The Iris Murdoch Review

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Iris Murdoch Society

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The Iris Murdoch Society

The *Iris Murdoch Review* is the publication of the Iris Murdoch Society, which was formed at the Modern Language Association Convention in New York City in 1986. It appears annually, offering a forum for short articles, reviews and notices, and keeps members of the society informed of new publications, symposia and other news that has a bearing on the life and work of Iris Murdoch.

If you would like to join the Iris Murdoch Society and automatically receive The *Iris Murdoch Review* please contact:

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Appeal on Behalf of the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies by the Society

The Iris Murdoch Society actively supports Kingston University's acquisitioning of new material for the archives at the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies. It has contributed financially towards the purchase of Iris Murdoch's heavily annotated library from her study at her Oxford home, the library from her London flat, the Conradi archives, a number of substantial letter runs and other individual items. (A list of new acquisitions appears in the report on the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies in this *Review* and more detailed information on the collections can be found on the website for the Centre:

http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/Iris-_Murdoch/index.shtml

The Centre is regularly offered documents, individual letters and letter-runs that are carefully evaluated and considered for funding. We would welcome any donations that would enable the Iris Murdoch Society to contribute to the purchase of important items that may come up for sale in the future. We would also welcome reminiscences of Iris Murdoch, letters from her, or the donation of any other material that would enrich the scholarly value of the archives. The Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies is establishing itself as an internationally significant source of information for researchers on Iris Murdoch's work. The Iris Murdoch Society would greatly appreciate your help to continue this level of support for the Centre.

Contents

Preface

The Iris Murdoch Society and the *Iris Murdoch News Letter* alike are twenty years old. It is touching now to read the first issues, edited by John Burke in Alabama, which were partly minutes of the Modern Language Association meetings and abstracts of papers, together with John Fletcher's admirable researches into Murdoch juvenilia: work-in-progress for his and Cheryl Bove's massive, invaluable bibliography.

It is sometimes said that you can tell how good an artist is by the quality of the scholars attracted to her. By this standard we have much to feel encouraged by. The quality of contributions at the biennial Iris Murdoch conferences - last year's drawing 90 people from four continents - is impressive. The *News Letter* today is less of the cosy parish-pump affair than it inevitably began as, and is now being published as an expanded *Iris Murdoch Review* by the newly formed Kingston University Press.

In 1987, when the first *Iris Murdoch News Letter* was produced, there would still be four more late novels, each contemplating its wounded and dying patriarch. I recall the launch-party Chatto gave in 1987 for *The Good Apprentice* with Janet Stone (half-Virginia Woolf, half-stork), the Australian composer Sir Malcolm Williamson and others. Although Iris was very important to all her friends, I have little sense now that she was truly known by many.

Canetti - who figures importantly in this first *Iris Murdoch Review*, and hence in this editorial - was one measure of our ignorance. True, Christine Ann Evans, reviewing Richard H. Lawson's *Understanding Elias Canetti* in an *Iris Murdoch News Letter* (No 6, 1992), was – so far as I know – among the first to suggest in print that the power figures in Murdoch might have Canetti as a real-life model. But *Party in the Blitz*, whose pages on Iris Johanna Canetti sent to me loose-leaf, in uncertain order and in German, in 2001, is – despite Evans's percipience - an index of the depth of that general ignorance. Canetti and Murdoch now appear locked together like Dante's Paolo and Francesca, doomed to tumble through eternity in terrible, unfulfilling embrace. But not, at least on his part, the embrace of affection.

When *Party im Blitz* appeared in German in 2003 Susie Ovadia, sister of Cannetti's mistress Friedl Benedikt, rang me from Paris. We had spent two days together in Chaville-sur-Seine in 1998, recording hours of talk together, mainly about Canetti and Friedl; we stayed in touch thereafter. Around 2001 I took her to *Chez Jenny* on the *Place de la Republique* - serving fish on Alsacian *choucroute* - where she talked about Marcel Reich-Ranicki's portrait of Canetti in *Author of Myself*. She believed herself to be one of the very few people who had never been frightened of Canetti and was always scrupulous and careful in speaking of him. Having worked as a journalist for Radio Free Europe, where her fluent French, German, Swedish and English came in useful, she is neither naïve nor sentimental. What Canetti finally wrote of Murdoch shocked her immensely. Having thought she knew him well for sixty years - since 1934 - he had finally, and after his death, managed to change her view.

Yet the sense that Canetti's and Murdoch's relationship was based on kinship persists. In Paris in 2001 Queneau's son let me read, in the family's Neuilly flat, Iris's letters to his father, all written to his work address at Gallimard, the great publishing house; these letters may now have disappeared for good into the Queneau summer-house in Burgundy. I was not permitted to photocopy but could laboriously transcribe, and made a rapid note of a letter from Iris in 1947 or 48, enquiring, I think, about the thinker Kojève, who influenced Queneau; and then - quite distinctly - asking about Canetti. Queneau played a role in having Canetti's *Die Blendung* (*Auto-da-Fe*) translated into French post-war - at the same time as it appeared to great acclaim in English in 1946, in a translation by Veronica Wedgwood. (Later I could not locate this letter).

Queneau, his son assured me, knew Canetti only slightly. It was, however, striking to discover that Iris's awareness of Canetti pre-dated their meeting by five or so years. Perhaps her admirable and brilliant fellow-Somervillian friend Carol Stuart, whom Iris saw a little of during the war, had told Iris of Canetti. Stuart, who was to translate *Crowds and Power* into English in 1960, first met Canetti around 1943, I think at a party of William Empson's. In any case, whatever it was that Murdoch had been told clearly caught her imagination. Anne Rowe in this Review describes the August 1952 letter from Iris to Canetti, soliciting a meeting in Paris, where Canetti's brothers lived. Nissim, also known as Jacques, a musical impresario, backed Yves Montand while Georges was satirised as the psychiatrist in *Auto-da-Fe*.

The appearance of *Party in the Blitz* changed my view of the politics of their relationship. I tried to express this in the 2005 edition (No 18) of the *News Letter* as I had in the *Guardian*. Iris Murdoch first had seemed a victim; now, on the contrary, she looked stronger than Canetti, the person who listened best – 'greedily,' as Canetti accused her, feeling his privacy violated, his inner being 'robbed'. He secretly liked talking even better than listening: she understood his Mr Toad-like vanity and cannibalised his life in her work.

John Gross in a *Telegraph* review points out that one of Canetti's charges against Iris is not - as I had at first thought - that she did not suffer, but that she did not suffer *for her art*. Canetti has a point. On 28th January 2007 the BBC radio programme *Desert Island Discs*, in which celebrities reminisce and choose favourite music, featured the science fiction writer Brian Aldiss, who recounted being advised at some literary gathering, 'never admit how much you love writing,' since the public expects - perhaps wishes - artists to suffer for success. He fumbled for the counsellor's name and then remembered: Iris Murdoch. She indeed loved writing when it was going well. It was not always the case, however: there were times of terror during the initial planning and during composition alike.

Many Canetti tales remain untold. A distinguished novelist from University College London described other British Trilbys than Murdoch to whom Canetti played Svengali, but honour and loyalty forbade disclosure of their identities: they were not writers, but creative women in other fields. Here is another tale. Janet Adam- Smith, deputy literary editor at *The New Statesman* just after the war and during the period of Canetti's greatest English fame, invited one review from him. A long saga began. Canetti demanded to know in the company of exactly which other authors he might be expected to appear, and whether they were worthy of him. It is worth recalling that the book pages of *The New Statesman* were then among the most prestigious in the English-speaking world. In any case, reviewers - even in Vienna - simply do not thus quiz editors: it looks vain to the point of dementia. Adam-Smith eventually cut the communication.

It is no accident that a description of some men – and here the gender matters – 'driving themselves mad through sheer vanity' comes in one of Murdoch's late novels. As Clive James wrote in his *New York Times* review of *Party in the Blitz*, '[H]e wrote a book fit to serve every writer in the world as a hideous, hilarious example of the tone to avoid when the ego, faced with the certain proof of its peripheral importance, loses the last of its inhibitions'; while John Carey in an acute *Sunday Times* review, insightful about Canetti's power-obsessions, evoked his 'venom and envy' .

For those who want a recovery of a less compromised Canetti, an October 1990 entry in Murdoch's journal offers hope: 'I wonder if my relationship with religions (which is by no means clear) is in effect just making me feeble and soft? Canetti's advice from long ago. "*The way of brokenness*?"' - a very striking phrase. It appears also in January 1989 where Murdoch questioningly associates an unknown person's choosing the 'way of brokenness' with 'abdication of responsibility, an escape from life?' But its 1990 appearance seems more positive.

But what exactly was Canetti's advice from long ago? It is highly probable that in the 1950s and 1960s he attacked Murdoch's propensity towards the religiose. Whether it was he who went on to advocate 'brokenness' is absolutely unclear. But 'brokenness', if this signifies the willingness to make a healing surrender to the contingency of life, is the lesson in which she took great interest, both in life

and also in her fiction. And happily her best work - after the appearance of four (if you include Canetti's) memoirs, two biographies, and a film - remains what it was: powerfully entertaining, funny, moving, mysterious and open-ended. To take one instance, Robert Macfarlane from Emmanuel College, author of prize-winning *Mountains of the Mind* and *The Wild Places* reports that 'there has been something of a Murdoch revival at Cambridge'.

Perhaps the single most important development in Murdoch studies over the last twenty years is the commitment of Kingston University to Iris Murdoch scholarship. The purchase of the Oxford library has now been followed by that of the smaller London one, this time a record of friendship more than learning. Despite the book-seller Bertram Rota's having sold off all London books lacking dedications or other marginalia while keeping no record of titles, this library too has value. Kingston's is an ongoing investment showing real imagination and courage. Here also are to be found those Murdoch juvenilia John Fletcher described in that first *Iris Murdoch News Letter* twenty years ago, the Ovadia tapes, the Queneau letter-transcripts, Adam-Smith's story and more. Murdoch scholarship owes much to the vision of - among others – Kingston University's Professor of English, Avril Horner, and Dr Anne Rowe.

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Meeting the Enchantress: Unpublished Interview with Iris Murdoch

The following interview between Stephanie de Pue and Iris Murdoch has not previously been published. To begin, de Pue describes the circumstances of the meeting, which took place in 1976.

I had contacted Iris Murdoch from the United States and then wrote again when I arrived in London. She was the only interviewee whom I had contacted who insisted that I write rather than telephone. I felt that I might have written too carelessly and flippantly, as Murdoch wrote back, second class postage, demanding further details. In my second letter I wrote more carefully and was rewarded with Murdoch's London telephone number, which I was to call at 8.50 a.m.

I called as requested but the rendezvous arrangements were bungled, probably because of my extreme nervousness at meeting Murdoch. I telephoned her two days later with an explanation, and wrote her another letter. Murdoch responded and asked me to telephone her the following Sunday morning, but this letter crossed mine and was ripped up, in an attempt to open it, by Rebecca, my host and hostess's two-year-old, who was fascinated by mail.

I telephoned several times on Monday to Oxford, and then again to Oxford on Tuesday at 8.10 a.m. We arranged to meet on Tuesday, which was Murdoch's day to come down to London. It was foggy, and she thought the train might be late, but we arranged to meet at 11.30 a.m. at Gloucester Road tube station. The arrangement was totally illogical: the station has two exits and I had to run back and forth in the rain, from one to the other. Also, as she was coming in from the north, her train most likely came into Kings Cross, or possibly Euston Station, both of which I had to pass on my way to Gloucester Road from Islington, and either of which would have been handier.

She was twenty minutes late and I was soaked to the skin and worried to death about missing her a second time, thinking perhaps I hadn't recognized her and remembering that she'd only scheduled me for half an hour. When she finally arrived I thought her somewhat older and heavier than one would have thought from the pictures I had seen on book jackets. But she was also less awesome looking than in those pictures. Her face was wrinkled and rather heavily powdered. She seemed to have given up smoking and was shorter than one would have thought. She was wearing one of those shapeless smock dresses – perhaps for style or perhaps for camouflage. She seemed quite shy and nice. She said that she would put off her next appointment by half an hour to give me some time to interview her. After ten minutes she remarked that she recognized me; she had seen me hanging around her block the week before – red suede hat and a case, which she had thought could contain a tape recorder. 'It could,' I said, 'and it does'.

We went to the Gloucester Hotel bar, which was warm and dry, and would have been a more sensible place to meet in the first place. I drank sherry, she ordered tomato juice; when I hesitated about drinking alone, she murmured something about her next appointments, but got a glass of white wine. She was very interested in me and pumped me about Bradwell (perhaps she missed contact with young people), and asked whether I wanted to write novels myself; she said she thought I had the talent - what it took. All this was very nice. She was also interested in where I had been to school, which was Cornell. She told me that when she had done a year's exchange teaching at Yale she had come down to Cornell for a football weekend and found it beautiful. I suspect that she must have used more than half our allotted time questioning me, and I wondered if I would turn up in her next novel. At the end, she seemed really to regret that she had allotted so little time, and obviously thought better of me than she had expected (our mutual liking for Kingsley Amis may have been something to do with that). She asked me to write to her and keep in touch.

Interview

Q: [Regarding the] Rose interview, [in] Harper's Bazaar, in 1969 – [I was talking about] her wanting to make characters more 'accidental', rounded. [Was there any relationship between this discourse and the fact that] some time afterwards, the novel, *An Accidental Man* [was published]?

M: Yes, I don't think the title had any connection, really, with that project, but the project's still there. It's very difficult to do. But I'd like to write much more like Dickens, as it were. I'd like to be able to create all sorts of very lively characters who aren't necessarily connected with the action, but I find that the action is rather strong, my plots and stories become very strong, and tend to control the characters too much. But, I mean, this is a problem any novelist faces, I think, the problem of the tension between the strength of the plot or the myth and the strength of the characters. And of course the characters in turn draw strength from the myth or the plot. I mean, one's got to have that, a connection, but I'd like to be able to create more absolutely free characters.

Q: You think then you are still leaning more heavily towards plot.

M: Well, I don't know.

Q: I mean, your books have such fantastic plots …

M: Yes, I don't know. One goes on and one writes books, and one tries to produce works of art and that's the main object and it may be that one's simply trying to be another sort of person and that one had better decide that this is the kind of thing that one is good at writing, and write it.

But I keep wanting to change, and so on. And obviously one wants the stuff to be better, and I think that it would be better if I could produce more sort of free ranging characters. I mean, that's one of the many things one might think of which one's work could improve by. But I mean one's just hoping to improve.

Q: [In *The] Red and the Green*, is there a strong concern with religion, Protestant or Catholic, on [the] part of all [the] characters?

