frame a conjecture of that reality from some other reality. For you yourself assert that there can be nothing else like it."

Anselm's reply clarifies his first argument. He is, he says, not speaking of something which is, or happens to be, greater than all other beings, but of something than which a greater cannot be conceived. This is the respect in which God is unique. To put the matter in the terms in which it has been later handled, God and God alone exists, not contingently or accidentally, but necessarily; what the Proof defines and proves is his necessary existence. In this case alone if you can conceive of this entity you are ipso facto certain that what you are thinking is real. This is a point at which a modern sympathiser might feel that something is being proved, but the question is what. The definition of God as having necessary not contingent accidental, existence is certainly an important clarification. God cannot be a particular, a contingent thing, a contingent God would be a demon or idol. Anything which happens to exist, or about whose existence one might speculate, is not what is thought of here. God's necessary existence is connected with his not-being-an-object. God is not to be worshipped as an idol or identified with any empirical thing: as is indeed enjoined by the second Commandment.

Guanilo's interesting doubt whether he can conceive of God is answered by Anselm in two arguments, both Platonic in style, one rather cool and abstract, the other considerably larger and warmer. We have the idea of a series and of extending a series. We can recognise and identify goodness and degrees of good and are thus able to have the idea of a greatest conceivable good. Anselm also argues that God, who is invisible and not an object in the world, can be seen, and clearly seen, everywhere in the visible things which are his creatures and shadows. "So easily then can the Fool who does not accept a sacred authority be refuted if he denies that a notion may be formed from other objects of a being than which a greater is inconceivable. But if any Catholic would deny this, let him remember that the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

Anselm is here quoting St. Paul, Romans I 20. We "see" God through the morally good things of the world, through our (moral) perception of what is beautiful and terrible, through our ability to distinguish good and evil, and our just God-fearing understanding of what is not good. So we find God both, and inextricably both, in the world and in our own soul. (This is like the argument, or intuition, of Descartes). We conceive of God by looking about us, and when we consider what we conceive of, we understand that it exists necessarily and not by accident, not contingently. The definition of God as non-contingent, non-accidental, is given body by our general perception and experience of the fundamental, authoritative (uniquely necessary) nature of moral value, thought of in a Christian context as God. This is essentially an argument from morality, not from design, a Platonic not an Aristotelian argument. It appeals to our moral understanding and not to the more strictly rational considerations relied upon by Aquinas, who did not accept Anselm's proof. I now quote Karl Barth's commentary upon Romans I 20. The context in Paul concerns those who can or could see God, but turn away from what they ought to be able to see clearly. Barth says, "We have forgotten this, and must allow it to be brought back once more to our minds. Our lack of humility, our lack of recollection, our lack of fear in the presence of God, are not in our present position inevitable, however natural they may seem to us. Plato in his wisdom recognised long ago that behind the visible there lies the invisible universe which is the origin of all concrete things. The good sense of the men of the world had long ago perceived that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The honest eyes of the poet in the book of Job, and of the preacher Soloman had long ago rediscovered, mirrored in the world of appearance, the archetypal, majesty of God". (Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans).

Anselm's argument about an Ens Realissimum derives from Plato, through Plotinus and St. Augustine, through the neo-Platonic transformation of Plato's Form of the Good into a supreme spiritual being and thus into a metaphysical conception of the Christian God. Plato's philosophy expounds a fundamental connection between epistemology and ethics, [. . .] knowledge and virtue are connected. The sharp distinction between fact and value implied by Aristotle, [explicit in Hume,] formalised by Kant, and later made into a dogma by existentialists, structuralists, sociologists, and linguistic empiricists [in the twentieth century is absent in Plato. The philosophic vision of Plato (including the connection between epistemology and ethics) presupposes the tripartite division of the soul which provides the basis of his psychological realism. (Republic, Bk. IV, 434d - 441c) Plato's account of the tripartite division of the soul is essentially (but not exclusively, an account of mental conflict in the individual and salvation consists in the integration of each part of the soul into a single unity. (See Republic, Bk. IV, 443d) The picture of the soul Plato provides illustrates both the relationship between the different parts from which mental conflicts emerge and the soul's] continuous engagement with an independent reality. "Truth" is not just a collection of facts. Truthfulness, the search for truth, for real objects of thought, for a closer connection between thought and reality, demands and effects an exercise of virtue and a purification of desire. Thought, goodness and reality thus turn out to be internally connected. The intensity of Plato's vision of this connection forces him (if one may put it thus) to separate the idea of goodness, the supreme and fundamental requirement, in a unique manner from the imperfect hurly-burly of the human struggle. The notion of this separateness and uniqueness, of the distance between good and evil, is expressed by Plato in the most memorable of all philosophical metaphors, the myth of the cave. This picture is also of course a religious vision, which in Plato's mind has nothing to do with a personal God or gods. The Idea of Good is not God. Any notion of this sort would have seemed to Plato a gross superstition; true religion is above the level of gods.

The pilgrimage of the prisoners in the Cave is inspired by the intimations of, and desires for, realities which lie just beyond what can be easily seen, and which appear at first as shadows. Such metaphors, intelligible as pictures of thinking and language, are extended into a general conception of human striving as subject to the magnetism of moral ideas which cast light and inspire love. The same conception is expressed in Plato's dialogue the Meno in the myth of Anamnesis, spiritual recollection or remembrance. A slave who knows no geometry, is led, by questioning and prompting, to solve a geometrical problem. He seems to recover the necessary knowledge out of himself. He attends to an object not yet visible but grasped as "there". The process of discovery, which is like a remembering, is accompanied or motivated by a desire which is purified in the process. This, which is a picture of truth and truthfulness, is I think something

which we can recognise as occurring in all sorts of human activities. Incidentally, Freud, who admitted that his "libido" was Plato's Eros, must surely, though he does not, so far as I know, say so, have recognised a relation between his "unconscious mind" and Anamnesis. As Plato's pictures indicate, you can only see at your own moral and intellectual level and a little above it. Perception here is, and properly, the image of thought and spiritual insight. Truth and moral progress are the reward of courage, humility, patience. Here we may use too the example of the creative artist, adding that of course we are all, in innumerable ways, artists: language - using is art. The artist attends to the dark something out of which he feels certain that he can, if he concentrates and waits, elicit his poem, picture, music, it is as if he remembered it or found it waiting for him, veiled but present. He hopes to be taught, and places himself in a situation where this is possible. Paul Valery, with the poet's inspiration in mind, says that "the proper, unique and perpetual object of thought is that which does not exist". "A thing understood is a being falsified". "A difficulty is a light. An insuperable difficulty is a sum." And, "At its highest point, love is a determination to create the being which it has taken as its object." This states a version of Ontological Proof.

Returning to Anselm: there appears to be two, interlocking, arguments, a "logical" argument about necessary existence, and an ancillary argument from experience to support the idea, required by the first argument, that we can conceive of God. The logical argument defines God's existence as necessary not contingent. The argument from moral experience is more evidently platonic and may be stated in the metaphysical terminology of degrees of reality, or as a more homely appeal to our sense of God, or Good, as discovered everywhere in the world. Plato uses both methods, presenting large mythical pictures and explaining them by everyday examples. We are saved by Eros and techne, by love and work, by good desires and by the search for truth, by the magnetism which draws us to innumerable forms of what is good; whether we are philosophers or mathematicians or lovers or craftsmen like the carpenter in Book Ten of the Republic. Thus we are constantly shown the reality of what is better and the illusory nature of what is worse. We learn about perfection and imperfection through our ability to understand what we see as an image or shadow of something better which we cannot yet see. The idea of Good, perceived in our confused reality, also transcends it and must be conceived of as uniquely pure, and unavoidable, "above being" to use Plato's phrase, supremely real. This is what Anselm expresses when he quotes Romans I 2, joining Platonic metaphysics, and neo-Platonic conception of a Perfect Being, to the Hebrew experience of the omnipresence of a personal God. The (second) argument from experience emerges as it were under the pressure of the (first) logical argument. If we are able to distinguish necessary and contingent we can see that God cannot be contingent. Experience shows us the uniquely unavoidable nature of God (or Good), its purity and separateness from our "fallen" reality, in which its magnetic shadow is nevertheless everywhere perceptible. God either exists necessarily or it is impossible. All our experience shows that he exists.

Philosophical discussions of the Proof whether Kantian or modern have tended to take the logical argument as primary, as if one could talk of God without reference to morality; and have regarded the Platonic background as a mere historical phenomenon. Appeals to experience, if they occur, may be offered as personal reflections, not quite part of the picture. I want to put it the other way round. The Proof, as something to be taken seriously as philosophy, must be understood by looking at Plato. Its deep sense, whose restatement is now of importance in servicing our concept of religion, lies in degrees of reality argument: the argument about necessary existence can only be intelligibly reiterated inside this frame. [. . .]

Much of the tissue of the original Proof is lost in modern views of it. We are uneasy with Anselm because of Kant, and because Anselm is concerned with a Supreme Person, God, an entity with a proper name, disliked by modern secularists and also by some modern believers and theologians. However in spite of that, and of Kant's authoritative intervention, the Proof has not lost its charm and has received, with new modes of philosophy, new modes of criticism. Russell and Moore were interested in it. Wittgenstein thought about it. Norman Malcolm, in a notable article, drew attention to the two version[s] of the logical argument, and suggested that Kant's objections were fatal only to the first version. Kant's refutation of Anselm, summed up as "existence is not a predicate", runs, very briefly put, thus. We do not add anything to the idea of something by saying that it exists. "We do not make the least addition to the thing when we further declare that this thing is. Otherwise it would not be exactly the

same thing that exists." There can be no "necessary existence" which is contrasted with "contingent existence". "Under conditions that there be a triangle three angles will necessarily be found in it." "To posit a triangle and yet to reject its three angles is self-contradictory; but there is no contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles. The same holds true of the concept of an absolutely necessary being. If its existence be rejected, we reject the thing itself with all its predicates; and no question of contradiction can then arise." Kant here expresses something like a modern view of necessity as existing only inside a deductive situation, belonging therefore to a sign-system and not to the world. Kant however, we may note here, introduced his own form of moral necessity and Ontological Proof, supported by appeal to experience, in the form of the Categorical Imperative, thereby supplying the unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality which Tillich wished us to attend to. Kant's command of duty, linked to the concept of freedom, is unavoidable in the same sense as Anselm's God and Plato's Good. [. . .]

Norman Malcolm argues that Kant's assertion that we can "reject the subject" in the case of God, as in the case of the triangle, neglects an important difference. "God exists necessarily" must be taken to be an a priori truth; it cannot logically be an empirical truth. "A triangle has three angles", is also an a priori truth; but one which can be hypothetically stated as: "If a triangle exists (and it is possible that none does) it has three angles". Whereas the statement about God cannot be set up in this form without contradiction. If we define God as existing necessarily, we cannot frame a proposition which admits the possibility of his non-existence. The Proof ought instead to be stated as: "If the phrase 'necessary being' has meaning, then what it means exists necessarily, and if it exists necessarily a fortiori it exists". That puts God in a different situation from the triangle whose possible existence can be denied without contradiction.

This new attention to the proof, especially Norman Malcolm's article, provided a certain amount of amused attention among Anglo-Saxon philosophers, many of whom were not at all interested in God, but simply in the technicalities of the argument. At this point we can hear Schopenhauer saying how right he was to call it a "charming joke". The restated hypothetical argument says that if the concept of God is meaningful (not self-contradictory) God must necessarily exist. Malcolm summarises it as: God (as we understand him) cannot have come into existence, so if he does not exist his existence is impossible, and if he exists his existence is necessary. So, if it is meaningful, the concept is not self-contradictory, God exists. This makes the problem, in no trivial way, one of meaning. What is to be counted as meaning? Gaunilo, a pious monk, said that he did not know the reality of God, nor could he conjecture it from any other reality. Anselm replies by quoting Paul. And as Barth points out Paul's argument is Platonic. [. . .]