M: Oh, yes, well, Ireland's very concerned with religion. I mean, one can't be in Ireland without being very conscious of religion. The Catholic/Protestant tension is a very stirring thing in the country. And I think people, Catholic or Protestant, are more religious in Ireland than they are in England. I think they're more deeply into the beliefs which now seem in England to so many ordinary people so alien. Are you a religious person yourself?

Q: No, well, I don't know. I couldn't say that I am. I guess I'd have to say that I was an agnostic or something.

M: But you weren't brought up inside a faith?

Q: No. Well, I have the feeling I'm probably one of those Catholics manqués. It's the only religion that really appeals to me emotionally, but I'll be damned if I'm going to …

M: Oh, yes, I feel that, yes, yes. Yes. I was brought up as Christianly as possible, very much inside Christianity and although I don't believe, I don't believe the dogma at all, I mean I am not a Christian, I feel very attached to Christianity. In fact, increasingly so, in a way. You know, I used to feel either you're in or you're out. Now I don't feel that, and of course, I'm out, in a sense that I don't believe in God, in Christ, in that sense. But I feel very close to the whole business, very attached to it too.

Q: Because you think it has informed your moral viewpoint?

M: I think when one's ever been absolutely inside a religion, it is a permanent feature of your life, in a way. It's a sort of vehicle of the spirit, or something. It's a standard and a sort of reality touch to things, and I don't feel I've ever lost, broken that bond, really, with Christ. Although I don't believe the stuff.

Q: Non-religious Catholics who still get very upset at abortions.

M: Oh, yes, yes, well I think the tribal instinct's involved too, of course.

Q: [There is a] mention in the '69 interview that you see sex as a sort of dark force which 'enslaves' people. [This] struck me as an Irish outlook ……

M: I can't remember that remark, or what its context would have been. I know what I meant: I think sex is an absolutely sort of universal ubiquitous force. I think that one of the gloomy things about many present-day manifestations is that they tend to corner sex, and specialize in it, and so on. I think sex is to do with the whole of one's life, with one's …

Q: You [also] said in the 1969 interview that you thought it made us do all sorts of things we might not otherwise do, that it was a very powerful force – you spoke of it as 'connected with the obsessional side of one's life which has got to be overcome'.

M: Well, yes, I don't think sex has got to be overcome. I think it's the energy of one's life, it's everything that you … I mean, I'm not a Freudian but I think that Freud understood something very important in suggesting that sex was such a very very general force. And after all Plato says this too. I mean you don't have to go to Freud for this sort of insight, I mean it's a tremendously sort of general thing in one's life, it's connected with one's deep desires, what makes one's life go forwards, and gears it and so on. But 'the obsessional demons' I think are something slightly different. I mean, obviously they are connected with sex but that's a kind of localization of sex. I think that art, and indeed a good life and so on, is connected with getting out of obsessions. I think getting out of the localized aspect of one's sexual being to be improvement.

Q: Well, to change the subject, sometimes your characters do such outrageous things, do you sometimes say to yourself, after you've written something, well I've really gone too far now, what will they say about it?

M: Oh, well, no, I don't think so. I don't think my characters do particularly outrageous things. It's people in life who do outrageous things.

Q: Yes, of course, granting that's true. But still, I don't know many books where as many outrageous things happen as in yours.

M: Well, when you sort of draw a line around a thing and present it in art, people notice it and are surprised. But in fact life is much odder than art. And people I know are much much odder than people in my books. I don't think that my people are especially odd or unusual. I think life is most extraordinary, and the weirdest things happen. People do the strangest things. I don't think that my novels are particularly exceptional in this respect. I mean don't all modern novels, well, I don't read many modern novels, but I should have thought pretty odd things happened in most of them too.

Q: I guess so – I have to admit I don't read all that many myself.

M: But I think things recounted in novels and characters in novels look odder just because they're set out in the lurid light of art, as it were. They're separated, they're framed. I mean it's just like putting a frame round a natural scene. You suddenly see everything with special light, and so on.

Q: Well. There was the one in which you had the central woman killed off by terrorists in Munich airport. Now, I mean it does happen, but there are people around who would call that a kind of *deus ex machina* –

M: Yes, yes, I reflected on that. I mean, I don't usually use such methods but in this particular case it just seemed artistically right. I mean, I may be wrong, the novels are full of faults and mistakes and so on, but that seemed to me to be OK in that case. But that's rather unusual, I don't usually kill people off to that extent –

Q: Have people machine-gunned in airports … Artists and political views, [do you] keep [them] out of [your] novels?

M: Yes, well there's plenty of politics in *The Red and The Green*, for instance. And, in fact, if you want a textbook on Ireland, that's quite a useful one, because I think it's very accurate about Ireland and that war. But in general I don't feel I can as an artist write about politics. I mean, I write about politics to some extent, you know, just as a citizen but I can't do it as an artist, you know, one's got to do what one can understand. I don't understand enough about politics, I suppose. I tried to write a novel once about MPs and parliament and so on, but I couldn't do it, it's a terribly specialized thing. I don't know what it's like to be an MP, really. I don't feel that I can – I also tried to write a play about the war in Vietnam, but it was too difficult, I couldn't do it. I hadn't got the kind of grasp of the thing to be able to do it. And I think the artist's job is to produce a good work of art, and not to bear witness socially in a work of art unless he can do it without spoiling the art. But I think it's also probably his duty to be a citizen and to fight some way or another.

Q: [I] interviewed Kingsley Amis this trip –

M: Oh, how'd you get on? He's an old friend of mine. How'd you get on with Kingsley?

Q: Not badly at all. He'd just finished a book the day before and told me all about it, for 3 ½ hours. We had a long liquid lunch.

M: He's awfully nice, Kingsley. I think he's such a very good writer, too.

Q: I really quite liked him. We very nearly came to blows about Vietnam, but …

M: Oh well, he's a tremendous Tory. But he's an interesting, very clever man, and I think a very good writer.

Q: Well, it was a very enjoyable lunch. I'll certainly remember it a long time … Well, *The Red and The Green* is the only historical thing you've ever done, I think. I assume it's that being Irish born, you felt you knew the material without having to research it.

M: Well, things that I really know about, in that sense. I do, I mean I was born in Dublin, and I've got an awful lot in my bones about Ireland which somehow that particular form suddenly sort of set off. I don't think I could write about Ireland alone. Well, *The Unicorn*'s set in Ireland, but not, you know, in any sense that matters, really.

Q: I know your family was Anglo-Irish, but it was often said that they frequently became more Irish than the Irish. And I know many of the figures in the independence movement were Anglo-Irish –

M: Oh, absolutely. Any Irishman you ever heard of is quite likely to be Anglo-Irish. I mean the great Irish fighters were predominantly Anglo-Irish. Yes, I think the Anglo-Irish are very very Irish. This is what's so tragic about the present situation and those things. Till those things polarized, the Anglo-Irish always assumed they were just Irish. I mean I've always assumed that I was Irish. I don't now

assume I'm Irish. I mean the whole thing is simply problematical to me. Somebody says what nationality are you, and I'm not sure.

Q: I've seen you described as a 'Victorian novelist dealing with decayed family life in the 20th century'. Would that strike you as accurate?

M: Well, I'd love to be a Victorian novelist - that would be a great label to have. No, I'm not up to being Victorian, I'm a sub-Victorian novelist. Well, decayed family life – family life is decayed everywhere, isn't it, all the time. I mean, family life is essentially a process of conflict, and decay. I think I'm mainly interested in conflict, but I'm interested in religion and society and art and thought and, you know, everything under the sun. But family life is of course the traditional subject of the novel, and I think it's very good. It often gives quite a good kind of pattern, after which you can, you know, hang on the force of things, the force of the argument, the story.

Q: [Do you work] out [the] structure of [the] novel at [the] beg[inning], before [you] go to paper? Where [do you] start?

M: Oh, I don't know. I mean, I never work on two things at once, and when I finish a novel, why, there's usually an awful lot of stuff which has been quietly collecting which suggests something or other. I usually start with two or three characters in a situation. As it might be, somebody coming home to his family after a long time, or, you know, parents parting, and a child … So, I mean, any, it might be absolutely anything. Which makes a kind of nucleus then, and just collects. I spend an awful lot of time just inventing the thing, I spend more time inventing the novel, than I spend writing it, though I always write two complete drafts, and very often ten drafts. Still, it's the invention that's important.

Q: And you do that before you go to paper?

M: Well, before I start the narrative, actually.

Q: Do you write longhand?

M: Longhand, I can't type.

Q: When you're inventing and thinking, do you go out in the garden, or make preserves, or just sit at your desk?

M: Oh, I sit at a desk, and I write as I think. I'm writing, in lots and lots of notebooks. Things, thoughts collecting, and so forth.

Q: I believe I read your saying that you were very 'un-neurotic' about writing, that you kept regular office hours?

M: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, I do an awful lot of things besides writing, so that the day won't necessarily be altogether a writing day, but if I can I just go straight on.

Q: I understand that you gave up teaching because of the time problem?

M: Yes, it was just a time conflict. It was very sad. I didn't want to give up teaching, I taught for fifteen or more years when I was writing at the same time, but it just, you know, in terms of time, became too difficult to sustain both roles. But I do some teaching, and I still do philosophy. I still write a bit of philosophy, but I miss teaching philosophy. Talking philosophy, of course, with one's colleagues is just a great activity. This, I miss.

Q: Well there seemed to be quite a bit of philosophy in *The Black Prince*. You could say that was basically a philosophical novel.

M: Oh well, no, I hope not. I certainly wouldn't want to write a philosophical novel because I think it's a very dangerous form. I mean I think even Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir can't do it. I mean as soon as you feel that there's . . . . soon as I think in a novel or in that kind of fictional art you feel that the artist has got some kind of theory which he's concealing or getting at you with some kind of view, which he's not being entirely honest about, or clean about, it spoils the response of the relationship. I certainly feel, I admire Sartre enormously as a novelist, and as everything else too, I mean I think he's a marvellous man. But I think he just about gets away with it, but I think, you know, you feel oh, that's existentialism sort of looking through, you know, there's a theory there which he wants me to look at, not at these people, but at this theory. This is very damaging I think. I hope that's not so of *The Black Prince*. I don't think it is, actually, because I think the theory is pretty assimilated there, in as far as there is any. It's just that, I mean, it's really Bradley's theory, it's not exactly my theory. The character can swallow the theory, and then it becomes his theory, not mine, and even then it's dangerous.

Q: I don't think I meant philosophical in a pejorative way. I meant the operation of chance in that book, the permutations of chance.

M: Yes, yes. Well, I think it's full of speculation and reflections, that's true, that …. I put off my appointment from twenty to twelve, I shall have to go … But do, let's have one more exchange as it were.

Q: OK, in this one review here, you're accused of 'Propagating the grotesque as a high religion of behaviour'.

M: [Laughter] I think that that critic was a bit carried away, actually. I don't know what that would mean, exactly –

Q: And he was talking about *The Red and The Green* at the time, no less. Well, your characters do behave in unusual ways –

M: Well, I don't think they do. I think that everybody behaves in unusual ways. Of course, human beings are terribly secretive, I mean, that is what's so wonderful about the novel, and what made it so popular in the nineteenth century. I think that when people were even more secretive than they are now, it took the front off the house. You saw what was going on, you saw these extraordinary scenes, you saw the scenes of sort of domestic violence, and fearful suspicion and sort of crazy obsession and so on, which people of course conceal. I mean, nobody will admit to having the grotesque in their lives if they can conceal it away, some kinds of grotesque, even now. I think it's there all the same, though. I mean I think that this is just realism that's being objected to. I mean my norms of behaviour are extremely conventional in I hope the best sense. But if one's describing the world, of course there are grotesque things and extreme things. I would aim at being a realist writer. Again, in the Victorian sense.

Q: Another critic [is] saying he thinks you have now rejected the existential view of life because 'it promotes narcissistic self-absorption'?

M: Yes, I think I'd agree with that statement. I'm certainly not an existentialist. I don't think I ever was one. I mean, but when I was young, I was, you know, I was very, as a lot of young people are, sort of very interested in Sartre and freedom and the notion of having no identity, and all this kind of thing. I mean, this seems to me now psychological nonsense and moral nonsense too. I don't think that one's all that free, and I don't think anyway one should aim at all that sort of empty freedom. I think the important thing is getting over fantasies and obsession and one's own narcissistic egoism, or whatever that critic was saying, and this is the job, and enjoying life in doing so. This means, it

involves all the other things that one has, ordinary duties to do, duties to one's friends and relations and one's country, I mean, ideally all this works out in a natural kind of way. I mean, I don't feel as dramatic about life as perhaps I did once, or as existentialists tend to do. I don't think life is in that sense a drama. I think drama belongs to art. I think life is, different.

Q: Are you rejecting the currently popular American idea then of creating a beautiful life for oneself?

M: Oh, the Americans … I think this is wonderful, this is excellent mystic (laughing). I must say, I love America, and I don't think this is peculiarly American, though is it? I mean, this seems to me to be an aspect of youth, and perhaps this aspect of youthfulness in your country. And of course, you are literally a newer country, with fewer bonds from the past, with more confidence about possible change, and with more ability for possible change, in a good sense, I think. No, I don't think it matters what form one's ideals take, so long as one has ideals, so long as one's also realistic. I think realism's very important, that one must realise the mechanism of change is quite frightfully complicated. And to change one's own personality, one's own self, is quite frightfully hard, all one can do is push away a few illusions. Well, I've got to go, I'm awfully sorry, but my husband didn't put that appointment back this far.

Stephanie du Pue

The Iris Murdoch Text Analysis Project and its Importance to the Study of Authorship and Alzheimer's Disease

In response to requests from IMS members for information about the highly publicised work of Dr Peter Garrard from University College London, which compares syntactical differences between Murdoch's early and late work, he has kindly provided a summary of his research for the Review.

Consider the following pair of descriptive passages:

The great brown eyes, which once opened so blandly upon the world, seemed narrowed, and where Anna had used to draw a dark line upward at their corners the years had sketched in a little sheaf of wrinkles.

He feared the currents, the wind, the grim force of the waves, more savage now, larger, louder, taller, curling over in great white arches, hurling themselves in deafening impact against the slithering wall of stones, and in destroying themselves, each wave in its demise receding, dragging clattering down a grinding mass of sand and stones.

One extract was written by a 34 year-old, newly appointed Oxford don, keen to write a novel but with no more than a handful of unfinished manuscripts to her name. The other is by a full-time writer who, in the course of a career spanning more than four decades, had published twenty-five novels, four plays, a collection of poetry, and five volumes of philosophical writing. Reading them, it is not at all obvious that the first is the work of the novice while the second originates from the more mature mind. Less obvious still, perhaps, is the fact that these two people are one and the same.

The first extract (from *Under the Net*, p.37) is lexically innovative, syntactically dense and stylistically accomplished. By contrast, it is the ordinariness, the almost Roget-like repetitiveness of the content-bearing words, together with the awkward grammatical structure, that are the most salient features of the second (*Jackson's Dilemma*, p.103).

Admittedly, there are striking differences in subject matter, and contrasting authorial points of view. Indeed, the stylistic effects of each passage seem well suited to, respectively, fascination tinged with *Schadenfreude* at the sight of an old flame, and raw fear. Considered in this light, therefore, the differences between two such randomly chosen passages may seem as unremarkable as those between an apple and an orange. There are, however, grounds for taking issue with such an analysis, and asking instead whether there is something fundamentally and pervasively different about Iris Murdoch's final novel and if so, what characterises this difference, and why it is there at all.

The first and most obvious cause for suspicion is that the experience of reading *Jackson's Dilemma* has been widely agreed to be unlike that produced by any one of Murdoch's 25 earlier novels. Although the characters of *Jackson's Dilemma* are familiarly untroubled by the inconveniences of life and, true to type, spend a lot of time sitting around discussing metaphysics before falling in love, the world in which they move seems as immaterial and unconvincing, irritating even, as the characters themselves. This feeling of there being something 'different' about *Jackson's Dilemma* was shared by the critics, many of whom were Murdoch's contemporaries, admirers and

friends. Most were either vague or respectful,[1] others fired arrows tinged with the venom of faint praise. Others criticised the novel in less oblique terms.[2]

John Bayley would say (later, and with hindsight) that he felt there had been something different about his wife's final novel - not only the product, but the process as well. Quite uncharacteristically she would ask his opinion on the work in progress. And the attitude she expressed towards the title character, Jackson, suggested the equally atypical assumption that he somehow *existed*, and needed to be *understood* rather than created and described.[3] Murdoch herself, in a post-publication interview for a Sunday newspaper, described the difficulties that she had had with the book, claiming that, for the first time in her life, she had suffered from 'writer's block'.

At the time this interview was published I was fortunate enough to be working at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit (CBU) in Cambridge, with three collaborators (Karalyn Patterson, Matthew Lambon Ralph and John Hodges), whose scientific interests focused on the effects of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias on the brain's ability to use language. Lambon Ralph brought a cutting of the interview to one of our Thursday morning research meetings, and pointed out a remarkable similarity between the words that Iris Murdoch (hereafter, IM) had used to describe her specific difficulties, and those typically used by patients with early onset dementia when they presented to our clinic for diagnosis. Further enquiry revealed that, around this time, IM had been examined by a specialist in Oxford, and given a diagnosis of probable Alzheimer's disease.[4] She also agreed to be examined by our team of researchers, who found deficits characteristic of the condition: she displayed scant knowledge of current events, showed extreme difficulty committing lists of objects to memory, and was unable to call to mind the names of familiar objects and animals when presented with line drawings (for example when shown a picture of a kangaroo she called it 'a beautiful creature that jumps').

Her difficulties progressed rapidly over the following year, during which she began to require increasing supervision, and developed a novel fascination with children's daytime television. IM had granted permission for her brain to be examined by a pathologist after her death, and changes characteristic of Alzheimer's disease were shown to be both present and widespread, confirming that the diagnosis made during life had been correct.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive condition caused by the accumulation of toxic changes in the structure of nerve cells and their interconnections, leading to their eventual destruction. Once this degenerative process is established it is impossible to stop, let alone to reverse it, and its cumulative effect over time is thus characterised by a progressive disappearance of nerve cells, shrinkage of brain substance, and gradual erosion of the intellectual abilities of the sufferer. Note that, in this analysis, visible changes in behaviour and performance lag behind the onset of pathological change in the brain. This is because, like many other organs of the body, the brain has a reserve capacity built into it; think of the kidneys - we all have two, but can get by just as well with one. Similarly, information processing in the brain can continue at a constant level even after a proportion of its physical constituents have been destroyed. It follows, therefore, that the beginnings of the destructive process

[1] A.S. Byatt, for instance, compares the structure of the novel to 'an Indian Rope Trick […] in which all the people have no selves and therefore there is no story and no novel' (*Sunday Times*, 2 October, 1995), while Penelope Fitzgerald noted that the economy of the writing made it appear 'as though Murdoch had let her fiction wear through almost to transparency' (*Evening Standard*, 16 October, 1995).

[2] Kate Kellaway found it 'not a perfect novel: the narrative itself is, at times, a little distrait: like Jackson [a central character], it often moves with scant explanation' (*Observer*, 1 October, 1995). Hugo Barnacle described it as reading 'like the work of a 13 year-old schoolgirl who doesn't get out enough' (*Independent*, 7 October, 1995).

[3] John Bayley made these observations in conversation with me in 2005. To illustrate the uncharacteristic nature of Iris's behaviour, he related two anecdotes: first, that the only time he had been allowed access to her manuscripts was when they agreed that he would write a small passage of *The Bell* as a kind of 'experiment'; and secondly, that on the rare occasions that he had asked Iris about progress while she was working on a manuscript, she would reply 'the book is finished. All I have to do now is write it'.

[4] A definite diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease cannot be made until the brain is examined at post mortem, but behavioural indicators can be reliably used to make a 'probable diagnosis' during life.

caused by Alzheimer's will always predate the onset of intellectual difficulty. The length of this lead-time is almost certainly variable and, for obvious reasons, difficult to determine. Some investigators have argued that it may extend back over years, or even decades. More recently, evidence has begun to emerge that intellectual activity may help to lengthen the silent, early phase of the disease, and thus delay the devastating effects of neural degeneration on patients and their families (the 'cognitive reserve' hypothesis). A lifetime of thinking, teaching, and writing creatively about the most profound and difficult questions that can be asked concerning human existence must surely have qualified IM to have benefited from this sort of 'protective' effect.

All of which, one afternoon in 2003, made me start thinking again about that odd-ball novel *Jackson's Dilemma*. IM's dementia had been diagnosed less than a year after she had finished the work. It followed that physical degenerative changes had been present in her brain throughout the eighteen-month period between conceiving the ideas behind the novel and delivering the finished manuscript to her publisher. It was possible, therefore, that by subjecting the language of the book to the same kinds of analyses as we had been using in Cambridge to examine the breakdown of speech in patients with early Alzheimer's disease, we might reveal similar changes in the writing. If so, then the much-discussed nature of the work would be open to fresh interpretation. Furthermore, the technique could prove useful to the problem of how to study the elusive 'silent' phase of early Alzheimer's.

Although speaking and writing are both linguistic abilities, and Alzheimer's sufferers experience a variety of difficulty with both processes, there are obvious differences between the two: hesitation, repetition and deviation are obvious in speech, but writing provides unlimited opportunities for checking, correcting, or even drafting in help from others. Kingsley Amis, for instance, would spend hours at his typewriter reworking passages in an attempt to achieve stylistic or comic perfection.[5] With the advent of electronic word-processing and limitless quantities of instant online information, these practices must, by now, be practically universal. Fortunately for the project, however, IM's written output was not subject to such distorting factors. IM wrote all her books out in longhand on pads of loose-leaf paper, never used a dictionary or thesaurus, did not accept any editorial interference in her work, and composed in a consistently linear fashion. In other words, what her reader sees on the printed page approximates to a reproduction in print of the content of her original manuscript. A visit to the Murdoch archive at Kingston University, which contains a number of manuscript versions, will confirm to any doubters that this is indeed the case.

So, if the language of *Jackson's Dilemma* is somehow contaminated by the linguistic changes typical of Alzheimer's disease, what effects might we expect to see? Previous work in the spoken language domain pointed to three major candidates: the extent of the vocabulary (how *repetitious* is the text?); the frequency of the words used (how *unusual* is the language of the work?); and the syntactic structure of the sentences (how *complex* are the sentences used to express the ideas of the book?). If the language used in *Jackson's Dilemma* was influenced by the neurodegenerative process, then comparison with the findings of identical analyses in a selection of IM's earlier novels would be expected to reveal systematic linguistic changes along one or more of these dimensions.

In order to carry out these analyses within an acceptable time frame (i.e. weeks, rather than years), electronic versions of three texts (*Under the Net*, *The Sea The Sea*, and *Jackson's Dilemma*) were acquired using a document scanner and commercial optical character recognition (OCR) software. These texts were chosen as representing not only the early and late phases of IM's writing career, but also the era during which she won the Booker Prize and other public plaudits: we thought it likely that, in addition to a deterioration culminating in the language of *Jackson's Dilemma*, there was likely to be a positive development between IM's early and mid-career writings. The *Concordance* software, developed by Dr. Rob Watt of the Department of English at the University of Dundee, proved to be another invaluable electronic tool: one of *Concordance's* basic functions is the

[5] Amis's correspondence with Philip Larkin contains many exchanges of and comments upon their respective works in progress.

transformation of a text into an alphabetical word-list complete with occurrence counts, line references, and contexts.

What the analyses showed confirmed many of our predictions: one of the most striking results came from an examination of the rate at which words are re-used. We plotted the ratio of the total number of words (word tokens) to unique usages (word types) in successive thousand-word chunks of the three texts. Clearly, given that the number of words available in a language is finite (English contains an estimated quarter of a million word types), all texts will have to 'recycle' words at some point, resulting in an inevitable flattening of its token-to-type ratio. However, the point in the text at which this flattening begins to be seen is much earlier in *Jackson's Dilemma*, and much later in *The Sea, The Sea*. The technique thus accurately reflects an enrichment of IM's repertoire over the first two and a half decades of her writing career, and an impoverishment at the end of it. A similar pattern emerged when we looked at the frequency (usages per million words in samples of written and spoken language) of the vocabulary of the three books: *Jackson's Dilemma* was associated with the highest overall frequency of usage, and *The Sea, The Sea* with the lowest, suggesting that more unusual words had become less easily available while IM was writing her last novel – a well-established phenomenon in scientific studies of spoken language in patients with Alzheimer's disease.

By contrast, syntactic complexity (which we measured by looking at sentence length, clause length, and short-range repetition of grammatical function words) showed little or no variation. Although this may at first sight seem surprising, it also fits well with what is known about this aspect of language in early Alzheimer's disease: mildly affected sufferers show little or no change compared to unaffected controls.

The outcomes of our analyses therefore accurately mirrored precisely the kinds of linguistic difficulties that patients with Alzheimer's show in the early stages of their disease, leaving little doubt that, at some level, IM's failing cognition had influenced the nature of her written output. That this occurred prior to the formal diagnosis of Alzheimer's is of even greater interest, as it raises the possibility that verbal changes may in some cases predate the more overt signs of cognitive disruption with which the disease usually presents. This in turn suggests further scientific opportunities that may contribute to earlier diagnosis, and eventually treatment, of the condition.

From a more literary perspective, the changes that we found in *Jackson's Dilemma* can be looked for in other authors. Those who were known to have suffered from neurodegenerative disease would be expected to show similar changes; those who died with all cognitive faculties intact should show a pattern of initial development that more closely resembles the findings from the first half of IM's career. What happens to the written language over a lifetime's writing in those who are *un*affected by Alzheimer's will be equally fascinating to observe. And it may be that the same set of techniques will eventually prove useful in helping to resolve longstanding questions of disputed authorial attribution.

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The Puzzling Seriousness of Language: Introducing Spanish Philosophy Students to Iris Murdoch's Philosophy and Fiction

The following article, by Professor Alfonso López, is based on a paper presented at the Third International Iris Murdoch Conference, Morality and the Novel (Kingston University London, September 2006). Professor López teaches English language and Teaching Methodology in the Teacher Training faculty at CES Don Bosco College Madrid. He also holds seminars on Iris Murdoch's work in the Philosophy faculty at Complutense University, Madrid.

This essay offers a reflection on two years of discussing Iris Murdoch's work with Spanish philosophy students. It focuses on what the students' responses to Murdoch's texts have taught me about the possibilities of Murdoch's thought. I initially thought that the students' very slight knowledge of Murdoch, English society and the linguistic philosophy of the 1950s and 60s would prove a hindrance. Instead, it proved a great advantage in our exploration of Murdochian themes. To my average student, Murdoch appears not as an inescapably well-known philosophical writer whose extensive oeuvre has already been judged and labelled by the literary fads of each generation but, rather, as a brilliant, unclassifiable thinker. She is as alien to a Spanish philosophy student's intellectual scene as characters such as Willy Kost, Julius King, or Mischa Fox are alien to the society into which Murdoch places them.

Such a fresh viewpoint facilitates a shift in focus *away* from the thinker and her biographical and intellectual context and towards a serious and undivided consideration of perennial ethical problems which are regarded in a new light. Amongst these problems are the role of moral experience in ethical conceptualising, and the difficult question of how, if at all, literature can aid reflection on moral issues. I will address these two points in the context of my students' reactions, first, to Murdoch's philosophy, and, second, to one of her fictional works.

The Murdoch seminar forms one of six sections of a course entitled 'Main Currents in Contemporary Philosophy'. Students are expected to engage with original philosophical texts and participate actively in their own learning process through class discussion and presentations. The general aim of the seminar is to get students to think for themselves and to develop their debating skills in the presence of an original philosophical text. After an introductory session, six classes are devoted to a discussion of *The Sovereignty of Good* – 2 sessions being allotted to each individual essay. After that, 3-4 sessions are devoted to *A Severed Head*. Students are expected to produce a short reflective essay bearing on the philosophy or the novel or both. Finally, there is a closing session in which students summarise the main points of their essays to the rest of the class, leading to a discussion period.

I asked my students to read *The Sovereignty of Good* because it was the only significant piece of Murdoch's philosophy readily available in Spanish translation. And yet few teachers of Murdoch will doubt that this is the one single work that *must* be read by her students because it comprises the most formally careful and systematic presentation of her thought and because it is her most influential piece of work, having inspired thinkers such as Charles Taylor, Cora Diamond, Hilary Putnam and Martha Nussbaum. The choice of novel was, in principle, bewildering, as most of Murdoch's 26 novels have been translated into Spanish. However, my initial guess was that if I wanted my students to read a novel carefully, I should avoid a longer work. I therefore chose *A Severed Head* with the vague intuition that the contrast between Murdoch's philosophy and this very entertaining and comic novel would be good for class discussion.

My experience of discussing *The Sovereignty of Good* with Spanish philosophy students led to the discovery of a significant achievement of Murdoch's philosophy because my students had to

overcome a major difficulty in order to understand it. The difficulty came in the form of my students' insistence upon reading Murdoch in terms of traditional metaphysical categories, thus detaching Murdoch's discussion, and ethical reflection in general, from ordinary moral experiences. The achievement is Murdoch's ability to make ethical discussion have bearing on the kinds of experiences which justify the use of ethical language in the first place.