Malcolm summarises the Proof thus: God, necessarily, cannot have come into existence, so if he does not exist, his existence is impossible. If he exists his existence is necessary. God's existence is either impossible or necessary. It can only be impossible if it is self-contradictory, or logically absurd. If this is not so, he necessarily exists. And "there is no more of a presumption that it (the concept of God) is contradictory than that the concept of a material object is. Both concepts have a place in the thinking of and the lives of human beings." Malcolm may seem here to suggest that any local use of language by people in Church for instance, can offer a kind of localised "necessity". The comparison with the material object sounds more promising. There is (Kantian) assertion about what we can and what we can't "think away" from human life which is in some form essentially contained in the Proof. God may not resemble triangles, but what about objects or causes? Here the strict idea of being self-contradictory or necessary blends into some softer notion of "essential aspects of experience". Perhaps the Proof must be content to exist and persuade in this softer version which involves imagination as well as logic? Can we imagine human existence and experience without surface colours? Yes. Without tactile objects? Yes. Without any objects, without causes, without regularity? Problems for science fiction writers. Without values, virtue, good, truth, difference between good and evil? Is this a different kind of question? Perhaps the "necessity" of God is more like the necessity of value than it is like the necessity of objects? The goodness of God is sometimes lost to view in logically-minded discussions of the Proof. It is the argument from experience which reminds us that the necessity of God is internally connected with his goodness, that is with morality.

Wittgenstein, who also entered the debate, but rather casually, argued as follows: "A proof of God's existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what believers who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is give their 'belief' an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves could never have come to believe as a result of such proofs. Perhaps one could 'convince someone that God exists' by means of a 'certain kind of upbringing', by shaping his life in such and such a way. Life can educate one to a belief in God. And experiences too are what bring this about; but I don't mean visions and other forms of sense experience which show us the 'existence of this being', but e.g. sufferings of various sorts. Those neither show us God in the way a sense of impression shows us an object, nor do they give rise to conjectures about him. Experiences, thoughts - life can force this concept upon us. So perhaps it is similar to the concept of an object."[1] When Wittgenstein says that life can "force" the concept of God upon us he seems to be using a rather weaker sense of the word "force", than the sense in which the concept of object or cause is forced upon us. What exactly he means is unclear, and was perhaps unclear to himself. What Wittgenstein certainly expresses is a general intuitive view to the effect that suffering "deepens" our lives and drives us towards some sense of an absolute.

Norman Malcolm also, concerned to establish that the concept of God has meaning and is not self-contradictory, carries his argument further by asking us to reflect upon what human life is like, or really like. He too likens the concept of God to the concept of an object, which has "a place in the thinking and the lives of human beings". "Even if one allows that, I am sure there cannot be a deep understanding of the concept without an understanding of the phenomena of human life that give rise to it." Malcolm's way of putting the matter here may seem to say no more than that "God" is a concept which we have, at times, motives to frame or attend to. In terms of some sympathy with the logical argument that if "God" is meaningful God exists, we might prefer to any that God is a (necessary) being whom we are implicitly conscious of and about whom we learn explicitly through experience, as Schillebeekx puts it. The whole argument is delicately poised at this point. If it is said that we can be ignorant or oblivious of God, some will say that proves he does not exist, while others will say that we are not "really" ignorant or oblivious: the same problem is encountered concerning knowledge of Good. Are we "really" ever unaware of our duty? As an example of one of these phenomena which lead us to frame the perhaps illusory concept of God, Malcolm instances an overwhelming feeling of guilt, "a guilt (greater than which cannot be conceived), for which is required an equally measureless power to forgive." "Out of such a storm of the soul, I am suggesting, there arises the conception of a forgiving mercy which is limitless beyond all measure. This is one important feature of the Jewish and Christian view of God." He goes on to quote Kierkegaard to this effect. "There is only one proof of the truth of Christianity, and that quite rightly is from the emotions, when the dread of sin and a heavy conscience torture a man into crossing the narrow line between despair bordering on madness, and Christendom." (Journals. A. Dru, Sec. 926). Thus Malcolm and Kierkegaard agree with Wittgenstein in mentioning suffering as likely to force the concept of God upon us. Malcolm is suggesting at this point that it is not any experience, but only some very special extreme kind of experience which seems to entail, or leads us to think of, God. This existentialist line of thought in the style of Kierkegaard, of mutatis mutandis Sartre, and of certain modern theologians suggests that spiritual understanding appears (especially) in extreme situations. It also seems to imply that people who lead quiet orderly lives are less spiritual than those who are torn apart by suffering. This is no doubt a popular view, much reflected in novels. Don Cupitt, an avant garde British Theologian, speaking of the saints of the modern world, lists Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Wittgenstein; well geniuses yes, but surely saints, no! If there is any kind of proof from experience via meaning should not the relevant phenomena be, not esoteric, but of great generality. What sort of experience can provide a strong enough meaning? If "God" can be learnt from experience must not the lesson be everywhere visible, as the experience of every soul? In an obvious sense there are "religious worlds" groups or communities with shared words and feelings; but in another sense all the world must be religious, everything must point to what is supremely valuable. Malcolm suggests that "the Proof can be thoroughly understood only by one who has a view of that 'form of life' that gives rise to

[1] The passage is from *Culture and Value*, pp. 85-6. You will find the entire passage on p. 415, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*

the idea of an infinitely great being", but adds that the Proof may have religious value by removing "some philosophical scruples that stand in the way of faith". Whether philosophical or intellectual scruples can be removed by exhibiting the Proof as a definition of God I am not sure. Malcolm connects religion with the idea of an infinite being. Modern scruples are in general more immediately concerned with the supernatural aspects or "accidents" of the traditional God, including his claim to be a person. In removing these by a process of radical demythologisation the idea of experience must of course play a part; and those who do not want to save the traditional personal God, but want religion to continue, in a way not unconnected with its past, as an assertion and examination and celebration of an absolute claim upon us, "an unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality", must see the whole of human experience as capable of indicating this value.

This must bring us back to reflect upon the origins of Anselm's proof in Plato, where we can see the argument as one from the whole of experience, showing how the unique and special and all-important knowledge of good and evil is learnt in every kind of human activity, in thinking and loving, in art, in griefs and joys, in work of all kinds; the question of truth, which we are indeed forced to attend to in all our doings, appears here as a primary aspect of the unavoidable nature of morality. If religion is to be the centre of the world it must be something thought to be true in the deepest and most thoroughly tested sense that we can attach to truth. To speak, as some protestant thinkers do, of "religious language", as something specialised, supposed to be "expressive" rather than referential, is to isolate religion from the truth-seeking struggle of the whole of life. Art too is part of this struggle[;] art is not either photographs of facts or outbursts of private feeling. In understanding how great art utterly transcends this distinction we exercise our general ability to distinguish what is illusory from what is real. Bad art is a kind of lie. Great art is true and just and deep in ways which are internally connected with its beauty. It inspires unselfish love, and can be seen, as Kant allowed beauty to be, as an analogy of morality and religion. Plato too said that beauty was the nearest spiritual thing. Praise and worship are not just expressive attitudes, they arise in very various cognitive contexts and are themselves a grasp of reality. Martin Buber says that in prayer we wait (hope) for God to manifest himself. An image of prayer is the artist who, rejecting easy, false, mediocre ideas, and hoping for the right thing, the best thing, waits. This too is an image of all sorts of stilled attentive situations in work and human relations, where the waiting is intensely collected and yet relaxed. "Fearlessly [receptive]," to use a beautiful phrase used by Theodor Adorno in exploring the (proper) dialectic of subject and object. Valery speaks of the sunlight which rewards him who steadily contemplates the insuperable difficulty. What is awaited is an illuminating experience, a kind of certainty, a presence: a case of human consciousness at its most highly textured.

A question for the western world is whether religion, that is effectively its main religion, Christianity, can continue without supernatural charms and literalistic myths, and whether morality can live without a religious dimension. This is a rough and ready question which raises other questions, about institutions and rituals, about what myth is and how it works, about the relation of religion and morals and so on. Of course "morality" will continue, but could it largely collapse into relativism and cynicism, is it so collapsing? Is it important that philosophers should try, once more, to explain in what sense morality is something unique and absolute? Eastern religions benefit from being less burdened by historical claims and intellectualised dogma. In Buddhism and Hinduism the idea of how, through innumerable kinds of symbols, the visible points to the invisible, is acceptable at many levels of sophistication, and there is no personal God and no divine intervention in history. I think that useless confusion arises from trying to extend the meaning of our word "God" to cover any conception of a spiritual reality. This move clouds over the problem without solving it. "God" is the name of a supernatural person. It makes a difference whether we believe there is such a person, as it makes a difference whether Christ rose from the dead. Of course these differences do not affect whether or not people are virtuous. I would like to see Christianity continue without a personal God and without beliefs in supernatural places and happenings, such as heaven and life after death, but retaining the mystical figure of Christ occupying a place analogous to that of Buddha: a Christ who can console and save but who is to be found as a living force within each human soul, and not elsewhere. Such a continuation would preserve and renew the Christian tradition as it has always, somehow or other, been preserved and

renewed. Perhaps this is something which cannot be brought about in time, that is before Christian belief and practice virtually disappear. To accomplish this leap it might also be necessary for philosophers to become theologians and theologians to become philosophers, and this is not very likely to happen either.

-IRIS MURDOCH

MEMOIR, FESTCHRIFT, BIOGRAPHY

John Bayley and Peter Conradi plan to publish *Iris Murdoch: A Celebration,* probably early 1999, as a *Festchrift* to coincide with Dame Iris's eightieth birthday year. John Bayley will write a Foreword, and Conradi will edit the volume with him. It will comprise of a mixture of hereto uncollected small pieces, including the 1939 eve-of-war Journal *The Magpie Players* (which concerns an Oxford amateur theatrical group's tour of the Cotswolds for two weeks in late August 1939), the Radio Play *The One Alone*, the long short story *Something Special*, reviews and other bits and pieces, a couple of interviews; and, last but not least, tributes by friends. Among around 25 (or so) contributors are likely to be such old friends as Natasha Spender, Philippa Foot, John Grigg, Audi Villers, Andrew Wilson, Tony Quinton, Josephine Hart, Mary Midgeley, Janet Stone, John Simopoulos, Tom Phillips, Christopher Hood, Carmen Callil, Eric Christiansen, Neil McEwen, Ben McKintire, Jeremy Adler, Jonathan Cecil, Reggie Askew, Scott Dunbar, Stephen Medcalf, A.S. Byatt, Dulcibel Broderick, and Ed Victor. These range from childhood, College and war-time friends to Dame Iris's mother's window-cleaner, whose fiction she was instrumental in getting published.

Apart from this, John Bayley is writing a memoir which mixes scenes from the present, with those from the past. It is hoped that this may give comfort to other carers of Alzheimer's victims. And Peter Conradi has been invited to write an official biography

The tasks of writing Dame Iris's biography are formidable ones, and would fill any proper contender with feelings of holy dread. The problems of assembling information represent only one part of this. Her memory for the distant past is often surprisingly vivid. She has retrieved one surname from the early 1950's before John Bayley could. She poetically described her current condition in December 1997, as "sailing away into darkness".