Murdoch's achievement is perhaps best summarised by Murdoch herself, when, in 'The Idea of Perfection'; she reminds us that 'progress in understanding of a scheme of concepts often takes place as we listen to normative-descriptive talk in the presence of a common object' (*Existentialists and Mystics*, p.325). This is true of her own scheme of concepts, shown in her use of words such as 'attention', 'authority', 'transcendence', 'virtue' or 'Good'. Indeed, to understand Murdoch's use of any of these concepts, or of her philosophy generally, student reflection needs to bear closely on the common objects of attention that populate the pages of *The Sovereignty of Good*.

What are some of these objects of attention? Typically, they are moral experiences accessible to most citizens of a Western democracy – moral scenarios which, as the phrase goes, will 'ring a bell' in most of her readers. One of the most prominent ones is the well-known story of M and D, mother and daughter-in-law, in 'The Idea of Perfection' we also encounter experiences related to the aesthetic realm, such as the self-less contemplation of the hovering kestrel in 'The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts', or the experience of the indestructibility of the artwork that often joins its contemplation, in 'On "God" and "Good"'. A further example is the perception of degrees of excellence in most human activities, such as learning a language – the Murdochian equivalent to Plato's love of the mathematical *techne*. There are also objects of attention borrowed from literature, notably from Shakespeare and Tolstoy. Although Murdoch employs literary stories in more fruitful ways in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, *The Sovereignty of Good* already provides indications as to how literature may feed ethical reflection.

My greatest challenge as a teacher was helping students to stay focused on Murdoch's objects of attention as a necessary way of understanding her conceptual scheme. They tended, very naturally, to disengage her concepts from their original sources and attempted to decipher them by reference to external philosophical language. This tendency took a variety of forms. Sometimes students *labelled* a particular argument by calling it, for example, "naturalist" or "subjectivist". At other times, students tried to understand the problem at hand by means of a comparison: saying, for example: 'This is Kantian, isn't it?' Finally, they often raised issues which have resonance in the history of continental philosophy but whose relevance to understanding Murdoch's ethics is doubtful: the students asked, for instance, about what happens to the 'objectivity of ethical values' in Murdoch's thought.

In saying this, I am not questioning the utility of using general categories to classify thinkers and to enable what are often enlightening comparisons between different world-views. (Otherwise, there would be no point in studying the history of philosophy.) But excessive use of such categories in either scholarship or teaching can become a substitute for genuine thinking, especially in ethics. Specifically, I found that their attitude revealed two things about the philosophical training my students had received. First, was their estrangement from the empirical realm. Philosophers in the continental tradition (and elsewhere) often appear to be afraid of the empirical. Of course they love hard cases and extreme situations – think of the existentialists, for example – but they rarely occupy themselves with the moral scenarios of Everyman. Secondly, I found in many of the students a clear bias toward an epistemic, rather than a dialectical, ethics. I am using such Aristotelian categories to describe my typical student's assumption that ethics – in common with the rest of philosophy – must be a *scientific* endeavour or, at least, it must *seem* like one. From this post-Kantian point of view, it does not suffice that Murdochian ethical concepts offer a successful but tentative explanation of what

is going on in M's mind in the light of our common experience. On the contrary, arguments are expected to be given for the necessity of such concepts *in general*.[6]

However, once my predominantly Kantian and Hegelian students were able to suspend their metaphysical prejudices and devote their efforts to understanding Murdoch's philosophy by attending to her own objects of attention, some clear benefits resulted. First, students soon felt free to bring to the class *their own* real or fictional moral scenarios as alternative objects of attention on which to test Murdoch's ethical concepts. One student, for example, tried to shed light on Murdoch's concept of 'attention' by describing to the class his daily practice of taking walks with the sole aim of attending to reality in a self-less way. That this student was, like Murdoch, an admirer of Krishnamurti and a reader of Ken Wilbur is interesting but ultimately irrelevant to my particular focus. What was important was not understanding how Oriental, or Orientally inspired, Murdoch's philosophy is, but whether such kinds of aesthetic practices can foster better attention to human individuals; in short, whether attention can be developed by means of the *will*.

Similarly, I am quite convinced that studying *The Sovereignty of Good* allowed my students – as I'm sure it has allowed many others – to get to know themselves better *as intellectuals*. Murdoch's polemical style and the plethora of meta-theoretical pointers which fill her essays provoke an exercise of self-reflection in all but her least open-minded readers. What am I deeply afraid of as a thinker? What is my ethical temperament like? What do *I* feel inclined to say or think at this point despite what philosophy might suggest? What are the moral facts that I think should be saved by philosophy? These are all questions that Murdoch asks herself while developing her philosophy and whose resonance in her readers serves to *individualize* them as thinkers. As a result, Murdoch's philosophy does not produce doctrinal followers in the way that Aristotle's or Hegel's or Lacan's may do, but instead produces (perhaps more modestly) more reflective and self-critical thinkers who are now better equipped to offer a fuller articulation of ethical issues.

What I learnt from discussing Murdoch's fiction with my students is much more fragmentary and impressionistic. The general aim of this latter part of the course was to raise awareness of two things. First, that good literature can feed ethical reflection in significant and characteristic ways. Secondly, that it is by no means obvious precisely how this 'food for thought' should be integrated into philosophical discourse. As an introduction to these issues, I invited students to consider the following question: how does *A Severed Head* voice, or complement, or revise the ethical positions defended in *The Sovereignty of Good*?

The most revealing reaction was from one student who had disliked the novel. The reaction could be summarised by the question: 'how can the author of *The Sovereignty of Good* be the same as the author of *this*?' Puzzlement and annoyance was expressed at being asked to compare Murdoch's 'deep, serious' philosophical work with what appeared to be 'a mere pastime, a minor work'. This response – which I regarded as positive in that as it was not one of *indifference* toward the text – betrayed an assumption that is unfortunately commonplace in most academic philosophy. The assumption is that literature which may be considered as feeding philosophical reflection must be 'philosophical literature'; that is, it needs to adopt the seriousness, self-consciousness, and inaccessibility common to most philosophical reflection. In this view, which is especially popular in the continental tradition, Sartre, Thomas Mann and Herman Hesse are of more value to ethical reflection than Jane Austen, Charles Dickens or Henry James. Or, to relate this point more closely to Murdoch, *Under the Net* or *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* should be more interesting to the ethicist than *A Severed Head*.[7]

[6] Iris Murdoch herself provides us valuable clues on why an epistemic approach to ethics fails to grasp some of the crucial aspects of the moral dimension, notably in her essays "Vision and Choice in Morality" and "The Idea of Perfection". On this theme, see also Hilary Putnam's "Literature, Science and Reflection", in *Meaning and the Moral Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980), pp. 83-96.

[7] The same assumption – that literature important to philosophy must look like philosophy - is also at work in the Anglo-American tradition, if with different consequences. As Cora Diamond suggests in "Having a Rough Story about What Moral

In a broader sense, as Cora Diamond proposes in her essay, 'Having a Rough Story about What Moral Philosophy Is', the prevalent assumption in much contemporary moral philosophy is that literature may offer us interesting cases of moral argument, or, even more so, evidence 'bearing on issues and questions already there in moral philosophy'. (379) From this premise, novels provide us with countless moral stories which, like Murdoch's description of M and D, may serve to test philosophy by reference to a common object of attention. Valuable as this may be, the point still remains, as Diamond reminds us, that 'how' the story is told – its artistic quality – plays no role in its contribution to ethical thought.

This assumption has, of course, been contested. Martha Nussbaum has argued that thought is necessarily dependent on the form in which it is expressed and that certain truths about the human condition can only be expressed by narrative art.[8] Similarly, Hilary Putnam proposes that literature may provide conceptual, not empirical, knowledge: that is, insight into the plausibility of different hypotheses bearing on human life.[9] In both cases, the philosophical truth of the work of art is considered to be contingent on its form, and, to some extent, self-authenticating. Both these authors have acknowledged their intellectual debt to Iris Murdoch. In interview with Bryan Magee in 1977, Murdoch said that:

> Philosophy and literature are both truth-seeking and truth-revealing activities. They are cognitive activities, explanations. Literature, like other arts, involves exploration, classification, discrimination, organised vision. Of course good literature does not look like 'analysis' because what the imagination produces is sensuous, fused, reified, mysterious, ambiguous, particular. Art is cognition in another mode. (*Existentialists and Mystics,* p.11)

So what is the mode of cognition of a fine novel such as *A Severed Head*? How are we to look for its characteristic insights? These questions are beyond the scope of this discussion, but I will suggest some pointers which proved to be of some value in my seminar. First, the way in which we react to the novel as readers must be considered. It is not unimportant that most of us – especially male readers – felt annoyed, even frustrated, by Martin Lynch-Gibbon's passivity and civilised, if ironic, submission to the plans of his wife and her lover. Secondly, given that some Murdochian characters are quite eloquent about ethics, it can be fruitful to read some of her novels as we would read Platonic dialogues. This would involve examining the correspondence between the characters' discourses and their respective fates. In Plato's *Charmides*, for example, the reader knows that Critias – Socrates' main interlocutor – will eventually become a blood-thirsty tyrant, knowledge which inevitably colours our reading of his statements. In this respect, it may be interesting to ask whether it is Palmer Anderson or Honor Klein's explicit wisdom that is supported by the unfolding of the story: that is, whether Palmer's ideal of civilization without morals is feasible in the fictional world that is presented.

If we choose to look at *A Severed Head* with reference to Murdoch's philosophy, we will notice immediately that this novel – and Murdoch's fiction generally – addresses two themes which are also touched on in her philosophical essays, namely, Eros and power. Indeed, there are few contemporary intellectuals for whom Eros has been a greater concern. However, Murdoch's fiction articulates these moral themes more fully than does her philosophy. So the question arises, is the

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Philosophy Is" (Chapter 15 of *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991, pp. 367-381), the language of literature is often considered by philosophers in this tradition to be too confused, not plain enough to deserve their attention.

[8] See Martha C. Nussbaum: *Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[9] See Putnam, p. 89.

novel form particularly suited for the exploration of important ethical themes such as power or erotic desire? Or, as Cora Diamond encapsulates the question, 'how is it that *this* literary feature is so much more illuminating a way of writing about *that* feature of human life than are the familiar ways of moral philosophy?' (Diamond, 379)

The significance of exploring ethical themes in a *comic* framework may also be considered. Some of Murdoch's best critics have noted that her fiction is often most successful when it tells the saddest events in a funny way. Think, for example of Martin Lynch-Gibbon, the hero-narrator of *A Severed Head*, who is said to have the face of 'someone laughing at something tragic' (*SH, 12*). As comic theory has pointed out, following Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism*[10], comedy is largely about the integration of the hero in society. Conradi has shown, with reference to some of Murdoch's best works, how comedy often works as a counter-romantic, counter-dramatic force.[11] *A Severed Head* follows a comic convention by ending with a number of improbable couplings. The suggestion is that life goes on, that what we normally call 'the tragic' only has limited power over us. How does such an implicit celebration of ordinariness and survival affect the novel's treatment of ethical issues, if at all?

Questions like this are extremely difficult to answer, but it is important that both academics and students of ethics realize that they occupy a genuine conceptual space which has been left empty by ethical philosophy. In fact, the somewhat impressionistic pointers I have been suggesting as an introduction to a philosophical reading of *A Severed Head* all refer to an important point which Murdoch herself often made. With the authority of an experienced novelist and academic philosopher, she insisted that profound literature can indeed be serious, but, as literature, it needs to be playful. As a consequence, if ethical inquiry is to profit fully from literature, it cannot attempt to detach the seriousness from the play. Murdoch's chief contribution to the expansion of understanding which students gained from this seminar is that reading and discussing her work can help to counter the mistrust of language which is unfortunately widespread in ethical teaching and research. The expression is, of course, Murdochian, but the idea has been well captured by Cora Diamond in the following words:

> 'Mistrust of language' is a reluctance to see all that is involved in using it well, responding well to it, meeting it well, reluctance to see what kind of failure it may be to use it badly. How do our words, thoughts, descriptions, philosophical styles let us down or let others down? How do they, used at full stretch – and in what spirit or spirits – illuminate? (380)

If this is so, then Murdoch can be said to teach her readers to trust language, first, by fostering attention to the common but authoritative moral experiences which give sense to our moral vocabulary; and, second, by showing that ordinary language which is playfully combined can at times afford valuable insights into what it means to be human.

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[10] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971)
[11] See Peter Conradi: *The Saint and the Artist: A Study of the Fiction of Iris Murdoch* (London: HarperCollins, 2001).

Forgotten and Unknown? The Sandcastle Revisited

In Iris Murdoch's oeuvre, *The Sandcastle* (1957)[12] now occupies a rather humble position; indeed it is often spoken of as the 'forgotten' or 'unknown' Murdoch novel. Yet this has not always been the case. When the Fifties closed and Murdoch's contribution to the contemporary novel was evaluated, it was widely felt that this book had vindicated earlier critical praise and routed any reservations about her work. After the picaresque adventures in Soho and Paris of *Under the Net* (1954) and the cast of displaced persons of *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *The Sandcastle*, with its setting of a Home Counties public-school and its sober, intense study of a marital crisis, marked its author's deliberate entry into the traditional territory of the English novelist. The lucidity of its prose, so often evoking landscape and the effect of the natural world on people, reinforced this perception. Nor were the merits of *The Sandcastle* eclipsed by the more spectacular qualities of its ambitious successor, *The Bell* (1958). The novels appeared as evident siblings, not exactly advances on the two earlier books, but proofs that this lavishly gifted writer had once-and-for-all moved on from Bohemia, from society's seductive margins, to the centre-ground that a serious novelist was expected to occupy. This view did not quite disappear even as the Sixties progressed and Murdoch was associated with dazzlingly individual achievements ushered in by *A Severed Head* (1961). I remember Angus Wilson saying to me in 1965, 'With Iris Murdoch it's really *The Sandcastle* and *The Bell* that I admire'.

I propose here to look at *The Sandcastle* for the picture it gives of British (English) society, and therefore of a still developing major writer's complex attitude towards it. In doing so I am being entirely consonant with the spirit of the time itself, preoccupied as it was with Britain's irrevocable shifts in class and concomitant values, and when the writings of Kingsley Amis, John Wain and John Osborne were hailed as salvoes against an exhausted status quo. Also, inspiration for further inquiry was supplied by Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* **(**1958).

St Bride's, the public school which contains, indeed brings about, the action at the centre of *The Sandcastle* is, we are told, twenty miles distant from (and south of) London. It is worth examining Murdoch's formal description of the place, significantly given to us when the protagonist, Mor, St Bride's Second Master, is about to take the woman he will fall in love with (the painter, Rain Carter) on a guided tour:

> The chief buildings of St Bride's were grouped unevenly around a large square of asphalt which was called the playground, although the one thing that was strictly forbidden therein was playing. The buildings consisted of four tall red-brick blocks: Main School, which contained the hall, and most of the senior classrooms, and which was surmounted by the neo-Gothic tower; Library, which contained the library and more classrooms, and which was built close against Main School, jutting at right angles to it; School House, opposite to Library, where the scholars ate and slept; and "Phys and Gym" opposite to Main School, which contained the gymnasium, some laboratories, the administrative offices, and two flats for resident masters. The St Bride's estate was extensive, but lay along the slope of a hill, which created notorious problems upon the playing fields which lay behind Main School, stretching away toward the fringes of the housing estate and the maze of suburban roads in the midst of which Mor's house lay. The playground was connected with the main road by a gravel drive which ran through a shrubbery, past the masters' garden; but the largest section of the grounds lay further down the hill, below the Library building. Here there was a thick wood of oak and birch, dense with fern and undergrowth, and cut by many winding paths, deep and soft with old leaves, the paradise of the younger boys.

[12] Iris Murdoch, *The Sandcastle*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957). All references are to this edition.

> On the fringe of this wood, within sight of the Library, stood the Chapel, a stumpy oblong building of lighter brick and more recent date, looking not unlike a water works. Beyond this, hidden among the trees, were the three houses to which the boys other than the scholars belonged, where they lived and took their meals, and, if they were senior boys, had their studies…..Beyond the wood, alongside the arterial road, which skirted the school grounds on that side, lay the squash courts and the swimming pool – and upon the other side, upon the edge of the housing estate, were the music rooms and the studio. At the bottom of the hill was… a white stucco Victorian house in inhabited *de officio* by Mr Everard [Headmaster] (pp 40-41).

From this we can see that St Bride's is no public school of ancient foundation, nor one, like so many, evolved out of the long-established country-town grammar school and then 'Arnoldised' in the mid-Victorian era. Its constituents have been purpose-built, including the chapel, and its grounds landscaped and maintained specifically to cater, according to slightly later desiderata, for every aspect of its resident middle-class boys' lives, both their academic work and their leisure-time. Under its previous headmaster, as the present one will later remark, 'St Bride's rose from the deplorable slough in which it lay, and became, dare we say it, a sound and reputable public school of the second rank' (p.293). Not that he shares the priorities of his eminent predecessor, and the difference between the two men makes an interesting contribution to the work's cultural debates. The older man, Demoyte, the portrait of whom provides the engine of the novel's drama, was basically uninterested in religious instruction, just as he was in sex education, taking a cavalier attitude to both. 'What Demoyte cared about was proficiency in work. This his masters were engaged to produce and sacked for failing to produce' (p.20). A good crop of Oxbridge scholarships was what particularly concerned him. The younger man, Everard, generally known as the Revvy Evvy, is a clergyman of Anglo-Catholic persuasion (he seems to act as Chaplain as well) who cares for character-building as dearly as any Victorian headmaster-cleric though without any accompanying streak of authoritarianism. Perhaps what Evvy is making St Bride's most resemble is one of the Woodard Schools of Anglican conviction, founded in the 1870/80s, the three most famous Woodard establishments being in the affluent Home Counties (Lancing, Ardingly, Hurstpierpoint, all in Sussex). And this is at a time when Britain is turning itself into a meritocracy, when Hoggart and Williams, to name no others, are viewing the nation's cultural predicament from the vantage-point of the Scholarship Boy who has 'made it'. The faith by which Evvy lives is a benign but watery affair, consonant with his outdatedly chaste lifestyle and his propensity to base his sermons on platitudinous popular proverbs. One can well understand why Mor, for all his socialism, prefers the sybaritic and often curmudgeonly Demoyte, an unidealistic Tory but with the courage of his own likes and dislikes and living within sight of the school, in gentlemanly style, at Brayling's Close; Mor sees him as a far more considerable man.

The school, as its premises indicate, draws from the comfortably off. The only parent we meet, the boy Rigden's father, is 'a very successful barrister' and the Governors, whose grand annual dinner we attend, decidedly strike us as well-heeled members of an *ancien régime***.** How otherwise could they afford the then extremely large sum of 'five hundred guineas' (the novel's arresting, scornfully spoken first words) for Demoyte's portrait, executed by the fashionable painter-daughter of a late famous artist?

Of all the information given us about St Bride's, that concerning its context proves, in the end, even more significant even than that about its component parts. In the Fifties, as befitted the first post-war decade, the private housing estate was an increasingly important feature of the landscape, and very rarely an aesthetically pleasing one. It's not clear why Mor, a housemaster, does not actually live in the boarding-house that carries his name, but his home, with its short front garden, small rooms and architecturally cloned neighbours, is a dismal palpable presence throughout the novel, cramping him with its conformist dullness more severely even than the school (of which in fact he is proud). Then there is the woodland within the school domain linking it to the wooded countryside beyond.

The novel emphatically and poetically juxtaposes the conventionality of school and estate with the sylvan. The principal representative of this last is, of course, Rain Carter herself, though Felicity, Mor's daughter, and the gypsy who stalks the neighbourhood also partake of its essence. They are indeed, on one level, and at Murdoch's own admission,[13] extensions of Rain; the one her fledgling self, the other her 'shadow'. The woodland – especially the eruption into it of the river in which Rain swims and in the mud of which her beloved car gets stuck – is observed with lyrical fidelity. The epiphany of liberation it provides anticipates, even more than the Thames-diving of *Under the Net*, the powerful, cathartic episodes in Murdoch's finest later fiction, such as *Nuns and Soldiers* **(**1980). The appearances of the gypsy are hauntingly, convincingly done. Murdoch's American publisher and her early critics, notably A.S.Byatt, were troubled by them, questioning their actuality. I, who lived and went to school in a similar environment at precisely this period, could have reassured them. Gypsies camped openly in the woods and on the common-land near my public school. Their representative here offers a glimpse of the atavistic to a community intent on excluding it, just as his kinsfolk did to me in my teenage life.

The third important feature of the surroundings of St Bride's is the arterial road. Constantly throughout the novel we hear the noise of its ceaseless traffic, roaring towards London. There is no way of forgetting either its presence or its destination. St Bride's appears to be in, or very close to, Surrey, the county actually named during the description of a car-ride. Three stops down the railway line from this community lies Marsington, 'just inside the London area', a safe Labour seat apparently, and forming with St Bride's the novel's topographical/cultural axis. Here Mor gives WEA classes and enjoys the friendship of Tim Burke, jeweller and Goldsmith, Labour activist and the man determined that Mor should be the constituency's next parliamentary candidate. Tim is one of the novel's happiest creations. He is Irish, though as regards speech also Cockney/American, a touch shallow and flashy in his autodidact capacity but, as a friend and a craftsman, a man of true depth. His premises are in a row of old shops in the High Street of Marsington, of which Murdoch paints a recognisable picture:

> Marsington was an old village with a fine broad main street with grassy cobbled edges. The fields about it had long ago been covered with the red-roofed houses between which the green Southern Region trains sped at frequent intervals bringing the inhabitants of Marsington and its neighbouring boroughs to and from their daily work in central London. The main street now carried one of the most important routes to the metropolis, and its most conspicuous features were the rival garages whose brightly lit petrol pumps, glowing upon ancient brick and stone, attracted the passing motorist. The traffic was incessant. For all that, in the warm twilight it had a remote and peaceful air, the long broad façades of its inns and spacious houses withdrawn and reassuring. (p.58)

This account is accurate and fair, spiritually as well as literally. Marsington has, in the post-war era, shed the sense of permanence inseparable from satisfactory living; new houses, new people have been imposed pell-mell on the old, so that it imparts a perpetual feeling of being in transit, of lying at the capital's beck-and-call. At the same time it still has charm, even if this is by now slightly ersatz, and it contains pockets not just of repose but of creativity, represented by Tim's richly realised shop. Here, in fact, Mor's son, Donald, another of the novel's triumphs of portraiture, will go after abandoning the chance of going to university, for which he was neither intellectually or temperamentally suited, to become Tim's enthusiastic apprentice. Marsington might suggest Mitcham, though in these years that was, by a small majority, a Conservative seat. Another possibly comparable constituency is what was

[13] See her letters to her American editor, Marshall Best, cited by Peter Conradi in *Iris Murdoch: A Life*, (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 417.

then (but not now) South Croydon; in the 1966 election this went to Labour by 81 votes! But even if we fail to find an exact counterpart for Marsington, and think that for Mor to be certain of victory he would have had to go further into London, Murdoch's presentation of the place rings true enough.

Mor himself, who straddles the axis, is important in St Bride's and is to become important in Marsington. He is a prisoner of the suburban estate and turns, if temporarily, into a devotee of the sylvan. He is an ambiguous figure, often touching, less than heroic in his vacillations and compromises, but is not unsympathetic. We all surely contain his inability not merely to decide, but to know *how* to decide. Of Methodist background and grammar-school educated, Mor taught in a big London grammar-school before accepting a senior post at St Bride's. He has written text-books on politics. He is surely a meritocrat by conviction. Under Demoyte, his energies would have gone into preparing clever boys for Oxbridge, imbuing them with knowledge and tools of analysis suitable for the building up of an enlightened new society. Evvy's St Bride's could not satisfy him as much. In the school classroom and at the WEA he shows signs of decided and somewhat unattractive impatience; Tim's habit of speaking above himself intellectually embarrasses him, and his wife Nan, much as we deplore her nagging, is surely correct when she says he has never accepted his two children's not being 'clever'. He insists Donald should try for Cambridge, and has spent money he did not have much of, on an expensive education for Felicity. The kind of Labour policies Mor will espouse will be flavoured by a certain intellectual elitism. At the same time, given the social confusions, the encroachments of popular culture upon Britain, is he necessarily to be censured for this? He himself (in the WEA class) says:

> Freedom needs to be defined. If by freedom we mean absence of external restraint, then we may call a man lucky for being free – but why should we call him good? If, on the other hand, by freedom we mean self-discipline, which dominates selfish desires, then we may call a free man virtuous. But, as we know, this more refined conception of freedom can also play a dangerous role in politics'. (pp.54-55)

Perhaps, in his educated certainty, Mor is not free from such dangers himself.

What redeems Mor, at least partially, is his love for Rain. She refreshes him, revivifies him, thus living up to her beautiful name, which sends the reader's mind to Hopkins's great sonnet of spiritual drought, written March 17 1889, and distinguished by passionate apostrophes to woodland: 'Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain'. Their (never consummated) affair, which gives both lovers joy and reveals the amplitude of human existence as Mor's loveless domesticity with Nan never could, finally falters, not so much – I think it important to stress – through Nan's cunning but because Mor has never told Rain anything at all about his political ambitions (partly because, in his passion for her, he'd decided to renounce them anyway). It is almost as though the loving side of Mor, which is aroused by the half-French painter and her values, cannot coexist (or finds it extremely difficult to do so) with the thoroughly Anglo-Saxon, essentially masculine, moralist empiricism of post-war Labour politics.

The resolutions the novel provides are of course – as its imaginatively chosen, pleading last sentences tell us – not resolutions at all, but seemingly unbrookable demonstrations of these ambiguities so evident in Mor. Who could ever believe that the rescued marriage of Mor and Nan will bring happiness to either of them or to their children? And we are not intended to believe this. Furthermore, founded as it will be on his wife's officious, peremptory act of salvation, and preceded as it was by sincere self-doubt, Mor's political career cannot fill us with great hope. Is he himself whole enough to assist a fractured community towards fulfilment? But equally is it impossible to see Mor and Rain enjoying a united existence; their provenances are too different, and have played too large a part in their mutual attraction. Perhaps Rain herself, for all her patent sweetness of nature and sensitivity, is, as a result of having spent so much time out of England sharing her father's cultivated

solitude, a little too remote from the wear-and-tear of the prosaic world of the institutional edifice. After all as a lonely child by ‘a melancholy sea’ (the Mediterranean) she was never able to build a sandcastle. Whenever she tried to do so, ‘the sand would just run away between [her] fingers’ (p.73).

Not that we can regret Mor’s turning his back on St Bride’s. Reactionary Demoyte may have virtues that we can respect, even treasure, but he is essentially of the past, bound to an old-fashioned bachelor’s life dependent on a self-parodying redoubtable housekeeper, and prone to sentimental fantasies about young girls (such as Rain herself). The wishy-washy religion of the Revvy Evvy has principally its mildness to commend it; but there is nothing there that couldn’t be found, in stronger form, in humanist secularism, while for spirituality we would do better turning to Rain, Felicity and the nameless gypsy. And of course to the art-master, Bledyard, who, with his Etonian background, idiosyncratic speech-patterns and preoccupation with Byzantine art and its avoidance of direct human representation, stands at an oblique but commanding angle to the other characters just as the art school does geographically to the school and his subject to its academic curriculum. No, Murdoch could see only one satisfactory route from the social worlds she had been attempting to dwell in: the arterial road leading to London, where, indeed, Mor the MP will transfer his family. This inevitably means forsaking the sylvan, but we cannot doubt that it will always occupy, indeed call to, a major part of the psyche of those (Felicity, Mor himself) who learned release from it – learned release, we should add, mainly through the behaviour of a half-French woman, whose culture at least respects the body and the senses in the way that the English culture does not. In subsequent novels Murdoch, by installing herself in places that appealed to her imagination – from the Burren in *The Unicorn* (1963), to Provence in *Nuns and Soldiers* – was enabled to make adventurous journeys of the soul. But *The Sandcastle* shows her ability to travel to a region of middle England (that did not, one feels, much attract her but of whose universal relevance she was convinced) and to penetrate its carapaces and uncover the flow of secret life beneath.

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Iris Murdoch and the Art of Dedication

In *The Human Province* (1985), Elias Canetti speaks of the 'transformations and unmaskings' of drama and of the creative artist as a sage who 'lives in hearing, in listening […] who can make a clean slate of himself for every man, but preserves in himself all the other full slates *without thinking of them* (my italics)'.[14] As so often, Canetti gives an invaluable insight into the creative processes of Iris Murdoch. Anyone who studies her life alongside her work is bound to be struck by the transformations (Canetti's 'Verwandlungen') that she makes of the former into the latter. She herself protested vehemently that this was not the case; throughout her career she argued consistently and insistently for the *impersonality* of art, attacking contemporary fiction (for example in 'The Sublime and the Good', 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited' and 'Against Dryness') for indulging in personal fantasy.