In this condition of "sailing away", if exact *expression* of a memory sometimes fails, she can none the less accomplish much in other ways. She has recounted her first memory of all as swimming in the salt-water baths near Kingstown, outside Dublin, when she was three or four years old. Her father got quickly to the further side, where he sat and called out encouragement. She enacts the excitement, fear, sense of challenge, and deep love entailed in her infant efforts slowly to swim to the other side, and regain her father's protection - a powerful enough Proto-image in itself of her continuing life-quest for "the authority of the Father". She also speaks of sitting at the age of about seven under the table while her parents play bridge - either reading a favourite childhood book, or listening in wonderment at the altercations and mutual reproaches of the adults at the end of each round, or, as she puts it, "simply sitting in quietness".

For the anxious biographer, there are further resources. John Bayley's almost total recall of the events is invaluable. While this is a long-term and sometimes an arduous commitment, it is also a fascinating one, and a privilege. It feels right that, since there is no question but that a biography - and probably more than one - will sooner or later be written, the first should fall to a scholar who is devoted both to her and to her work.

Murdoch once noted (to the present writer) that she preferred Rousseau to Voltaire - a pair set in opposition, in discussions between Guy and the Count in *Nuns and Soldiers* - and that this preference withstood her knowledge of Rousseau's lamentable private life. It is hard to conceive of her reading contemporary biography. Yet she is so gifted a writer because she understands the ways of the world, an understanding that includes the knowledge that her story, one day, will be told, even if not during her life-time. It is worth the telling. It is not lamentable. It is, if anything, a triumphal tale.

- Peter Conradi

PHILOSOPHY, ART AND MORALS: Reflections on *Existentialists and Mystics*

Existentialists and Mystics
Writings on Philosophy and Literature
by Iris Murdoch (Ed. Peter Conradi)
Chatto and Windus pp 546 20 pounds

There is a widespread tendency to regard the history of English philosophy as a history of empiricism. The influence of German idealism in the nineteenth century on British philosophy is on the whole regarded as a temporary interruption in the development of a traditional empiricism. (There are exceptions; compare in this respect *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* by J.H. Muirhead who rejects this view of the history of English philosophy as "... if not wholly mistaken give[ing] a one-sided picture of the work of the National genius in the department of philosophy and its contribution to Western thought." (p.13) But the work of G. E. Moore, with his emphasis on common-sense and clarifying our concepts by analysis was largely responsible for the turning of the tide against the speculative metaphysics and idealism of philosophers like Hegel and Bradley; and for bringing philosophic thinking in England back into the empiricist stream. Another influential figure who helped considerably to shape the development of twentieth-century English philosophy is Bertrand Russell, whose dominating philosophic interests were logic and mathematics. He attempted to analyse statements into atomic propositions which consisted solely of a proper name and a simple predicate. These atomic propositions Russell maintained were the simplest of all propositions, and the facts that these propositions expressed were called atomic facts. Atomic propositions it was believed laid bare the essential character of the world, This line of thinking was developed by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* which was published in English in 1922.

Suffice to say, the work of Moore and Russell forms a bridge back to their empiricist predecessors as well as providing a place from which further development might begin. In the thirties English philosophy entered a further stage of development through the influence of logical positivism. The main features of logical positivism are twofold: a deep respect for science and mathematics and a deep distaste for metaphysics. Logical positivists maintained that philosophy was concerned with meaning and devised a test in which science and mathematics would pass with flying colours but metaphysical assertions would fail abysmally. The principle of verifiability states; 'the meaning of any statement is given by its method of verification.' (Dr. F. Waismann was the first to state the principle explicitly in *Erkenntnis*, Vol. 1, 1930. Waismann was later a colleague of Iris Murdoch at Oxford.) In *Existentialists and Mystics* (pp. 265-267) there is a most insightful discussion of some of the main figures in the history of English empiricism with Kant hovering in the background, a splendid blend of political and scientific ideas; liberal in attitude and tolerant of difference.

The philosophical landscape I have described here is, in very general terms, the one with which Iris Murdoch would become familiar as a student, and later as a teacher. Of especial significance in this context, is the publications of Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949) and Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Wittgenstein had a much more profound influence on Murdoch than Ryle. Nonetheless, Ryle *et al.* contributed to Murdoch's philosophical development by creating a climate of thinking which helped shape her own distinctive philosophical outlook. In her monograph Sartre: *Romantic Rationalist* (1953) she says of Ryle's *Concept of Mind*: "The 'world' of the *Concept of Mind* is the world in which people play cricket, cook cakes, make simple decisions, remember their childhood and go to the circus; not the world in which they commit sins, fall in love, say prayers or join the Communist Party." Only Murdoch could have said these words; and in doing so, provide such a stringent and precise critique of Ryle's *Concept of Mind.*

The prologue in *Existentialists and Mystics* is a conversation between Bryan Magee and Iris Murdoch, originally shown on British television in 1977; the version which appears here is a revised version of the original. I include it in this article largely because it anticipates ideas and themes we find throughout Murdoch's work; it is not, however, in any sense a synopsis of ideas and themes or an analysis of them but an introduction to some of them. Murdoch says: "... the methods of philosophy change, but we have not left Plato behind, which is also to say that philosophy does not make progress in the way science does. Of course literature does not make progress either. Nobody is

better than Homer." (p.6) I suggest the reason why we have not left Plato behind is the same reason we have not left Homer behind. No (philosopher) is better than Plato.

The *Iliad* is anonymous; it seems always to have been with us. Yet, when we re-read it do we think of Homer? I think not; or, if we do, only in retrospect. Recall the classics don at Cambridge, who, walking by the river, wonders if Homer would like her in her new hat? (*A Room of One's Own,* Virginia Woolf). When we think of the *Iliad* we think of the people we have encountered in it; not in vague generalizations, but in their particularity; Achilles and Thetis, Patroclus and Briseis, Hector and Andromache, Priam and Achilles. Homer creates persons who are independent of himself; they are both real and free of their creator. They are the achievements of imagination rather than reflections or shadows of fantasies or private obsessions.

Man is perceived as an aspect of nature; thus his life is intermingled with it. Our deepest affinities are with others and the earth from which we come and to which we return. The gods have significance and relevance only because of human beings; they are projections of man. The difference between the gods and humans is immeasurable. The gods are timeless and never know old age; man knows he is transient and old age is a part of the human condition. But what the gods gain in duration they lose in immediacy of experience. In Bk. VI we read: "Men in their generations are like the leaves of the trees. The wind blows and one year's leaves are scattered on the ground; but the trees burst into bud and put on fresh ones when the spring comes round. In the same way one generation flourishes and another nears its end."[2] In this passage Glaucus expresses man's fate by recourse to our natural surroundings of which we are a part. And the war (in which Homer does not take sides) continues: "As he spoke, he aimed at Hector, whom he yearned to bring down, and sent another arrow flying from his string. He missed him, but the arrow landed in the breast of one of Priam's noble sons, peerless Gorgythion.... Weighed down by his helmet, Gorgythion's head dropped to one side, like the lolling head of a garden poppy, weighed down by its seed and the showers of spring." (Bk. VIII)....

In the *Iliad* natural phenomena or nature is not taken for granted. It is a fundamental source of wonder, and the particularity and individuality of natural objects are never lost sight of. Nature is perceived as mysterious and strange; it is alive and full of divinities. Thus, a sense of wonder at existence developed among the ancient Greeks providing them with the origins of philosophy (Compare: Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d and Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, 982b, 983a).

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In *Literature and Philosophy* Murdoch says: "Shakespeare has a recognisable style but no presence, whereas a writer like D.H. Lawrence has a less evident style but a strong presence. Though many poets and some novelists speak to us in a highly personal manner, much of the best literature has no strongly felt presence of the author in the work." (p.9) This is an important distinction and one with which readers of the Newsletter will be familiar. However, I do not think a line can always be drawn between style and presence. In Shakespeare, *Lear* and *The Tempest* are clear examples of the distinction. But what about Sonnets 116 and 43? The former has unmistakably style and little (if any) presence; the latter has both style and presence (Shakespeare in love). In Sonnet 43, Shakespeare does not impose his presence on the reader; he creates art out of a slave condition which is apprehensible to the reader either because of his own experience or exercise of the imagination.

A difficulty with the style-presence distinction is that almost inevitably, when we say X has style but no (or little) presence; Y, in contrast, has a strong presence in his work but little style, subconsciously, we infer the distinction applies to all Shakespeare's work or all D.H. Lawrence. We know more, much more, about Andromache, Achilles, Patroclus, Hector, Priam than we know about Homer. The greatest art is anonymous.

Murdoch concludes her conversation with Magee by articulating in summary form her view of the relationship between art and morals. She says: "There is a breadth of tolerance and generosity and intelligent kindness which blows out of Homer and Shakespeare and the great novelists. The great artist sees the vast interesting collection of what is other than himself and does not picture the world in his own image. I think this particular kind of merciful objectivity is virtue, and it is this which the totalitarian state is trying to destroy when it persecutes art." (pp 29-30) Virtue and

2 Quotations from the *Iliad* E. V. Rieu trans · Martin Hammond's trans. was also consulted. Both are Penguin Classics

reality which is outside us are connected; through persons and things we encounter the transcendent, the transcendence of the world. In this context the parable of the Cave in Plato's *Republic* (Book VII: 514ff) readily comes to mind. The contrast is between the prisoners in the cave who can only see the shadows of artifacts, and believe the truth to be nothing other than the shadows they are forced to look at, and one prisoner, who is freed from his fetters, and made to look at the fire in the cave which casts the shadows the other prisoners look at. Next, the freed prisoner is taken out of the cave, and eventually able to look at the sun itself; he begins to reflect that it is the sun "which provides the seasons and the years, which governs everything in the visible world...." (516c: Grube translation). This man discovered the differences as well as the connections between the fire and the sun; the shadows in the cave and persons and things in the visible world.

Existentialists and Mystics is not simply a remarkable book; it is a great one. It allows the reader to follow the philosophical development and achievements of one of the few philosophers in the twentieth century who possesses intellectual originality, a range of philosophical interests second to none, and, above all, wisdom. Iris Murdoch is also a great artist; this is evident from every page in this book. Ideally, a review of *Existentialists and Mystics* would require the reviewer to give a seminar on it, discussing the essays with others interested in philosophy or literature (or both). There would be no prerequisites; all the participants would need to bring to the seminar would be desire to understand, openness of mind and receptivity to new vision -- these three, and, of course, one's own copy of the book. Under less than ideal circumstances described above I have had to make my own selection from *Existentialists and Mystics*; the choices were not easy to make.

In *Existentialists and Mystics* there is an abbreviated version of Murdoch's essay, "Vision and Choice in Morality". Originally published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society: Supplement*, 1956, it reached a much wider and larger audience when it was included in the influential collection of essays, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy* edited by Ian Ramsey, 1966. Ian Ramsey and Iris Murdoch were colleagues at Oxford (Ramsey was Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in the university. In 1966 he was appointed Bishop of Durham. Many thought he would be the successor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, but he died in 1972).

In "Vision and Choice in Morality" Murdoch reminds us of the distinction between the two questions: "What is my morality?" and "What is morality as such?" In reading Murdoch's essay we do well to bear these two questions in mind: the study of moral philosophy is not a prerequisite for moral insight or moral sensibilities. An individual may find Kant's *Grundlegung* incomprehensible and yet live her or his life in the light that emanates from the fruit of the Spirit ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ..." [Galations, 5. 22-3]), on which she or he attends and reflects. The fruit of the Spirit provides a mode of seeing and responding to the world and our fellow creatures; not in abstractions but in particularities. The question: "What is my morality?" becomes a question about personal vision and I have contextualised the framework of this vision in the fruit of the Spirit. However, I do not wish to go on and say something like: "An individual who finds the *Grundlegung* incomprehensible and the fruit of the Spirit apprehensible lacks the intellectual or reasoning capacity Kant demands from his readers" (though *sometimes* this might be the case). What I would want to suggest is; an individual committed to the vision of life delineated in the fruit of the Spirit has a richer and more comprehensive view of persons as moral beings than we find in the *Grundlegung*. I shall have more to say on this later in discussing Murdoch's essays, "The Sublime and the Good" and "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited."

In "Vision and Choice in Morality" Murdoch presents two different views of morality and displays the corresponding dissimilarities in moral outlook between them. The first view has its philosophical antecedents in traditional British empiricism, in particular, Hume and Mill; in addition, the influence of Kant is clearly evident. In the twentieth century (as already mentioned) the concept of meaning was connected with the principle of verifiability and the anti-metaphysical attitude in British philosophy gained a new breath of life by the application of the same principal to metaphysical assertions. Linguistic philosophy was in its hey-day at Oxford in the fifties and Rylean behaviorism was pervasive. Against this very abbreviated background Murdoch provides the first view of morality in which the central focus is on choice and moral rules. "[T]he moral life of the

individual is a series of overt choices which take place in a series of specifiable situations. The individual's 'stream of consciousness' is of comparatively little importance, partly because it is often not there at all (having been thought to be continuous for wrong reasons), and more pertinently because it is and can only be through overt acts that we can characterise another person, or ourselves, mentally or morally. Further, a moral judgement ... is supported by reasons held by the agent to be valid for all others placed as he [is], and which would involve the objective specification of the situation in terms of facts available to disinterested scrutiny. Moral words come into the picture because we not only make choices, but also guide choices by verbal recommendations.... The view combines the philosophical insight of Hume (we live in a world of disconnected facts) with that of Kant (morality is rational and seeks universally valid reasons), while more surreptitiously it embodies the morality of Mill ('a creed learnt by heart is paganism'). All this is achieved by a 'linguistic' method ... without reference to transcendent entities or states of consciousness." (pp. 77-8)

Murdoch emphasises four features or points in the view of morality she has provided and described; each one is interrelated within the view and is also important for referential purposes; the behaviouristic analysis of the "inner life",[3] the perception of moral concepts as factual specifications plus recommendations, the universalisability of moral judgements, and moral freedom. These four points are reinforced by Prof. R. M. Hare, who says: "If we were to ask a person 'what are his moral principles?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he did" (*The Language of Morals*, p.1). Morality is essentially behaviour. It is important to say I do not disagree with the substance of Hare's statement; the relationship between moral principles and moral action is fundamental. If a man claimed Ross' *prima facie* duties were his moral principles but did not act in accord with them one would think him insincere and hypocritical. The view of morality we have considered encourages us to look at the phenomenon under examination as (at best) a series of separate situations in which we are obliged to make choices: match moral principles with moral actions. There is no awareness of the individual as either a moral being or of morality as a fundamental part of his being; just as there is no awareness of the individual as a continuous historical self who acquires moral experience throughout his life. And the possibility that an individual may have a vision of his own life would be of no consequence in the view of morality considered here.

It is important to remind ourselves that there is no one correct view of morality and that Murdoch is concerned with choice *and* vision in morality. Murdoch says: "In a philosophical analysis of morality what place should be given to the 'inner life'? ...What must here be clearly separated is the notion of inner or private psychological phenomena, open to introspection, and the notion of private or personal vision which may find expression overtly or inwardly. There has, I think, been some tendency for the discrediting of the 'inner' in the former sense to involve the neglect of the 'inner' in the latter sense." (p.78) For Murdoch the "inner life" is part of the data of ethics. It includes personal attitudes and personal visions; it does not take the form of choice-guiding arguments....

In "Vision and Choice in Morality" Murdoch distinguishes between people whose fundamental moral view or belief is that we all live in the same empirical and rationally comprehensible world and think of morality as the adoption of universal and openly defensible rules of conduct; by contrast, there are others whose fundamental moral view or belief is that we live in a world haunted by mystery and that morality includes the exploration of this mystery insofar as it concerns other persons; and one's own life may be understood as a pilgrimage from fantasy and illusion to a vision of the world apprehended and unclouded by egoism and self-centredness. In her discussion of morality in terms of vision, she says: "The insistence that morality is essentially rules may be seen as an attempt to secure us against the ambiguity of the world. Rules may be ambiguous in that we have to decide how to apply them, but at least in attempting an ever more detailed specification one is moving in the direction of complete clarity. If I am right, however, this cannot properly be taken as the only structural model of morality. There are times when it is proper to stress, not the comprehensibility of the world, but its incomprehensibility, and there are types of morality which emphasise this more than is customary in utilitarian Liberal moralities. We may consider here

[3] See Ryle, Hampshire, [who speaks of " ...the parasitic and shadowy nature of mental actions ... " in *Thought and Action*, p. 163] and Murdoch on Hampshire at pp. 288-9, 302, 304, in the present volume.

the importance of parables and stories as moral guides.... Consider too the adaptability which a religion may gain from having at its centre a person and not a set of rules." (pp.90-1)

The core of the first view or model of morality (held by Hare and expressed by Murdoch): "It has been powerfully argued, especially by Mr. Hare that a *moral* decision is one which is supportable by reasons which are universalisable. Here we may get the full force of what is meant by a philosophical model. We are being asked to conceive of a structure of would-be universal reasoning as lying at the core of any activity which could properly be called moral" (See p.85 and footnote).

And, Hare says, "We steer a middle course" between the "hidebound inflexibility" of the man who never adjusts rules to situations, and the "neurotic indetermination" of the man who always hesitates because he fears he has not understood. Murdoch (rightly) says here: "To select the middle course is itself a moral choice: the choice which, transformed into a description of morality, Mr. Hare wishes us to make true by definition." (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1954-5), p.310 and *Existentialists and Mystics*, p.88)

The core of the second view or model of morality presented by Murdoch is both a development and alternative to the first summarised in the above paragraph. Murdoch says: we do continually have to make choices--but why should we blot out as irrelevant the different background of these choices, whether they are made confidently on the basis of a clear specification of the situation, or tentatively, with no confidence of having sufficiently explored the details? Why should attention to detail, or belief in its inexhaustibility, necessarily bring paralysis, rather than, say, inducing humility and being an expression of love? (p.88) And, "It is at this point that one may raise the question ... of the contrast between art and morals.... Some people stress the dissimilarity between art and morals because they want to insist that morality is rational, in the sense of legislating for repeatable situations by specification of morally relevant facts. Other people stress the similarity between art and morals because they want to insist that morality is imaginative and creative and not limited to duties of special obligations." (pp.86 and 87)

I think the expressions "duty" or "obligation" fail to convey the repugnance one sometimes feels in a particular moral situation just as they fail to convey the variety and complexity of morality. As a matter of fact we are not as individuals continuously fulfilling an obligation or performing a duty. Not infrequently, one sees more than one understands, and one may go away remembering a particular scene thinking about what one can do (if anything) in this situation. Expressions such as duty and obligation *quasi* imply morality is something the individual can "switch on" or "switch off"; more like moves in a chess game than a fundamental aspect of oneself as a moral being. I am not suggesting that the expressions duty or obligation have no place in morals--in moral discourse or in articulating or justifying one's feelings about a moral situation. I am suggesting that the scope of these expressions is a limited one and is not coterminous with morality as we know it. One of the remarkable features of twentieth century moral philosophers--I'm thinking particularly of Anglo-American philosophers -- is that professionally they do not discuss love. There are course exceptions, and one of them is Professor R. B. Braithwaite in his Eddington Memorial Lecture for 1955, "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief" (Iris Murdoch's "Vision and Choice in Morality" was published in 1956, and despite remarkable similarities between the two papers there is no mention of Braithwaite in *Existentialists and Mystics*, or in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 1992). Braithwaite says: "The kernel for an empiricist of the problem of the nature of religious belief is to explain, in empirical terms, how a religious statement is used by a man who asserts it in order to express his religious conviction. Since I shall argue that the primary element in this use is that the religious assertion is used as a moral assertion, I must first consider how moral assertions are used.... [A] moral assertion is used to express an attitude of the man making the assertion.... The attitude is concerned with the action which he asserts to be right or to be his duty, or the state of affairs which he asserts to be good...." (*Christian and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Ian T. Ramsey, p.59)

An important internal criticism or problem which arises contextually from Braithwaite's account of religious belief concerns the connection or relationship between the intention to carry out a particular policy of behaviour and the policy concerned. I have to know what it is I intend to do. Braithwaite meets this

criticism by suggesting that if a particular assertion is regarded as representative of a large number of assertions of which the particular one is a representative specimen it is used by the asserter as implicitly specifying a particular way of life. "Unless a Christian's assertion that God is love (agape) -- which I take to epitomize the assertions of the Christian religion -- be taken to declare his intention to follow an agapeistic way of life, he could be asked what is the connection between the assertion and the intention, between Christian belief and Christian practice. And this question can always be asked if religious assertions are separated from conduct. Unless religious principles are moral principles, it makes no sense putting them into practice." (p.63) For Braithwaite the typical meaning of the body of Christian assertions is given by proclaiming one's intentions to follow an agapeistic way of life, and a description of this way of life--a description in metaphorical and general terms, but an empirical description nevertheless--is to be found in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Thus, For Braithwaite, the primary use of religious assertions is to announce allegiance to a set of moral principles: without such allegiance there is no "true religion." (p.64)

Erroneously, Braithwaite has been described as reducing the Christian religion to morality, and morality is then equated with behaviour (overt acts). Obviously morality is behaviour, *but only in part*. It is also inner (a frame of mind) *and* overt (behaviour). This distinction is of fundamental importance to Braithwaite's moral theory: his conception of morality. He would reject any view which considered the inner to be parasitic on the outer. Think of different levels of "seeing" and "understanding"; how seeing is (sometimes) connected with understanding, not only in religion and morals, but in art--the ephemerality of childhood: Gainsborough's daughter seeks to gasp the butterfly, but its dancing movements elude her hand. And how many years did it take to see *The Polish Rider's* face was tired?

The intention to follow an agapeistic way of life combines both one's inner life and external conduct. Christ enjoins us not only to act towards one's neighbour as though one loved him as oneself but to love him as oneself: "Christianity requires not only that you should behave towards your neighbor as if you loved him as yourself: it requires that you should love him as yourself. And though I have no doubt that the Christian concept of agape refers partly to external behaviour ... yet being filled with agape includes more than agapeistically externally: it also includes an agapeistic frame of mind." (p.65) And: "The resolution proclaimed by a religious assertion may then be taken as referring to inner life as well as to outward conduct.... [T]he superiority of religious conviction over the mere adoption of a moral code in securing conformity to the code arises from a religious conviction changing what the religious man wants. It may be hard enough to love your enemy, but once you have succeeded in doing so it is easy to behave lovingly towards him. But if you continue to hate him, it requires a heroic perseverance continually to behave as if you loved him. Resolution to feel, even if they are only partly fulfilled, are powerful reinforcements of resolution to act." (p.65)

Braithwaite does not neglect to consider the significance and role of the parables, or as he calls them "stories." The function of the stories or parables is that they cause us to reflect, to attend, to nurture the agapeistic way of life in ways which we *might* not if they did not exist. Compare by way of example: Luke, 10.25-37; John, 8.1-11; and Matthew, 25.34-40. A Christian need not believe these stories correspond with empirical fact; they help him or her in their resolve to follow an agapeistic way of life.