Murdoch's own artistic credo was that of John Keats, that 'the poetical Character […] is not itself – it has no self – it is everything and nothing' *(Letters,* 27 October 1818).[15] She seems to have experienced a genuine sense of shock when readers nonetheless assumed that she fed directly from her own life and made simplistic jumps from fictional character to real person. Peter Conradi records a particularly clear case when Murdoch's mother-in-law linked Felix Meecham in *An Unofficial Rose* with her own son Michael.[16] 'Drawing from life', Conradi concludes, 'was taboo' (Conradi, 2001, p.437). His own research, however, uncovers some fascinating exceptions, notably the overt portrait of Yorick Smythies as Hugo Belfounder in *Under the Net*, and Conradi also notes 'the importance of friends within her imaginative universe'.[17] Her friends were, in other words, the figures who moved, transformed, within her imagination, and left their traces there. I would argue, with Canetti, that writers, and Murdoch in particular, cannot help but transform autobiographical material, the 'full slates' of the personalities around them, and would add that in her case this dialogue between art and life is also conducted in a suggestive, if oblique, way through the apparently innocent act of dedication.

It is evident from Murdoch's correspondence that she took the dedicatory process extremely seriously. She offers her homage to Josephine Hart, Stuart Brize and Ian McDiarmid at the beginning of the play-script of *The Black Prince*; she carefully arranges that Lucy and Christopher Cornford should remain dedicatees of the various editions of her collected plays; she writes to Norah Smallwood that the dedication of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* to Janet and Reynolds Stone should be kept a secret until publication day as a surprise for her friends. All Murdoch's novels have at least one dedicatee, with the revealing exceptions of *A Severed Head* (1961) and *Jackson's Dilemma* (1995). *A Severed Head* was conceived in response to Elias Canetti's criticisms of her 'blandness' in *The Sandcastle* and *The Bell.* She met Canetti in London on 29 January 1959, self-confessedly in search of his abrasive criticism, and immediately afterwards abandoned her 'trades union novel', *Jerusalem*, to begin *A Severed Head*, which dealt with what she felt was a deliberately dangerous theme - incest. The obvious conclusion to draw is that she did not dedicate this book to anyone because she did not want to connect any of the people she loved to such an explosive issue. The other novel without a dedicatee, *Jackson's Dilemma,* was her final novel, about whose literary quality the already ill Murdoch may have felt some doubts. The corollary of these two acts of 'non-dedication' imply that she saw 'dedication' as suggesting a specific link between the dedicatee and the novel.

Murdoch's first dedication is one of simple piety, acknowledging the 'perfect trinity of love' in which she grew up. *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953) is dedicated simply 'To My Parents'.

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[14] Elias Canetti, *The Human Province* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1985), first published 1973 as *Die Provinz des Menschen: Aufzeichnungen* (Carl Hanser Verlag. English translation copyright the Seabury Press Inc. 1978), p.197.
[15] *Letters of John Keats* selected and with an Introduction by Hugh l'Anson Fausset (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, n.d.), pp.221-2.
[16] Peter Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p.437. (Hereafter Conradi, 2001).
[17] Peter Conradi, 'Writing *Iris Murdoch: A Life*, Freud versus Multiplicity' (*Iris Murdoch News Letter* 16, 2003), p.7.

Others might be seen as straightforward expressions of gratitude – to kind hosts such as Diana Avebury (*The Book and the Brotherhood*, 1987) or to hardworking publishers such as Norah Smallwood (*The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, 1974). The dedication of *The Unicorn* in 1963, 'To David Pears', was declaredly part of the debate Murdoch was having with her philosopher-friend about Platonism. Often, however, the motive behind the dedication is more oblique. The dedication of *The Good Apprentice* (1985) to Brigid Brophy, perhaps a former lover and certainly a rivalrous friend, is at one level an act of kindness because Brophy had recently been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. It may also have been linked to Murdoch's 'survivor's guilt',[18] for guilt is at the heart of *The Good Apprentice*, which begins with the accidental killing of a friend. On one or two significant occasions Murdoch displays a revealing boldness in the dedicatory act, as in the defiant gift of *The Flight from the Enchanter* to Canetti, her own enchanter-figure. She certainly expected, and on this occasion received, a vigorous response from the recipient. It is noteworthy that all the dedications until *The Green Knight* (which is 'For Ed Victor') use the preposition 'To'. This may be merely a sign of Murdoch's classical education. It could also imply, however, the active nature of the giving: the recipient is, as it were, *invited* to respond. 'To' implies 'From'; it sets up a reciprocal relationship which is not there in the use of the more passive and pious 'For'.

There seem, in the case of the twenty-six novels, to be three main categories of dedicatee, each linked to a different type of plot. In this essay, I will look at dedications to 'enchanter' figures, to protégés and to successful married couples.

Enchanters

In addition to the well-documented case of Canetti and *The Flight from the Enchanter*, other enchanter-dedicatees are Raymond Queneau (*Under the Net*, 1954); Eduard Fraenkel (*The Time of the Angels*, 1966); Arnaldo Momigliano (*The Philosopher's Pupil*, 1983) and (arguably) Georg Kreisel (*An Accidental Man*, 1971). *The Philosopher's Pupil* contains significant imaginative reworkings of the Dante-esque world that Murdoch shared with Momigliano when they read Italian together on Saturday evenings in Oxford in the 1950s. The underground world beneath the Ennistone baths, into which key characters have to descend to find redemption, is surely imaginatively linked to the world of Dante's *Inferno*. There is even a guide for the reader, 'N', who, like Dante's Virgil, explains what the reader sees. Murdoch called Momigliano 'one of her great teachers' (Conradi, 2001, p.314), but he went out of her life in 1956, angered by her marriage, only to return twenty years later, on 19 February 1977, when they were reconciled. (She had dreamt of pursuing him through crowds [Conradi, 2001, p.315]).On 18 July 1979 he finally restored to her the copy of Dante's *Rime* he had demanded back during their estrangement. *The Philosopher's Pupil*, begun two years later, describes a 'great Teacher' 'returning like a priest-king to his people': 'John Robert was coming back. Oh God! Oh *God*!' thinks the hapless George (Vintage, 2000, p.15). In the novel, the early 'murder' of a spouse is followed by George's reconciliation with the teacher who terrifies him. The 'romantic symmetry of our midsummer idyll' (p.551) could suggest how Murdoch saw both the novel and the romance with Momigliano which informs it. Like all her enchanters, though, Rozanov remains a potent threat; George desires Rozanov's death so much that he imagines (for the second time) that he himself is guilty of murder. It is only Rozanov's suicide at the end of the novel that enables George to return, guilt-free, to his wife and to resume an unenchanted existence.

Raymond Queneau, an early enchanter, is not condemned to such a literary death. In August 1952, when Murdoch was deeply involved with Franz Steiner and Momigliano, she wrote to Queneau to declare her love for him.[19] He seems to have been a reluctant lover and, in 1954, an unimpressed dedicatee, but the influence of *Pierrot Mon Ami* on *Under the Net* is apparent in a few desperate

[18] When they first met, at the 1954 Cheltenham Literature Festival, Brophy beat Murdoch to the prize for best first novel, with *Hackenfeller's Ape*.
[19] Peter Conradi, 'Writing *Iris Murdoch: A Life*, Freud versus Multiplicity' *Iris Murdoch News Letter* (no. 16, 2003), p.8.

references in Murdoch's letters to David Hicks regarding her earlier attempts at novel-writing. From UNRRA in Vienna on 27 January 1946, she writes that her characters seem to her to be merely spoilt joyless intellectuals and she needs the influence of Queneau.[20] Only in her construction of the character of Jake Donaghue in *Under the Net* does she finally succeed in utilizing and anglicizing the French writer's twentieth-century picaresque. Queneau is a liberating, not a possessive, enchanter and the novel he is given is a comedy. In stark contrast is *The Time of the Angels* (1966), dedicated 'To Eduard Fraenkel', who had been Murdoch's classics tutor at Oxford and in 1940 she had attended his terrifying but brilliant seminars on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. Stuart Hampshire fulminated that Murdoch could only see the 'dominant, boastful, oppressive' Fraenkel as a 'golden figure' and there is much evidence that she was both fearful and enslaved. She talked of 'that terrifying class of Fraenkel's - it was the most frightening part of my university education' (Conradi, 2001, p.615n.). Fraenkel, like Carel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels*, cast other people as bit-part players in the drama of his own life. He spoke of one student, Nick Crosbie, as 'the Cherubino of my classes'.[21] Carel similarly describes his black servant Pattie as his 'Sugar-Plum Fairy' and his own (unacknowledged) daughter Elizabeth as his 'Swan Princess'. For Pattie, '[h]er will was his. He was the Lord God and she was the inert and silent earth which moves in perfect obedience' (Chatto, 1966, p.223).

The friendship between Murdoch and Fraenkel cooled, probably as the result of criticism he made of her work, but they were reconciled in February 1966, after which she dedicated her current novel to him. Yet there might be much more to this dedication than mere coincidence. Fraenkel may well have put his career before his family and Murdoch had attempted to comfort him after his daughter's suicide in 1953. In *The Time of the Angels* a father-daughter relationship is explored and a suicide is described but the novel makes a transformation of the events that happened around her in life: the unloved, potentially suicidal daughter Muriel's sleeping pills are stolen by her father for his own suicide, which is then discovered by the daughter, who watches him dying. In fiction, though not in life, through the unlikely figures of the neglected Muriel and the passive Pattie, Murdoch ultimately succeeds in transforming slavish worship into a victory over oppression. She 'kills off' the monster and, in a final act of (probably unconscious) defiance, dedicates the novel to Fraenkel under the guise of celebrating their resumed friendship. (In the novel it is the subservient Pattie's final defection that prompts Carel's suicide. Four years after the novel's publication Fraenkel's loyal and long-suffering wife, Ruth, died. Within days, in February 1970, Fraenkel committed suicide, using the same method as the fictional Carel.)

Protégés

The novels that Murdoch dedicated to members of the large circle of usually younger men (and women) whom she adopted and cherished and whose careers she tirelessly supported have a different structure from the 'Enchanter' novels. They are often centred on the effort to live a good life, the search for love and the response to temptation. *The Black Prince* is, in addition, specifically *about* the act of dedication. Bradley Pearson ends his Foreword, 'It remains to record a dedication. There is of course one for whom the book was written whom I cannot name here' (Penguin, 1973, p.19). This enigmatic reference is presumably to 'P. Loxias', who claims to be the editor of his friend's tale. Murdoch plays in this novel with the notion of historical truth as well as with the sadness and temptations involved in the search for love. Bradley describes his life as 'an uneventful one […] I was married, then I ceased to be married […], I am childless' (p.15). She dedicated the book to her European historian and businessman protégé, Ernesto de Marchi, whose life conformed to this description, though his character was very different from Bradley's. John Bayley describes de Marchi as a 'sweet diffident Anglophile, looking like a thickset squirrel' and charts his wistful search for

[20] Iris Murdoch's letters to David Hicks are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.
[21] Conradi, 2001, p.117. For a description of Fraenkel's *Agamemnon* seminars see also pp.495 and 615.

love.[22] De Marchi's personality seems already to have been closely sketched in the cheerful, easy-going Danby in *Bruno's Dream* (1969), whose diffidence is encapsulated in his desultory pursuit of his sister-in-law, Diana: 'Naturally he'd have liked to go to bed with her. However she was married to Miles and though at first it seemed a jolly idea a more extended reflection suggested snags' (Penguin, 1970, p.143). Long after that novel's publication, Murdoch was still attempting to script de Marchi's life, asking Norah Smallwood (17 September 1975) to meet him to discuss the publishing scene.[23] Murdoch had dedicated *Bruno's Dream*, not to de Marchi, but to another young friend, Scott Dunbar, whom she described as 'something like a permanency, a real friend' (Conradi, 2001, p.491). On 14 March 1975 she recommended to Smallwood a project for a book on Oxford architecture by yet another younger protégé, Stephen Gardiner. The following year she dedicated *Henry and Cato* to Gardiner. These benign dedications are overshadowed**,** however, by a much darker one to *The Bell* (1958).

One might have expected this novel about a religious community to have been dedicated to Murdoch's close friend, Lucy Klatschko, who entered Stanbrook Abbey near Worcester on 1 May 1954. 'Take me with you as much as you can', Murdoch had written to Klatschko (Conradi, 2001, p.420). The actual dedication suggests quite a different imaginative source to the novel, however: it is 'To John Simopoulos', the half-Jewish, homosexual philosopher who was the son of the Greek ambassador to London. It is the homosexuality of a number of characters in *The Bell* that provides the book with its sense of danger: sexual temptation, not religious doubt, is at its heart. Simopoulos was one of three close friends whose importance to Murdoch led to her hesitation about marrying John Bayley in 1956 and she recorded in her journal that Simopoulos's 'strong black eyes, down-drawn, wry-smiling mouth, quick glances' attracted her more and more. (Conradi, 2001, p.399)

Successful Married Couples

A third group of novels illustrates the power that can be wielded over a circle of friends by a well-meaning 'golden' couple. *The Nice and the Good* (1968, To Rachel and David Cecil) and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970, To Janet and Reynolds Stone) both centre on a successful upper middle-class marriage. *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980, To Natasha and Stephen Spender) begins with such a marriage and has their emblematic garden as its poetic centre. Here, Murdoch's transformations suggest again a darker response to her friendships than she ever exhibited in life.

The underlying structure of these 'marriage' novels is exemplified by *The Nice and the Good*, which is dedicated 'To Rachel and David Cecil'. The 'official' link, of course, is the Dorset setting. The Cecil family lived in – indeed owned – the village of Cranborne and the Bayleys spent many happy weekends there. The kind Dorset hosts in *The Nice and the Good*, Kate and Octavian, are reminiscent of the Cecils: 'They were happily married and spontaneous in their efforts to cause happiness in others' (Vintage, 2000, pp.19-20). The outsider is Mary Clothier, whom Peter Conradi identifies with Murdoch, and he takes Paula (another protégé) to be a portrait of Murdoch's best friend, Philippa Foot. (Conradi, 2001, p.485) The muddle of Mary's life is set against the golden glory of Kate and Octavian's. The Cecils had encouraged John and Iris's relationship, taking a protective interest in Lord David's star pupil. Under their protection, the Bayleys moved towards marriage, as if seeing its possibilities in the lives of their hosts. Similarly,

> Kate, eternally and unreflectively happy herself, made Mary want happiness and startled her, by a sort of electrical contact, into the hope of it [….] The golden life-

[22] See John Bayley's notes in Box 8 of Peter Conradi's papers, Kingston University Archive.
[23] Murdoch's letters to Norah Smallwood are in the Chatto and Windus Archive, Reading University.