Braithwaite's use of the word "stories" rather than parables reflects his recognition of the relationship between literature and life. Our morality is influenced not simply by intellectual beliefs and the use of reason but also by our imagination, and ideas about what we wish to do and be. He says: "Next to the Bible and the Prayer Book the most influential work in English Christian religious life has been a book whose stories are frankly recognized as fictitious--Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; and some of the most influential works in setting the moral tone of my generation were the novels of Dostoevsky. It is completely untrue, as a matter of psychological fact, to think that the only intellectual considerations which affect action are beliefs: it is *all* the thoughts of a man that determine his behaviour; and these include his phantasies, imaginations, ideas of what he would wish to be and do, as well as the propositions which he believes to be true." (p.68)

Clearly, Braithwaite and Murdoch have a great deal in common from a philosophical point of view; "Vision

and Choice in Morality" and "An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief" are landmark accounts of morality in twentieth-century British philosophy or more correctly Anglo-American philosophy. A major difference between them lies in their respective philosophic foundations; Braithwaite's account is derived from an adaptation of the principle of verification, Murdoch's is more complex, a unique combination of the creative artist and the philosopher. The uniqueness is evident throughout *Existentialists and Mystics*; her two papers, "The Sublime and the Good" (1959) and "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" (1959) on Kant provide excellent illustrations of it. Murdoch's critique and analysis of Kant's aesthetics is astute without being clever, of especial merit in *The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited* is her transformation of the sublime into a theory of art in which the artist may become the analogon of the good man.

Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* is a philosophical attempt to define art. In this work he makes a fundamental distinction between the beautiful and the sublime and then a further distinction between free and dependent beauty. Only free beauty is concerned with true judgement of taste in which imagination and understanding are in harmony. Aesthetic judgements, however, may be made in relation to both art and nature; we like nature when it seems to be purposefully constructed and art when it seems to be pointless. For Kant, free beauty is true beauty, dependent beauty "presupposes a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection." Examples of dependent beauty include the beauty of man, the beauty of a horse, or a building. (p.207)

In "The Sublime and the Good" Iris Murdoch reminds us of distinctions which Kant makes between the sublime and the beautiful. Beauty is not connected with emotion but awareness of, or a sense of the sublime is. Objects may be beautiful but no object--in the ordinary use of the word--is sublime.
And, as already mentioned, beauty reflects a harmony between imagination and understanding. The sublime by contrast, reflects a conflict between imagination and reason. Kant defines the sublime: "[As] an object (of nature) the representation of which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach as equivalent to, or a presentation of ideas." It "renders inevitable the supremacy of our cognitive faculties on the rational side over the greatest faculty of sensibility." (p.208) In other words, our reason demands the comprehension of what is before us in its totality. This demand of reason is like an inner-law which persists in its search for wholeness and rejects (or abhors) incompleteness. Awareness of the formlessness and terrifying in nature's vastness can create within us a sense of the sublime; climbing Yosemite in late winter and suddenly a fog-mist descends, one loses sight of the earth under one's feet, and one's companion is no longer within one's field of vision. I call out his name. No sound. I am encompassed by stillness and awe-ful silence. As Murdoch says later in "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited": "Whereas the beautiful reposes us the sublime rends us." (p.263) The sublime provides us with an 'upsetting glimpse' of the boundlessness of nature; it connects spiritual and moral experience.[4] From Kant's point of view art is not a part of this particular scene.

The experience of the sublime reflects the failure of the imagination to meet the demand of reason, namely, to comprehend what is before us as a totality. Despite the discomfiture we have at the failure of the imagination to encompass what is before us, we nonetheless, exult in our awareness of the demand or requirement or reason. In this "mixed" experience we discover that reason goes far beyond the limits (and achievements) of imagination; this discovery is akin to respect for the moral law. In this context Murdoch says: "In *Achtung* we feel pain at the thwarting of our sensuous nature by a moral requirement, and elation in the consciousness of our rational nature; that is, our freedom to conform to the absolute requirements of reason." (p.208) And, later: "The sublime is an experience of freedom, but of an empty freedom which is the fruitless aspiring demand for some sort of impossible total perceptual comprehension of nature." (p.214)

Throughout his three *Critiques* and the *Grundlegung* the concept of reason is sovereign for Kant. He says: "The practical necessity of acting on this principle--that is, duty--is in no way based on feelings, impulses, and inclinations, but only on the relation of rational beings to one another, a relation in which the will of a rational

[4] This is reminiscent of Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, particularly, the concept of the *numinous* and the *mysterium tremendum*

being must always be regarded as making universal law, because otherwise he could not be conceived as an end in himself. Reason thus relates every maxim of the will ... to every other will and also to every action towards oneself: it does so, not because of any further motive or future advantage, but from the Idea of the dignity of a rational being who obeys no law other than that which he at the same time enacts himself."[5] Given the supremacy Kant accords to reason it comes as no surprise that both his ethics and aesthetics are unblemished by any historical or human particularity. After all, we are not required to respect the whole person or historical individual; we are required to respect the universal reason within the other. Murdoch believes that Kant's view of ethics excludes the idea of tragedy and is thus unable to give an account of it in his aesthetics. My suggestion is, that at a more fundamental level, since Kant is unable to accommodate the historical individual in his ethics; similarly, he would be unable to accommodate the particularity of persons or individuals in his aesthetics....

What is the relationship between art and morals from Murdoch's point of view? The two may be considered as one, since the essence of both art and morals is love and love is the perception of individuals. Love makes it possible for us to discover reality; to realize that other persons really exist outside oneself. Murdoch turns Kant's account of the matter upside down in her own characteristically unobtrusive manner. She says: "What stuns us into realisation of our supersensible destiny is not, as Kant imagined, the formlessness of nature, but rather its unutterable particularity; and most particular and individual of all natural things is the mind of man. That is incidentally why tragedy is the highest art, because it is most intensely concerned with the most individual thing." And: "The tragic freedom implied by love is this: that we all have an indefinitely extended capacity to imagine the being of others. Tragic, because there is no prefabricated harmony, and others are, to an extent we never cease discovering, different from ourselves. Nor is there any social totality within which we can come to comprehend differences as placed and reconciled." (pp.215-6)

Earlier, I discussed Kant's contrast between the experience of beauty which reposes us and the experience of the sublime which rends us (the upsetting glimpse of the boundlessness of nature). The experience of the sublime is spiritual or moral and has nothing to do with art; beauty is seen in art but it is neither spiritual nor moral. Murdoch transforms Kant's view of the sublime into a theory of art and (rightly) claims the experience of the art of the novel is spiritual experience "... and where spirit fails, I would want to argue, art fails." (p.282) The experience of the sublime is close to a theory of tragedy; the spectator, instead of gazing at the Alps could have made the spectacle of human life the object of his gaze. "... [The spectator] ... that I have in mind, faced by the manifold of humanity, may feel, as well as terror, delight, but not, if he really sees what is before him, superiority.... To understand other people is a task which does not come to an end. This man will possess 'spirit' in the sense intended by Pascal when he said: 'The more spirit one has the more original men one discovers. Ordinary people do not notice differences between men.' And a better name for spirit here is not reason, not tolerance even, but love." (p.283)

Art, Murdoch tells us, is not an expression of personality, it is rather the continuing struggle to expel oneself from one's work as an artist. Virtue is fundamentally connected with the awareness that others exist and imagination (not fantasy or illusion) is virtue's ally. Virtue is knowledge and imagination, and both are required by the novelist if he is to create characters rather than puppets. In addition, he must respect the characters by allowing them to be, and give them freedom in their attempts to apprehend each other. Murdoch sees the artist as the analogon of the good man: the lover who, nothing himself, lets other things be through him. (p.284)....

The Fire and the Sun is the most original essay I have ever read on Plato in English; but it is more than a work on Plato. It is a dialogue between two philosophers in which the reader becomes involved because the subjects under discussion impinge on his life. In addition, it is an excellent introduction to Plato's thought and philosophical development. In this endeavor Murdoch is second to none as guide and critic.

Prior to the publication of *The Fire and the Sun* Murdoch's three essays: "The Idea of Perfection," "On God and Good" and "The Sovereignty of Good over

[5] See *Groundwork to the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. and analysed by H. J. Paton, pp. 101-02: referred to throughout this review as the *Grundlegung*

other Concepts" were published together as an anthology, *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970). Each essay in this anthology is much influenced by Plato and also by Christian theology. In "On God and Good" she says: "Such attitudes (of contemporary moral philosophy; ordinary language and existentialism) contrast with the vanishing images of Christian theology which represented goodness as almost impossibly difficult, and sin as almost insuperable and certainly as a universal condition.... [M]odern psychology has provided us with what might be called a doctrine of original sin, a doctrine which most philosophers either deny (Sartre), ignore (Oxford and Cambridge), or attempt to render innocuous (Hampshire). When I speak in this context of modern psychology I mean primarily the work of Freud.... Freud takes a thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature. He sees the psyche as an egocentric system of quasi- mechanical energy, largely determined by its own individual history, whose natural attachments are sexual, ambiguous, and hard for the subject to understand or control. Introspection reveals only the deep tissue of ambivalent motive, and fantasy is a stronger force than reason. Objectivity and unselfishness are not natural to human beings." (p. 341: see also, p.342 for fuller context)

I want to make a few comments about "On God and Good," including reference to the passage quoted above. In 1978 I published the essay, "On Art, Morals and Religion: Some Reflections on the Work of Iris Murdoch"; (Religious Studies, CUP, Vol.14, pp.515-524) and in 1982 the complementary essay, "On God and Virtue"; (Religious Studies, CUP, Vol, 18, pp. 489-502). In the former paper I made a distinction between religion at a popular level and religion at a serious level; this distinction was intended *inter alia* to disengage the life and teaching of Christ from the supernatural and consolatory background in which it is typically presented and enveloped. In contrast, religion at a serious level is realistic, and the passage quoted above from "On God and Good" expresses genuine insights into the human condition. In my own paper I put Murdoch's insights into the larger context of Plato's tripartite division of the soul (*Republic*, Bk. IV, 434D-441C) in order to provide a fuller background for them as well as give content to my claim that religion at a serious level is realistic.

In the past I have included *The Sovereignty of Good* as one of the major texts in various courses I have taught; religion and morals, ethics, and philosophy and literature. Without exception, "On God and Good" was the most controversial paper of the trio in the anthology; in particular, the notion of original sin and the claims made about the ego ("In the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego...") were--as I recall--the chief intellectual and moral irritants....

In *Vision and Choice in Morality* the initial distinction between: "What is my morality?" and "What is morality as such?" allows Murdoch to show how moral theory and the morality we live by are connected; the two accounts of morality she discusses--as we have seen above--delineate not only differences between us from the point of view of moral theory but also as moral beings. Recall also in this context the clear separation in the notion of "inner" or "inner life" Murdoch makes; "inner" or "inner life" is sometimes used to refer to private psychological phenomena, open to introspection. It is also used when we want to speak of private or personal vision which may find expression overtly or inwardly; what "goes on" between the acts or choices. In addition, her criticism concerning the tendency to discredit "inner" or "inner life" in the former sense which involves or includes "inner" or "inner life" in the latter sense. "Inner" or "inner life" in the latter sense is part of the data of ethics, it includes both private and personal vision. Introspection, on the other hand, is not part of the data of ethics because it is clouded by self-interest (or, more precisely, could be clouded and very frequently is) thus making it unreliable as a guide to both our motives and moral behaviour. I would say, introspection and attention (Weil) are at opposite ends of the spectrum; we oscillate between the two.

If I am right here, Murdoch's description of the human psyche in "On God and Good" at pp.341-2 is inadequate. In saying this, I am also keenly aware of the many percipient and valuable insights she provides throughout this essay. I have discussed some of them elsewhere; when I published "On Art, Morals and Religion" I shared her views on the human psyche. But over the years I found them less convincing; and felt a conflict between Murdoch's description of the psyche and my own experience. I think what she says is an over simplification of the complexities inherent in the phenomenon she describes; the human psyche is much richer, more various and diverse than she allows.

This may well be connected with my work as a medical ethicist since the middle of the eighties in two distinguished hospitals; one in the U.S.A. the other in London. In such settings one gets to know persons (reluctantly, but for the sake of clarity, I have to use the word, patients) at many different levels of human experience; their vulnerability, fears, anxieties, courage and values-sometimes, even his/her feelings of guilt and shame because of the nature of the illness or disease the person is living with. One identifies those who have a loving family or/and [a] significant other(s) who visit(s) every day; and there are others less fortunate who have been abandoned by both. One acquires a far deeper and greater knowledge of others working in a hospital than one does in the intellectual milieu of college or university. In London my duties were chiefly to persons with AIDS; largely a gay-patient population. The quality of love expressed openly between patient and significant other/partner--even to the time of death was deeply moving. And, the love between them was inclusive; the patient who did not have a visitor on a given day would be invited by his fellow patient, being visited by his partner/significant other, to join them. It was in this setting I saw; "Love is present and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; Love bears all things, endures all things." The absence of human love is what one misses most in Murdoch's description of the human psyche. (Contrast what Murdoch says about virtue and goodness (love) p.233, beginning with; "Virtue standing out ..." and concluding "... somebody is crying.") Some words of Ian Ramsey come to mind in this context. During a tutorial in his room at Oriel College he said to his tutee: "At the core of the Christian religion is the concept of redeeming love and when love is shown to us, it is natural to respond with love."

In *Existentialist and Mystics* on p.344 Murdoch says: "[O]ne of the main problems of moral philosophy might be formulated thus: are there any techniques for the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly?" Now, if the description of the human psyche she provides is accurate, I fail to see how there could be any motive for change, that is, the purification and reorientation of an energy which is naturally selfish and self-centered. And, as for choice and acting rightly, since the individual psyche is an egocentric system of quasi-mechanical energy, his choices would reflect self-interest, and acting rightly, would *at best*, be acting prudently from one's own point of view: *enlightened* self-interest. The absence of love is what one misses most in the description of the psyche Murdoch offers ; it is (perhaps) this omission--above all--which renders her account inadequate and ultimately unconvincing. She says: "The religious believer, especially if his God is conceived as a person, is in the fortunate position of being able to focus his thought upon something which is a source of energy. Such focusing, with such results, is natural to human beings." (p.345) What I want to do here is particularize this passage in the context of some features of Abelard's philosophy and theology. In doing so, I am indebted to Hastings Rashdell's, *The Ideas of Atonement in Christian Theology* , (1919) and J.G. Sikes', *Peter Abailard* (1932).

A fundamental feature of Abelard's philosophy and theology is the characterisation of the relationship between Christ and his disciples (as followers) as one of friendship. This feature is fundamentally connected with Abelard's exemplarist theory of atonement which I shall discuss very briefly below. Further, Abelard's definition of sin in terms of intention or consent is incompatible with any traditional view of original sin; this inherited sin plays no role in his theology. However, his stress on intention can lead to disregarding or ignoring the distinction between good and wicked acts. Another important feature in Abelard's theology is his view of the incarnation which is closely related to his theory of atonement. The incarnation is essentially ethical or moral in nature; Christ, for him, is teacher and example for all.

In summary: the creative genius of Abelard is that while rejecting any traditional view of *original* sin he does not hesitate to provide an interpretation of the concept of sin which connects with both his view of the incarnation and his exemplarist theory of atonement. I do not think a sharp line can be drawn between the incarnation and the exemplarist theory of atonement in Abelard, though it is the latter I want to emphasize. The exemplarist theory of atonement provides a motive for human actions, namely, love; in so doing, we respond to the redeeming love Christ has shown toward us. Consider the following passage from his *Expositio ad Romanos*: "Every man is made more just, that is more loving towards God, after the Passion of Christ than he had been before, because men are incited to love by a benefit actually received more than

by one hoped for. And so our redemption is that great love for us shown in the Passion of Christ which not only frees us from bondage of sin, but acquires for us the free liberty of the Sons of God, so that we should fulfill all things not so much through fear as through our love for him who showed towards us a favor than which, as he himself says, none greater can be found: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends?'" (Quotes by Sikes, *Peter Abailard* at p.208)

Murdoch begins "On God and Good" (p.337) by suggesting that to do philosophy is to explore one's own temperament while at the same time attempting to discover truth. She continues: "Areas peripheral to philosophy expand (psychology, political and social theory) or collapse (religion) without philosophy being able in the one case to encounter, and in the other case to rescue, the values involved." What we need, Murdoch says, is a moral philosophy which can speak significantly of Freud and Marx, and also, a moral philosophy in which the concept of love can once again be made central.

Existentialists and Mystics is not only a remarkable book, it is a great one, and we are grateful to Professor Conradi for the compilation of these works and making the ideas accessible. It allows the reader to follow the philosophical development and achievements of one of the few philosophers in the twentieth century who combines depth of intellectual originality with breadth of philosophical interest. She possesses human wisdom. Iris Murdoch is also one of the greatest artists of our time; indeed, I cannot imagine what literature in English in the twentieth century would be like without her art.

Scott Dunbar
Formerly, Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Dawson College, Montreal.
Currently, Medical Ethicist, Halifax, Nova Scotia

ALZHEIMER'S APPEAL

Like her mother, Irene Murdoch, before her, Dame Iris is suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. The first public indication of her condition appeared in "The Joanna Coles Interview" in *The Guardian* of Saturday, September 21st, 1996. Coles had visited the Bayleys in Oxford to investigate the rumour that Dame Iris had "a bit of a block". But the indications that the condition was more serious were already implicit. Coles has to "explain again" why she is there, and Professor Bayley sketches the answers Dame Iris is unable to formulate; her own responses end with too many ellipses.

Dame Iris explained that she was trying to regain something lost; she was, she said, searching for inspiration: "I am in a place from which I am desperately trying to get out". She described this block as a "very bad one," and said that she was "in a very, very bad, quiet place". The implications of her condition were already very distressing. A large photograph accompanied the interview, and in it, Dame Iris looks very lost whilst Professor Bayley's hand rests protectively over hers.

On Tuesday, February 4th, 1997, an article in the *Daily Telegraph* opened with the first public confirmation by Professor Bayley that indeed, "Iris has Alzheimer's. There is no doubt about it". This time, Christine Doyle visited the couple at their Oxford home and Professor Bayley confirmed that Professor John Hodges, consultant neurologist at Addenbroke's Hospital in Cambridge, had made the diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Professor Hodges (quoted extensively in the interview) described Dame Iris as "profoundly amnesiac ... one of the tragedies is that she has forgotten so much about her own life and cannot tell you the names of any of the books she has written. She has a striking language problem".

Professor Hodges' pronouncements are illustrated in Doyle's observations of Dame Iris. "Words are a struggle," Doyle notes, and "there are many pauses". Professor Bayley talks now on his wife's behalf. But once again, the warmth and generosity of Dame Iris are what most impress the interviewer. Doyle comments on the laughter and the "deep loving relationship" with her husband who seems unshaken by her progressive disorder. Doyle is touched by Professor Bayley's enduring, protective concern for his wife. He admits that the thing he misses most is "not being able to have the long interchangeable conversations.... We used to discuss books endlessly". In the previous interview with Joanna Coles, Dame Iris hoped that the dark space she was inhabiting was one from which there might be some escape; in this interview, there is a resigned acceptance of a new unalterable state of existence: "I'm afraid I am waiting in vain". Professor Bayley insists that his wife is not depressed or upset by her condition; indeed, "she usually appears mildly amused".

Praise came immediately from the Alzheimer's society for Professor Bayley's "determination to preserve his wife's intellect and personality". Within weeks, Dr. Thomas Stuttaford, writing in the *Times*, cited the revelation of Dame Iris's condition as valuable in bringing to public attention the comparative paucity of research money available for Alzheimer's ("10 pounds per head per year for Alzheimer's; 15,000 pounds for everyone who has Aids"). None the less, Professor Bayley's decision to "go public" was questioned in an article by Brian Appleyard in the *Sunday Times* on 9th February. In assessing how far serious illness in public figures should or should not be a public matter, Appleyard describes the decision to go public as a "fashionable injunction" and proclaims that Dame Iris had "begun to die in public". Although he admits that "writers of Murdoch's ability are much more important than politicians," Appleyard questions the validity of "going public" because nothing of legal or constitutional significance depends on it: "Why, therefore, must 'we' go public?" He doubts whether Alzheimer's suffers will be helped by any such admission, and questions how important this "consolation" is when set against the individual's privacy and dignity. He finds something "a little spurious, even ghoulish about our fascination with these awful deaths".

Peter Conradi felt moved to defend Dame Iris's dignity, and Professor Bayley's decision to speak for his wife, in a letter to the *Sunday Times* which appeared on 3rd March. Like the interviewers who had so recently seen her at her Oxford home, Professor Conradi describes "being with [Dame Iris as] a peaceful and delightful privilege". Conradi points out that Appleyard ignores the plight of the hundreds of thousands of often lonely, and sometimes desperate, carers, and goes on to question the implied moral superiority in Appleyard's article. Conradi condemns the attack on "a partner who is endlessly patient, gentle and good humoured in the midst of adversity".

The truth of Professor Conradi's observations is movingly apparent in John Bayley's article on marriage in the *Times* of 22 April, 1997, which illustrates how much of their marriage survives Dame Iris's illness. Their marriage never needs "working at", he says, whatever the pressures, and their shared sense of humour endures: "the main thing in a marriage ... is to retain from the resources of its past enough mutual understanding to produce and prolong a togetherness of jokes".

John Bayley in the *Times* (Christmas Eve, 1997), talks openly and movingly about how their lives have radically altered since the onset of Dame Iris's illness. The blessed nature of old, long held rituals of Christmas provides comfort, now, he says, and a "saving necessity for the many elderly people who suffer fading memory and the illness which has now been recognized as Alzheimer's". Routine, he suggests, becomes a substitute for memory: "It soothes the anxieties of a husband who has come to dread more than anything - more than the tears and the sentences without meaning - the questions 'Where are we? Who is coming? What are we doing now?'" One of the eerie aspects of the illness, he says, is that it is almost impossible to imagine Iris any different from the way she is now; it is hard, indeed, to remember a life any different from now: "Pondering the Teletubbies seems to be my life - or to have become it - and we have only had the television for six months.... My wife and I must both of us do the same things - watch together since we cannot talk together".

Alzheimer's Disease is the progressive decline in the ability to retrieve short-term memories. According to Professor John Hodges, it progresses in two stages. The first phrase makes suffers forgetful, but they are usually still able to look after themselves. In the second phase, loss of mental ground proceeds more rapidly. Dame Iris was for a short period drawn into a research study of the disease, and Professor Hodges revealed that she has a striking loss of autobiographical or episode memory, but her semantic memory - including understanding of abstract words, remainded at that point relatively preserved. Dame Iris's contribution to the study of Alzheimer's will obviously be of value, for, as Professor Hodges points out, "only rarely do we see someone whose life is so fully documented". Alzheimer's research is still underfunded because so few sufferers and their carers are prepared to discuss the condition. This has influenced the decision of Dame Iris and Professor Bayley to talk so openly and honestly about her condition.