> giving egoism and rich self-satisfaction of Kate and her husband inspired Mary. (p.22)

John Ducane, friend and colleague of Octavian, is the novel's centre of consciousness. He is initially attracted by Kate, and by the end of this Shakespearean comedy in a Dorset Arden the illusory pairings have faded away and the 'true lovers', John Ducane and Mary Clothier, stand revealed to each other:

> He had known, long before he had formulated it clearly, that she was like him, morally like him in some way that was important. Her mode of being gave him a moral, even a metaphysical, confidence in the world, in the reality of goodness. (p.333)

There is a darker side to the plot of the Romance, however. It is driven by power – the power of the married couple – and this is not necessarily benign: it defines and even manipulates the friends who orbit around them. Like Oberon and Titania, the idyllically married Octavian and Kate have been affected by the antics of the earth-bound lovers, but have withdrawn in time. The lovers have all found their matches and have escaped. The final dialogue and subsequent narrative comment are quietly rebarbative and the heavy irony of the last sentence (Kate has concealed an entire love affair from Octavian), as well as Octavian's 'blameless' affair with his secretary, pushes this idyllic marriage away from admiration towards contempt:

> 'Oh Octavian, it's so sad, all our house seems broken apart, everyone is going'.
> 'Darling, you'll soon get other ones'.
> 'Other whats?'
> 'I mean, well, people.'[…]
> 'Octavian, I do love you…Isn't it wonderful that we tell each other everything?'

In fact there were a few details of Octavian's conduct, concerning long evenings when he stayed in the office with his secretary, which Octavian did not think it necessary to divulge to Kate. However he easily forgave himself, so completely forgetting the matter as to feel blameless, and as he frequently decided that each occasion was the last he did not view himself as a deceiver of his wife. His knowledge that there was nothing which she concealed from him was a profound source of happiness and satisfaction. (p.341)

The Cecils' relationship with each other and their lives generally, of course, may well have borne very little resemblance to Kate and Ocatavian's, but Murdoch's novel suggests some recognition of the power games involved in a 'good marriage': the dedication, as it does so often, seems to indicate a re-examination of the deeper psychological implications of apparently blameless lives.

An even more complex portrayal of an upper-middle-class marriage appears in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970). This novel is dedicated 'To Janet and Reynolds Stone', who lived idyllically in Dorset and who also gave the Bayleys weekend hospitality and friendship during the 1960s and 70s. The long-term marriage at the centre of the novel is between Rupert and Hilda Foster and the dismemberment of their marriage is brutal and ends in tragedy. The setting in this novel is London, not Dorset, so there is no obvious reason for the dedication.

The Bayleys stayed with the Stones frequently. Iris encouraged Janet to publish a book of her photographs, *Thinking Faces* (1972), and with Reynolds she produced *A Year of Birds* in 1978, in which his engravings were accompanied by her poems. After his sudden death in 1979 she gave the eulogy at his funeral, praising his artistic and personal unpretentiousness:

> He had the happy good loving life of a true man, creating with his wife and children a serene and beautiful home [which was] a refuge and joy [to his friends].[24]

In the novels however, eulogy is almost always undercut by irony. In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, as Murdoch's imagination plays on her 'serene and beautiful' friends, there may have been a subliminal, imaginative transformation of the Stones into the Fosters. The fact that in the novel Hilda and Rupert 'were a handsome pair. They were altruistic, but treated themselves judiciously to luxuries' (Penguin, 1970, p.11) may again suggest the paradox of kindness and power: like George Eliot, Murdoch is fascinated by the damage 'good' people can do to those around them.

Stephen Spender's journals reveal the close relationship between the Spenders and the Bayleys, who had a great fondness for Mas Saint Jerome, the Spenders' beautiful home in Provence. In 1975, Murdoch spent her birthday there: '15 July 1975. The Bayleys were ideal guests, so thoughtful and pleasant and amusing [...] To them, this place is an enchantment and they fill it with their love […]'.[25] On 5 September 1980 Spender records 'a strange nightmare: That I was made Pope. I sat in a large room, waiting to deliver my sermon before about a million people'. He attributes this 'partly to material about Poland in Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* which I was reading till 2am' (p. 409). He observes that Murdoch

> […]doesn't seem quite a novelist. She can do certain things very well. The atmosphere of the countryside here wonderfully evoked. At the same time, she exaggerates. There are centipedes and lizards on the walls in a Provencal house. Well, yes, occasionally one or two centipedes but never lizards. (p.410)

This untypically prosaic and negative response suggests, perhaps, Spender's fear of the possibility of having his own marriage transformed into Murdoch's fiction. He goes on: 'She treats her characters as pieces in a game, invented by herself, which she shifts about arbitrarily' – and later in the same paragraph he (revealingly) restates the idea in directly personal terms: '*We* are pieces played in a game' (my italics) (p.410). The 'game' Murdoch plays in this novel is indeed, for Spender, a threatening one: it is to explore bereavement, specifically a loving wife's response to the death of a husband. Though her characters are most certainly not direct 'portraits' of the Spenders, her novelist's imagination has grasped that a strong potential story-line would be the shattering of the marital idyll. Spender's vague sense of being threatened may well have come from his poetic recognition of the closeness of art and life. Fictionally, Murdoch 'killed him off' and imagined his widow's life without him. He did not in fact die until 1995, when he was 86, but his widow did indeed then have to come to terms with being alone in their Provencal idyll.

Natasha Spender's account of Mas St. Jerome, written in 1999 after her husband's death, also links gardens explicitly to marriage just as *Nuns and Soldiers* had in 1980: in her memoir, Lady Spender describes Henry and Irina Moore's English garden as 'an affectionate collaboration [...]

[24] Eulogy to Reynolds Stone given at St James's Church, Piccadilly, 20 July 1979. Privately printed.
[25] Stephen Spender, *Journals* 1939-1983 (London: Faber, 1985), p.303.

within their close marriage'.[26] There is also a possibility that she may be consciously challenging the plot of *Nuns and Soldiers***:** in the novel the widowed Gertrude falls in love with the feckless Tim, a far remove from the noble Guy. Lady Spender makes a point of observing (in relation to some of her French neighbours) that 'successive partners often bear a striking resemblance to predecessors' (p.185). She later quotes from her dead husband's diaries a passage which suggests a peaceful acceptance of death far removed from the pain described in *Nuns and Soldiers*:

> Those autumnal days are like ripe life into which a faint stream of death flows, and these are like a still pool of death into which life flows […] one has a feeling of acceptance, standing in the utterly still garden, as though the clear-as-crystal light of such a day loosened all one's ties with life, put one in a passive mood of acceptance. (p.190)

Although the fictional Guy and Gertrude are never granted such acceptance, the actual ending of *Nuns and Soldiers* is similarly elegiac and even hopeful and also involves incorporating the seasons of the year into a human mood:

> The snow, illuminated by the street lamps, was falling abundantly, against the further background of the enclosing dark. Anne stopped and watched it. It reminded her of something, which perhaps she had seen in a picture or a dream. It looked like the heaven spread out in glory, totally unrolled before the face of God, countless, limitless, eternally beautiful, the universe in majesty proclaiming the presence and goodness of its Creator. (p.512)

The elegiac quality of all Lady Spender's recollections, including her choice of extract from her husband's diaries, could, in fact, suggest her own rereading of Murdoch's fictional Gertrude, who finds in the garden, in the rich past of her successful marriage, a way of transforming herself in order to confront the future. In *Nuns and Soldiers* Murdoch seems, in a ghostly way, to have dedicated the novel to the future rather than the past – to have anticipated for two of her dearest friends, through the creative imagination, the inevitable ending of a marriage in which the participants 'had grown together in mind and body and soul as it is sometimes blessedly given to two people to do' (p.26).

Canetti spoke of artistic 'Verwandlung', or transformation, as being essential to the creative process. None of the novels discussed here contains any kind of recognisable 'portraits' of real people. However, Murdoch's dedications enable us to glimpse the process of transformation in the dream-like changes and substitutions she makes between real and fictional lives. Her own comments on the nature of artistic creation, throughout her career, utterly deny the existence of such a process, asserting instead a Keatsian 'negative capability', an emptying out of self:

> One piece of imagination leads to another. You think about a certain situation and then some quite extraordinary aspect of it suddenly appears. The deep things that the work is about declare themselves and connect. Somehow things fly together and

[26] Natasha Spender, *An English Garden in Provence* (London: The Harvill Press, 1999), p.193.

> generate other things, and characters invent characters, as if they were all doing it themselves. One should be patient…[27]

On other occasions, however, she ruefully admits the struggle involved and the possibility of failure: 'one isn't good enough at creating character'. At the beginning of each novel, she confesses, she always hopes

> that a lot of people who are not me are going to come into existence in some wonderful way. Yet it often turns out in the end that something about the structure of the work itself, the myth, as it were, of the work, has drawn all these people into a sort of spiral, or into a kind of form which ultimately is the form of one's own mind. (Dooley, p.11)

Bran Nicol suggests that 'Murdoch's continual insistence on the value of self-expulsion lends it rather an extreme air, almost as if she is protesting a little too much. Indeed, it resembles the kind of excessive reaction that psychoanalysis would immediately regard as evidence of the eruption of desire' and he goes on to argue that Murdoch's theory of art is ultimately Freudian, being based on the principle that 'art arises out of the effort to defuse our natural desires' – though, unlike Freud, *she* believes that the greater the art, the greater the distance from those desires.[28] The moral vocabulary Murdoch uses in describing her struggle towards artistic impersonality suggests that to her it was part of the larger struggle towards the Good. At a conscious level she seems actively to have feared the emergence of the 'merely subjective' in her fiction. On the other hand, one could see in her an unacknowledged, probably unconscious, 'creative economy' in which the eruption in the novels of the darker implications of her friendships is balanced by the maintenance of eternal sunshine in her relationships in life. The dedications, occupying as they do a liminal space not quite inside but not quite outside the imaginative world, reveal most clearly the complex creative interaction in Murdoch between art and life. They are ambiguous gifts, offered apparently spontaneously and often with some lack of tact from some deep place in her creative self, and suggest, like the woodland antics in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a darker truth inexpressible except in the precious carnival space of fiction.

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List of Dedicatees

Under the Net	To Raymond Queneau
The Flight from the Enchanter	To Elias Canetti
The Sandcastle	To John Bayley
The Bell	To John Simopoulos
A Severed Head	No dedicatee
An Unofficial Rose	To Margaret Hubbard
The Unicorn	To David Pears
The Italian Girl	To Patsy and John Grigg
The Red and the Green	To Philippa Foot

[27] Gillian Dooley, ed. *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction* (University of Carolina, 2003), p.221.
[28] Bran Nicol, 'The Perfect Crime: Murdoch, Psychoanalysis and Authorship', *Iris Murdoch News Letter* 16, 2003, pp.10-11.

The Time of the Angels	To Eduard Fraenkel
The Nice and the Good	To Rachel and David Cecil
Bruno's Dream	To Scott Dunbar
A Fairly Honourable Defeat	To Janet and Reynolds Stone
An Accidental Man	To Kreisel
The Black Prince	To Ernesto De Marchi
The Sacred and Profane Love Machine	To Nora Smallwood
A Word Child	To Peter Ady
Henry and Cato	To Stephen Gardiner
The Sea, The Sea	To Rosemary Cramp
Nuns and Soldiers	To Natasha and Stephen Spender
The Philosopher's Pupil	To Arnaldo Momigliano
The Good Apprentice	To Brigid Brophy
The Book and the Brotherhood	To Diana Avebury
The Message to the Planet	To Audhilde and Borys Villers
The Green Knight	For Ed Victor
Jackson's Dilemma	No dedicatee

‘I embrace you with much love’: Letters from Iris Murdoch to Elias Canetti

The following article on Iris Murdoch’s letters to Elias Canetti held in the Conradi archive at the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies continues the series of commentaries on material in the Special Collections at Kingston University London.

Even on Elias Canetti and Iris Murdoch’s first assignation on the evening of Christmas day in 1952, after they had drunk at the North Star pub in Hampstead and moved on to Canetti’s flat, they spoke about his idea of ‘transformation’ (*Verwandlung*), or how one divides oneself into many *personae* – a concept that was to become dominant in Canetti’s work and in his life.[29] The twenty-five letters from Iris Murdoch to Elias Canetti held in the Conradi Archive at the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies suggest that Murdoch, during her subsequent relationship with Canetti, would herself be transformed - into a dependent, even predatory lover, living to a great extent under Canetti’s spell. Canetti was conducting extra-marital affairs long before he met Murdoch and was already involved in what was to be a life-long affair with the painter, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky. In her relationship with Canetti Murdoch appears to have become a willing co-conspirator in the covert machinations that sustained Canetti’s complicated life.

The letters from Murdoch to Canetti span some twenty three years – the earliest is written in 1952 and the last in 1975. A sense of furtiveness and intrigue characterize them even although a number were written many years after the affair itself, which lasted from 1953 to 1956. Most are brief and quickly scribbled (‘Dear Heart, just a note ...’), and Conradi has tentatively dated eleven of them. The earliest, written in 1952, before they became lovers, was sent when Murdoch had arrived in Paris and Canetti was staying at the Hotel des Vosges on the Boulevard St Germain: ‘Just to say that I am really here and would be very pleased to see you [...] It’s dreamlike to be in a place one has thought about so much when one wasn’t there. I still feel rather dazed. I hope all is truly well with you. Yours, Iris Murdoch’.

Although six of the letters provide no clues as to when or where they were written, the covert nature of the arrangements being made suggests that they may have been written from within the confines of the affair, but it is, of course, impossible to be sure: ‘My dear, just to say will come Tuesday, *chez toi*, as arranged,’ says Murdoch in one, and in another, ‘I’ll come for lunch on Wednesday if that’s Ok, arriving *chez toi* about 12.30 […] I’ll telephone (using code) when I’m in London if I arrive earlier’. The telephone ‘code’ could be a device to camouflage Murdoch’s calls or a means for Canetti to distinguish between friends and ‘bores or enemies’. [30]

One of these undated, unsourced letters provides a single enigmatic fragment of dialogue between the couple. It appears to have been written in response to fears that Canetti had expressed about an inevitable future grief (perhaps on or near the death of his wife, Veza, or of Friedl Benedikt, another of his lovers, who died of Hodgkin’s Disease at the age of thirty-six):

[29] The biographical detail regarding the affair between Iris Murdoch and Elias Canetti is from *Iris Murdoch: A Life* by Peter Conradi (London: HarperCollins, 2001), hereafter cited as Conradi. The account of their first meeting can be found on p.345. Thanks are due to Professor Conradi for his advice and most helpful comments on drafts of this essay.