About 670,000 people in the UK alone have Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. It is estimated that there are 180,000 people developing dementia each year - 500 a day. By the end of the

century, there will be over one million people over 85 living in Britain. One in five of them will suffer from Alzheimer's disease or another cause of dementia.[6] If any members of the Iris Murdoch Society would like to contribute to the Alzheimer's Society they should send their donations to: Alzheimer 's Disease Society
Gordon House
10 Greencoat Place
London SW1 1PH
Tel 0171 306 0606 Fax 0171 306 0808

-Anne Rowe
Kingston University

[The Iris Murdoch Society have donated one hundred pounds to the Alzheimer's Disease Society in 1998.]

CRITICAL RECEPTION OF *EXISTENTIALISTS AND MYSTICS* IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Existentialist and Mystics: Essays on Philosophy and Literature, by Iris Murdoch, edited by Peter Conradi with an introduction by George Steiner, was published by Chatto & Windus (546pp 20 pounds) in July 1997.

There is rejoicing in the British press in the fact that Peter Conradi has collected into a single volume all the most important of Iris Murdoch's essays and lectures on philosophical themes, many of which have been buried in obscure places. Many reviewers have taken the opportunity to write refreshing thumbnail sketches of some basic tenets of Murdoch philosophy: her emphasis on the importance of vision rather than choice; the idea that morality stems from quality of consciousness rather than will; the struggle with the ego's desire to distort reality with self-consolatory fantasy. Several seize the opportunity to quote her beautiful and memorable words on the relationship between art and morals: "art and morals are ... one. Their essence is the same. The essence of both of them is love". Many choose to focus on Murdoch's relationship to Plato, some on her quarrel with existentialism; others on her desire for the necessity for distinctions between good and bad art and the relationship between art and the Good. And while some critics comment on how the essays illustrate the development of Murdoch's thought, others comment on how consistent and coherent Murdoch's vision has always been.

Bart Jeffries writing in the *Guardian* of 17th July finds the book "strange," not because there is anything unusual in a philosopher publishing a valedictory collection of essays, but in that, for him, it is not clear why the book is worth publishing today: "Who is it for?" He contends that Murdoch's philosophy is ignored by professional philosophers and is regarded as being "as baggy and dubious as her worst novels ... even the dwindling band of readers who love her fiction," he carps, "are unlikely to stray here". He accuses Murdoch, like Isaiah Berlin, of preferring to be "a dinner party show-off, alluding to [her] broad reading, rather than doing the harder work of philosophical argument". Even while Jeffries concedes that the task of Murdoch's philosophy is to tackle grand issues, he reduces her philosophical virtue to being merely a "signpost": "Murdoch nods her Shirley Williams style hairdo decorously in Plato's direction" while "one feels one would do better to read the real thing". The review makes a partial *volte face* in acknowledging that "in an age of rampant selfishness, she preaches a climb from the dark Platonic cave of human delusion to the sun of goodness," and Jeffries even feels moved to defend Murdoch against Eagleton's "peremptory" criticism of her philosophy. But the review ends with a back - handed complement which offers only grudging praise for the philosophy while implying a damning criticism of the novels. They are the "dramatization of the philosophy," Jeffries argues, and "confronted with the histrionics of Murdochland one yearns for the mellow dignity of Murdoch's philosophy".

No other critic finds cause for such derision. Stephen Mulhall (*Times Literary Supplement,* 22nd August), defends Murdoch against the claim that the book contains no arguments: "when the question marks go this deep, we cannot look for the disagreement between Murdoch and her opponents to be brought to neat resolution". One of Murdoch's significant contributions to philosophy, he suggests, is that she raises the possibility that the rigour philosophy requires can take forms other than the argumentative: "she evaluates the capacity to elucidate and evaluate ... in more fruitful ways". He points out that Murdoch implies that progress will take "not an argument, but a shift in vision, a reorientation of thought". Noel

6 These figures have been provided by the Alzheimer's Disease Society

Malcolm, too, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 20th July, comments that he would "rather read [Murdoch] raising questions than most other philosophers answering them".

Each reviewer extracts from the essays a personal significance. Hilary Spurling (*Daily Telegraph,* 26th July) simply says that she has enjoyed "the intellectual journey of a lifetime, while Richard Kearney (*Sunday Tribune,* 6th July), goes as far as to suggest that "it is probably not an exaggeration to say that Iris Murdoch is one of the most intelligent living thinkers in contemporary English speaking philosophy". For him, the book's greatness lies in "the moral artistic imagination that inspires Murdoch's philosophy and fiction [which] is a rare creature indeed - profound without being obscure, spiritual but not dogmatic, affecting but never sentimental". Stephen Mulhall (*TLS*) claims that the publication of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* in 1993 had already restored Murdoch as a living philosophical force and that *Existentialists and Mystics* could stand as a companion volume. Kasia Boddy (*The Scotsman* 12th July) states that Murdoch, as someone who had time for both Anglo-American analytic tradition and the Hegelian legacy of continental philosophy, was then, and still is, a rare figure of British philosophy. Not only does she move between traditions, suggests Boddy, she points out their common philosophical roots, preoccupations and pitfalls. Raymond Carr, writing in the *Spectator* of 12th July, describes Dame Iris as a "lay saint, a gifted novelist and an accomplished philosopher". Despite being unable to sympathize with some aspects of Murdoch's philosophy, Carr holds Murdoch in great affection, "tinged with awe". Antonia Byatt, writing for the *Literary Review* of July 1997, admits a most personal response to the book and recalls how "[Murdoch's] philosophical essays changed everything". "It is not often," she muses, "either as a writer or a person that one comes across a body of writing that changes everything. These essays, even more than the novels changed me and the way I looked at the world".

Many critics make links between Murdoch's philosophy and her novels and welcome the book for this reason. A.C. Grayling (*Financial Times 6-7th* July) is one who makes the link between novels and philosophy, and suggests that "these essays bring [their elaborate] and subtle structure of ideas into clear view". Roger Scruton (*Times 10th* July) perceives the novels to be influenced by the philosophy, but not guided by it: in the philosophy, "the moral seriousness of her novels is translated into powerful theory ... one that brings the kind of absolving hope for which her characters so often yearn in vain". Stephen Mulhall, too, applauds the essays as aides to understanding the fiction. Their main elements, he suggests, "form the intellectual atmosphere in which many of her fictional characters have their being".

A substantial and detailed analysis of the gap between Murdoch's philosophy and fiction comes from James Wood writing in *The London Review of Books* on 1st January, 1998. He notes how English novelists "solemnise in commentary on the novel, the qualities and virtues they most obviously lack in practice." But this very gulf between theory and practice, he suggests, is part of what gives *Existentialists and Mystics* an extraordinary interest. He proceeds to provide a rationale for the gap between Murdoch's theory as a philosopher and her practice as a novelist: "her aesthetics is not aesthetics at all, but philosophy. Once one has discovered this, both her arguments about fiction and her fiction itself glow more clearly for us ... her aesthetics are precisely the expression of a philosophical ideal, serenely meditated in an Atlantis of the mind".

The accessibility of the essays is frequently a cause for commendation. Hilary Spurling, (*Daily Telegraph* of 26th July), sees this book as Murdoch's key to the riddle of the universe, and feels that it holds intellectual stimulation even for those who have difficulty in grasping the problem: "Few are as good at expounding complex truths clearly and simply enough to give even the non-specialist a consoling sense of comprehension". Noel Malcolm (*Sunday Telegraph* 20th July) actually finds more to enjoy in the philosopher than the novelist because the philosophy, "non-technical in its methods and almost conversational in style, has a richness, a warmth and a humanity which are rarely found in theoretical works of this kind". Guy Evans, (*Observer* 6th July), found this volume "frightening," but advises readers not to be put off because "this is a rare achievement, a collection of writings by a great mind which is not only fascinating, but accessible.... Murdoch is addressing questions as relevant to the man on the street as the professional thinker".

Such abiding relevance to contemporary life is a cause for celebration for other critics, too. Roger Scruton suggests that the lesson to be drawn from these essays is "of the first importance of our time, when our culture has been swallowed by fantasy, when the prizes are awarded not to those who have mastered the art that renews human virtue, but to those who know only how to excite our basest desires". A. C. Grayling suggests that the crucial appeal of Murdoch's philosophy comes from "a body of real flesh, and notes that her interest in philosophy stemmed from the fact that the austerities of the "ordinary language" philosophy of Ryle and Austin was "wholly inadequate to the experience of lived life".

The courage and independent thinking inherent in Murdoch's often unfashionable, philosophical standpoints excites frequent comment. Richard Kearney (*Sunday Tribune*) proclaims that "Iris Murdoch has no fear. Where most English speaking philosophers recoil from the great questions of Being, God and the Good as if they were Aliens 1, 11 and 111, Murdoch clutches them to her soul and worries them into thought". A. C. Grayling *(Financial Times*), too, comments on Murdoch's "deep, brave thought," and her "willingness to tackle unfashionable concerns both in literary and philosophical circles," while Noel Malcolm (*Sunday Telegraph* 20 July), finds one of the striking things to emerge from this collection is the extent to which Iris Murdoch struggled to avoid going down any kind of conservative path. And Stephen Mulhall feels that the essays "develop a conception of the moral life that is profoundly subversive of many assumptions embedded in modern culture".

The quality of Murdoch's prose warrants a good deal of attention. Kasia Boddy (*The Scotsman*) notes how her language remains "lucid and immensely literate throughout," while Roger Scruton, in the *Times*, suggests that she writes philosophy with the "art of fiction". Mulhall (*TLS*), applauds Murdoch's commitment to a vision of philosophical prose as a "careful, lucid and sober medium for thinking which ensures that even her more professionally directed lectures and essays are a pleasure to read". A. C. Grayling (*Financial Times*) compares Murdoch's literature to her philosophy and finds that while literature must sometimes conceal to reveal, the philosophy, by contrast, must strive for clarity and that these "absorbing and illuminating essays illustrate how [Murdoch] does both". Antonia Byatt (*Literary Review*) finds the extraordinary eloquence the most moving aspect of the essays: "It is an eloquence, not of theoretical decoration, but of truthfulness, and of a trust in words to express complex ideas of truth, which is rare in our time". When Byatt uses the word "elegance," to describe Murdoch's phrases, she says that she uses the word in the way in which mathematicians use it, "when they have found the precise and beautiful way to describe something". For Guy Evans of the *Observer*, the essays have a clarity of thought and lightness of style "probably only rivalled by Isaiah Berlin".

A number of reviewers refer to the tragedy of a brilliant mind lost to Alzheimer's. Guy Evans of the *Observer* describes Dame Iris's Alzheimer's as "a tragic and particularly inappropriate malady for a writer and thinker of such scope," and feels that this volume is "a fitting tribute to one of Britain's most wide ranging and humane intellects". Kasia Boddy, in *The Scotsman*, comments that the publication of *Existentialists and Mystics* is tinged with the sadness of knowing that no works are likely to follow. Stephen Mulhall (*TLS*) suggests that these essays can only heighten our sense of how much poorer our philosophical and literary culture will be as a consequence of the fact that Murdoch's intellectual projects have come to a close. Noel Malcolm of the *Sunday Telegraph* feels saddened that the questions the book raises will never, now, be answered by Murdoch herself. But perhaps the most fitting tribute comes from Richard Kearney in the *Sunday Tribune* who suggests that although it is a tragedy that Dame Iris Murdoch should have suffered from a disease that has taken her memory and her mind, it cannot take her soul.

Anne Rowe
Kingston University

CAROLINAS SYMPOSIUM ON BRITISH STUDIES

The Carolinas Symposium on British Studies took place on 6 October 1996 at Coastal Carolina University, Conway, South Carolina. Three papers on Iris Murdoch were given: "Reading Isher's Gestalt in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*" was given by Stacy Mulder from Ball State University. Barbara Stevens Heusel of Northwest Missouri State University gave "Love and the Road Chronotope: Murdoch's Comedic Mixing of Realism and Traditional Genres." "The

Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch" by Anne Rowe, from Kingston University, U.K., was read by Cheryl Bove from Ball State University on Anne Rowe's behalf. The authors have provided abstracts of these papers below.

"Reading Isher's Gestalt in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*"

Just prior to World War I, Max Wertheimer proposed a broad set of principles serving as a "philosophy of nature"--a "Gestalt" theory. In 1974, Wolfgang Isher borrowed gestalt theory as he looked at narrative concepts such as pattern repetition, foregrounding and backgrounding, and textual "gaps" ("The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach"). Interestingly, Iris Murdoch, twice using the term "gestalt" early in her novel *The Black Prince*, cues her reader to a narrative structure and depiction of relationships supporting Murdoch's contention that "the novel is a picture of, and a comment upon, the human condition" (*Sartre, Romantic Rationalist*).

One of Gestalt theory's emphases is living in the present. For Murdoch's Bradley Pearson, living in the present and "foreswear[ing] the fruitless anxious pain which binds to past and to future our miserable local arc of the great wheel of desire" also becomes important. Ironically, this revelation does not come to Pearson until the entire novel has been constructed. By that time we have recognized Pearson's inability to live in and for the present; we have constantly anticipated his shift in gestalt toward resolution of his problems, and we have been disappointed in those expectations as he continues along a self-destructive path.

Through shifting gestalt patterns of figure and ground, Murdoch shows us how limited our perceptions of our most intimate relationships can really be: how little the couples in the text truly know each other. We are struck by the lifelikeness of these couples; we see evidence of Gestalt theory's claim that "couples and families are dissipative structures" that need constant restructuring to move toward higher, more effective levels of functioning (Joseph Zinker in *In Search of Good Form: Gestalt Therapy with Couples and Families*, 1994).

Murdoch's *The Black Prince* offers a very "gestalt" comment upon the human failure to see the whole of humanity in context. As readers we need the novel's postscripts to help us achieve *gestalten*--to help us make sense of the flickering figures/grounds we have seen throughout the text. As Murdoch writes in "Against Dryness: A Polemical Sketch" (1961): "We no longer see man against a background of value, of realities, which transcend him." Through narrative structure and depiction of relationships that very much ring of a gestalt philosophical approach, *The Black Prince* shows us just how much our values can be attenuated by contemporary society.

Stacy Mulder
Ball State University

"Love and the Road Chronotope: Murdoch's Comedic Mixing of Realism and Traditional Genres"

Iris Murdoch continually revitalizes the novel form by mixing traditional genres into her texts and by calling into question the views of contemporary literary purists such as Harold Bloom. Murdoch parodies technical strategies employed in road novels such as *Joseph Andrews* or *Humphrey Clinker* to make possible this ongoing renewal. I have always agreed with Elizabeth Dipple that Murdoch is an experimenter: in her review of *Jackson's Dilemma* in the August 1995 *Iris Murdoch Newsletter*, Dipple says: "Here we have the romantic Shakespearean source material brought wholesale and transported into the last few years of the twentieth century--just to see how we can look at it, ... whether it can be dealt with within a new chronotopic experiment" (6). Basic to Murdoch's use in her novels of ancient space-time dilemmas is what Mikhail Bakhtin calls the road chronotope: an age-old temporal/spatial image of the living of life is the moving image of the road unrolling, very much like a narrative. Bakhtin historicizes this pattern, emphasizing "the immediacy" with which time and space "are felt in actual experience" at the time of an encounter: time "fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road) ... the course of life" (Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist. Austen: U of Texas P, 1981. 244).

While this paper explores Murdoch's use of the road chronotope in *The Sandcastle* (1957) and *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987), my larger point is that Murdoch's novels, often postmodern in their use of magic realism and other strategies for achieving discontinuity, are comedic mixtures of realism and traditional genres. Murdoch chooses distinctive temporal and spatial features from western literary tradition and reapplies them in contemporary settings to manipulate space and time dialogically, juxtaposing

real--or historical time--and fantasy time, real space and fantasy space. One of Murdoch's ways of representing historical time in novelistic space is to foreground the automobile and its effects on culture. For Murdoch the automobile motif is especially useful for incorporating the sexual--or the unconscious--and the mechanical--or the modernist. That automobiles are instruments that cause accidents on roads in almost half of her twenty-five novels demonstrates her conscious, imaginative manipulation of characters who believe it is easier and quicker to escape their narrow lives when they can use such a mode of travel. In addition, the automobile allows her to combine violence and contingency with adventure and escape.

Many of Murdoch's novels dramatize the physical needs of characters struggling between the world of fact and the world of fantasy by calling attention to the moments or intersections of space and time at which their crises, often crises of love, occur. More specifically, *An Accidental Man, The Bell, A Word Child, The Black Prince, The Philosopher's Pupil,* and *The Good Apprentice* all highlight the automobile as a metaphor for the animalistic drives that control unconsciously, an instrument in which people often act out unconscious sexual motivations that lead to destruction.

Barbara Stevens Heusel
Northwest Missouri State University

Anne Rowe's paper on "The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch" argues that the true extent and significance of the many paintings which appear within Murdoch's novels only becomes apparent through extensive study of the imagistic detail which links novel and painting. The extent of the interconnections, on such close examination, becomes surprisingly great and Murdoch's often experimental techniques are significant to the study of how contemporary writers are developing analogical links in their work.

The paper looks briefly at how the paintings are drawn into Murdoch's quarrel with the Structuralists and Symbolists and then proceeds to categorize their use into five areas: the way Murdoch borrows from painterly techniques and genres in her quest to portray non-verbal consciousness in literature; how paintings enlarge the representation of the inner life by functioning as extended metaphors; how paintings of soldiers or warriors open up a new dimension on how Murdoch defines heroism; how some of Murdoch's favourite paintings function as meditation points to Murdoch herself in the formation of plot, and, finally, how and why certain characters undergo spiritual revelations in response to paintings. The remainder of the paper is devoted to illustrating how Rembrandt's *Polish Rider* functions as a means to explore the nature of heroism in *The Green Knight.*

Anne Rowe
Kingston University

In Memoriam: Elizabeth Dipple May 8, 1937 - November 30, 1996

The editors include the following as a tribute to Elizabeth Dipple:

Elizabeth Dipple was one of my closest friends since I first entered the graduate program in English at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in 1960. Elizabeth was just beginning her second year in the program as I started my first, and from the first day of registration we "hit it off" as the expression goes. After she finished her degree and went off to her first University teaching post at the University of Washington in Seattle, we were in constant touch even as I finished my degree the following June and came to Northwestern University to assume my post. After a few years at the University of Washington, Elizabeth came to the Northwestern English Department where she remained an important and distinguished member until her death last November.

Elizabeth was a voracious reader all of her life; she was exceptionally well read in all periods of literature, criticism, critical theory, and philosophy. Interestingly enough she had specialized in the Renaissance in her graduate program at Hopkins, writing her doctoral dissertation on the relationships between the various versions of Sidney's *Arcadia*, one aspect of her long-standing interest in fiction. In recent years, of course, her major interest and her publications were in the field of contemporary fiction. And in that field her interests were confined by no international boundaries ranging from the obvious and immediate realms of contemporary American and British fiction to anglophone works as well as Latin American fiction. When it came to the writings of Iris Murdoch she was filled with passion and commitment as she voraciously read and re-read Murdoch's works with a critical perceptiveness (evident in her publications) that surely

ranks her among the top authorities on Murdoch's fiction.

Elizabeth demanded the best from her students and friends, but she demanded no less from herself. In our personal relationship over the course of some thirty-six years we shared many happy times and some difficult ones; but it was a deep and abiding friendship. Her death came too soon, too suddenly, too unexpectedly. I miss her deeply. And I know that the academy and literary criticism can ill afford the loss of such a great teacher, scholar-critic, and human being.

Albert R. Cirillo
Northwestern University

ON THE BOUNDARIES OF PAEDOPHILIA

Last year I seemed to have stirred up a hornets' nest when I described Uncle Theo in Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good* as a "classic paedophile".... Paedophilia is an emotional, hot-button issue, far hotter than I realized. The reactions ... indicate that there is considerable uncertainty about when and how the word paedophile could or should be used. The author(s) of the note maintained that I was mistaken about Uncle Theo because a paedophile (as distinct from a paederast) would be a "lover of pre-pubescent boys," and nothing more than that. In the novel Pierce Clothier, the object of Uncle Theo's attention, is 15, and therefore post-pubescent. Ergo, Uncle Theo, though admittedly gay, is not a paedophile because his affections are directed at another adult, not a child.

I disagree. Such a claim might be true for Uncle Theo if we are considering the word paedophile in its strictest usage. Nevertheless, it is not true about the word's more typical (and looser) usage. My own search through the *OED* finds no basis for the claim that the physical signs of puberty mark the difference between a child and an adult when it comes to paedophilia. To be sure, there is no definitive statement one way or the other in the *OED*....

I cannot be absolutely certain about where Iris Murdoch would draw the boundaries for paedophilia or how strictly she would draw them. I suspect, though, that she chose an instance approaching the boundaries for *The Nice and the Good.* At 15 Pierce may well be physically post-pubescent, but emotionally he is only on the threshold of adulthood, obsessed with thoughts about sex and filled with yearnings for his first sexual encounter. Anything that would take advantage of Pierce's confusion and vulnerability at this point in his life would be unmistakably wrong. In the climactic incident on the beach Theo does not act upon his erotic feelings, but only because Pierce unexpectedly stirs just as he is about to yield to temptation.

Pierce's accidental stirring will help bring about a "nice" conclusion to the story. Among other things it prevents Theo from repeating the actions that had cost him so dearly in India where another young object of his erotic drives had committed suicide. So, yes, tragedy has been stopped from happening a second time, but it seems to have little or nothing to do with Theo as an exemplar of the good.

John J. Burke, Jr.
The University of Alabama

APOLOGY

The editors wish to apologise to Professor John Burke, Jr. The editorial note in Professor Burke's review of David Gordon's *Fables of Unselfing* should, of course, have appeared in a footnote, not as it did, in the middle of the essay.

OCCASIONAL ESSAYS BY IRIS MURDOCH

Following the success of their edition of *Poems by Iris Murdoch* (see previous Newsletter for information and ordering instructions) Professor Yozo Muroya and Dr. Paul Hullah of Okayama University, Japan, have now almost completed work on a companion volume of Murdoch's writing, *Occasional Essays by Iris Murdoch*, to be published by University Education Press, Japan, in early 1998. Like the collected *Poems*, the *Essays* will appear in hardback form with a specially commissioned watercolour cover design. As readers will know, Murdoch has, over the years, produced several "light" essays and articles for periodicals, magazines and newspapers, covering a wide range of topics. Such occasional pieces have been collected together for the first time by the two editors and the book, which also contains four lengthy recent interviews with Iris Murdoch, and is sure to be of interest to all Murdoch scholars and general readers alike.