[30] Conradi recounts a memory from Carol Stewart, who revealed that Canetti gave a number of close friends this code – ‘ring three times, put the phone down, dial again – to distinguish them from bores and enemies’. Another letter reveals that the code is indeed ‘the one, two, three, stop principle,’ and yet another, written in 1965 referring to ‘the method’, obviously implies the use of this code. Even in 1970 she writes that she has ‘telephoned a number of times code-wise & got no answer’.

> I feel deeply convinced that the ordeal which you see ahead is some sort of dying into life - a good *verwandlung*, where one goes, as it were, open-eyed into what seems after darkness – and then finds one has entered some other and much better world. I am pleased the novel is there, bearing your company. Hold onto it and it will prove a guide.
>
> [...] as for the other thing you spoke of, I think one must endure the visitations of the gods, being glad that one is visited, living into it with one's whole self and finding more life and more good can come to one and to the other person.

Here, her role appears one of friend and comforter, yet how far Canetti was appreciative of her concern is questionable, for one of this group of unsourced letters, as do a number of others, suggests a deliberate evasiveness on Canetti's part. Murdoch writes, 'I gather from Marie-Louise that you <u>are</u> in England after all! But she said you were very busy'. She appears indifferent to Marie-Louise's obvious ascendancy in the pecking order of Canetti's mistresses and continues, 'I asked her to find out if you'd like lunch with me Tuesday (Feb 2) and if I don't hear to the contrary I'll come along 12.30ish to Thurlow Rd. But don't mind saying no via M.L (or postcard to me!) – in which case, I'll try later'.

Another seven undated notes are sent from Steeple Aston, where Murdoch moved with her husband, John Bayley, in 1956. Although the affair itself is reputed to have ended by this time, this group of letters largely comprises attempts to contact Canetti and suggestions for tentative assignations: 'You cannot write and I cannot telephone which makes communication always rather difficult! Do you think we could have lunch on Tuesday February 2nd?' Amongst them is one reference to a proposed visit to Thurlow Road: 'Cd I now suggest dinner on Tuesday Nov 11 – coming to Thurlow Rd between 7 & 7.30'. Canetti appears to treat her dismissively, even contemptuously; he does not tell her when he goes away or when he returns: 'My dear, John Simopoulos tells me you have gone abroad and will be away for some weeks. So I am assuming next Tues Feb 2 is not possible ... (I've tried to ring you a number of times …)'. Canetti appears at best a reluctant, at worst a manipulative, participant in Murdoch's drama: 'cd not get any answer from your London number tho' tried a number of times', she writes, 'so I assume you are away. I do very much want to see you & will try again'. Murdoch's disappointment is plain: 'My dear, I don't even know if you are in England. I am paralysed about making arrangements because of the difficulty in getting in touch with you & because I'm always afraid of making dates & then having to cancel'.

Another letter from Steeple Aston records the pleasure in rare meetings with Canetti: 'It was very wonderful to see you' ... 'You always give me life, I love you deeply, deeply, as you know'. She appears to have had a habit of enclosing a stamped addressed envelope which he would post back to her if her suggestions for meeting were agreeable: 'no need to put communication inside (though of course I would like one!!!) – just seal up and send off and I will know if I receive it that Nov 11th is OK'. In this particular letter these instructions are repeated in the margin and the writing appears agitated and, counter-productively, barely legible. She was to be disappointed it seems on this occasion, for another letter, written in the same agitated hand, but with a more defeated tone, is dated Nov 9th: 'My dear, I have not had my envelope back by post and could not get any answer from your London number tho' I tried a number of times so I assume you are still away. I do very much want to see you and will try again …Yours as always'.

Amongst these arrangements for what appear to be secretive meetings is an occasional invitation to a more formal soirée; there is no apparent attempt to divorce the covert and the public: from Steeple Aston Murdoch writes, 'My dear, just to remind, there will be a party at my flat 59, Harcourt Terrace next Wednesday June 9th between 5.30 and 8! And it would be very good to see you there. But I won't necessarily expect you'. A different invitation reveals a possible ulterior motive for inviting Canetti to these formal parties: 'will hope to dine with you afterwards (shd get rid of the

drinkers by 8)'.[31] If the motive behind these public appearances together was indeed to provide a 'cover' for the more intimate nature of their relationship, it worked well. When Murdoch died in 1999 few surviving friends, records Conradi, knew that the pair had ever been lovers – they had assumed them to be merely friends.

The eleven letters dated by Conradi span the period 1962 – 1975. Canetti's evasiveness and Murdoch's persistence lend uniformity to this collection. If the affair had ended, the *frisson* involved in the conducting of it appears to have been perpetuated for many years. Two letters from 1965 record failures to contact Canetti by phone, requests for dinner and bitter disappointment at his non-arrival:

> I arrived just after 7.30, tried door, shouted. Your windows were dark. Waited a bit. Then I went to the King of Bohemia till just before 8 and tried again. Then tried again about 8.30 waited in pub, telephoned. I felt so intensely disappointed. I'd been holding on for some time to the idea of meeting you and there was so much I wanted to say. I'm sorry, I do hope you are OK and all's well. I have been thinking about you a lot. Look after yourself, I will write, telephone again. It's nearly end of term, alas. Forgive my inefficiency. And much love, your I'.

A year later, in 1966, she tells Canetti that she 'had a dream last night in which you were Socrates [...] it's too many centuries since I saw you ... please let us meet...'.

Whether the desire she expresses for his presence is sexual or purely emotional is hard to judge, but clearly it is only to Canetti that she longs to relate certain experiences. In 1965, after another failed assignation, she writes, 'there was so much I wanted to say,' and in 1966, 'I have a lot to talk to you about – nothing particularly dramatic or urgent – but just the sorts of things I can only say to you, or best say to you. And I want you to tell me – oh, marvellous things'.

As a whole, these letters divulge very little about the relationship between Murdoch and Canetti, but they do reveal the extent of Murdoch's dependence on Canetti's simply being in the world. Her subservience to her 'Lord', 'Great Lion', 'Beloved Titian' is evident throughout and once she signs herself, 'Your humble I'. The torment of missing him apparently long outlived the years they were most passionately involved. In an aerogramme dated by Conradi as written on 27 Feb 1963(?), with what might be 'Queensland – Barrier Reef' written at the top, she reveals how she longs to tell him about her travels: 'I have so much to tell you about India. Oh you should have been there. I do love you. The gods guard you very dear. Be well. Ever well. Much much love'. Her touching desire for his well-being and to share some part of her life with him endures. In 1970 she sends him a postcard of 'Boris and Alexander: The Artist's Sons' by Leonid Pasternak and in the last of the notes, written in 1975 on a postcard of the centre panel of Max Beckmann's triptych 'Departure', she writes, 'My dear, many many thoughts of you and H and the child – I do look forward to hearing news. I have been in the USA, back briefly, and now away again. Back soon. With many good wishes and as always much love.'

A poignant mixture of painful rejection and jaunty insouciance forms a refrain throughout. Canetti's behaviour hurt Murdoch perhaps more than she feels she has the right to reveal to him. There are only a few outbreaks of jealousy: 'I'm jealous of Veza but I do want to meet her. How beautiful she is', she writes in one of the letters from Steeple Aston; and on another occasion, 'I hope one day I'll meet (I feel her name is taboo)'. Yet when Canetti endures some kind of emotional turmoil she says without a trace of malice, 'it is a time, too if I may speak of truth, for holding onto Veza and consenting to let her help you and experience with you as she would wish'. Murdoch never fails to wish Canetti well with a grace that could, in fact, be read as indifference: 'I'll look forward to

[31] Murdoch's flat in Harcourt Terrace was rented after 1963 and was given up in 1970.

seeing you when you're back. I may go to Vienna but the date is difficult as it falls in term so I'm not sure. I hope you'll have a good journey and a splendid time over there. Much, much love'. The mixture of high romance and banality is occasionally puzzling: 'Keep well my Lord. See you next term'. One suspects, in fact, that this obsessive, romantic correspondent has been partially invented by the rational, hard-working, high-flying intellectual who was functioning perfectly well alongside, and few ever grasped how deeply enthralled with Canetti she was.

'I can live in letters', Murdoch wrote to her friend, Philippa Foot (Conradi, 201), and she once said that 'one persists in considering the other person as something quite separate from his letters' (Conradi, 202). If letter-writing was in part the invention of a persona it was possible that Murdoch used her epistolary habit as inspiration for her novels. She may even have become dependent as much on the intrigue as on the man himself. She could, perhaps, have fostered this intrigue to fuel her plots and the psychology of her characters. Yet it was her passion for Canetti which lived most prominently and enduringly in her imagination and was perhaps the most prolific fodder for her art: 'through Canetti Iris discovered something about the workings of power and her own complicity in this. If so it made her a better writer', says Conradi, (p.350) who suggests that in one of his 'transformations' Canetti touches all Murdoch's male enchanter figures from *A Severed Head, The Time of the Angels* and *The Unicorn* to *The Sea, The Sea*. (p.350) But if the power-obsessed and misogynistic characters of Mischa Fox, Carel Fisher and Charles Arrowby are haunted by the presence of Canetti, so, perhaps, Murdoch's self-deprecating, obsessional female characters are haunted by Murdoch herself: 'You live in my mind', writes Lizzie Scherer to Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, The Sea*, and Lizzie's desperate, submissive pleas echo Murdoch's to Canetti. Lizzie writes to Charles, 'my love for you exists in a sort of eternal present, it almost is the meaning of time',[32] while 'what a sad air a letter can have when it records momentary things that are past when the other person gets it', Murdoch wrote in her journal, 'but writing down such things is a kind of charm to bring you into the present' (Conradi, p.202). *The Sea, The Sea* was written some twenty-five years after Murdoch met Canetti, but the 'eternal present' conjured up by her epistolary romance may have informed the construction of her enchanters and victims alike.

These twenty-five letters comprise only a fragment of the correspondence between Canetti and Murdoch. Her journals reveal that she wrote him letters constantly, sometimes twice a day (Conradi, p.362), and these letters would surely paint a picture of a love affair very inadequately catalogued here. Other letters, more dense and more intimate, must reflect on aspects of this relationship to which these brief pragmatic notes bear no witness, and others still will chart their quarrels, for it was by letter that Canetti would 'lash out' at Murdoch and it was by letter that she would angrily reply (Conradi, p.364).

Conradi believes that ultimately Murdoch came to fear Canetti as 'her own darker "double"' (p.372). 'Both had within them', he goes on to suggest, 'as well as warmth and vulnerability, that ice-splinter without which art is not made' (p.372). When confronted by that 'ice splinter' which his merciless manipulation could not shatter, Canetti appears to have experienced dislike and respect in equal measure. While spite fuels his vituperative memoir, *Party im Blitz*, in which he labels Murdoch as a lightweight intellectual, a bad writer and a cold lover, it must surely have been respect that not only ensured that their friendship survived until Canetti's death in 1994 but also his claim to have been proud to have lived to see twenty-five of her novels published (Conradi, p.372). Despite the fact that these letters identify the obsessive personae, or *Verwandlungen*, that Canetti brought into being as exasperating – or as occasionally unpalatable – his importance to Murdoch's art should not be ignored or underestimated.

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[32] Iris Murdoch, *The Sea, The Sea*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), pp. 42-47. First published Chatto & Windus, 1978.

'Tear up this Letter': Review of *Briefe An Georges*, the letters of Veza and Elias Canetti, edited by Karen Lauer and Kristian Wachinger (Munich: Hanser, 2006, ISBN 3 446 20760 0) by Jeremy Adler[33]

Elias Canetti boasted about his ability to outwit death with his posthumous writings – the unpublished novels, the half-a-dozen plays, the second part of *Crowds and Power*. 'When I'm dead', he claimed, 'my secret writing will take years to decipher'. The world would greet every new discovery with excitement: 'A new Canetti!' we were expected to exclaim. It has turned out otherwise. His code has proved to be a variant on a common shorthand; the literary cupboard was bare: those novels and plays never actually existed; and the acclaim has been less than universal. Yet the posthumous works have not entirely disappointed. Canetti's unpublished aphorisms are proving to be a major part of his oeuvre, and his memoirs of the English years, *Party im Blitz* (2005), which came out without the censorship of an editor jealous of Canetti's fame, succeeded in upsetting almost everyone. His scabrous remarks about his closest friends and admirers, above all the attack on Iris Murdoch, appeared to confirm John Bayley's judgement on the 'godmonster of Hampstead'. Yet for all their bile, Canetti's posthumous utterances have the mark of a classic: brilliance, trenchancy and memorability.

The latest publication, a volume of correspondence between Canetti, his wife Veza and his brother Georges, is no exception, not least because it offers us a glimpse of the Canetti we were never meant to see. It spans the major part of his struggle for literary success, from 1933, before the publication of his novel, *Auto da Fe*, until 1959, when he finished *Crowds and Power*. For the first time we are given an 'inner view' of Canetti's formative years, his ruthless ambition, his humiliating poverty, his rages and despair, as well as Veza's own astute eye and her intolerable situation. Readers of the Canettis' fictions are already familiar with their dramatic fury as well as with the figure of Canetti's beloved brother Georges in *Auto da Fe* (an autobiographical link to which these letters refer), but the correspondence now fills out the picture with a true *roman-à-trois* about this passionate family, penned by two gifted novelists – Canetti and Veza – and a no less intelligent other – the doctor, Georges – in letters whose constant theme is the bond unto death that linked all three. Veza's love for Georges was possibly more intense than that for Canetti himself, and – given Georges's homosexuality – even more hopeless. This dynamic involves her in constant suffering.

Contrary to the impression of a solitary but committed intellectual that he liked to cultivate in the coffee houses of Europe and perfected in his autobiography, Canetti always retained an affection for family life. *Briefe an Georges* testifies amply to his unreserved love for his brother Georges, his love-hatred for his other brother, the impresario, Nissim (later Jacques), and his passion for his mother. The complex of reasons that led to his marriage to Veza – fully explained, at last, in a letter to Georges – included her role as mother; while Veza, for her part, loved both brothers initially via their mother, as she wrote to Georges in a letter of condolence: 'I did not love Elias, and I did not love you, but I loved your mother; I was in her thrall [. . .]'. The intensity of these hidden, yet painfully raw passions has all the makings of a tragedy.

'Tear up this letter immediately', Veza writes to Georges one day. 'No document should exist that could provide an insight into Canetti's personality'. She is referring to her description of his fits of madness. On one occasion, she recalls, he was overcome by blindness, and crawled across the room on all fours, claiming that Veza wanted to stab him; then again, he was obsessed by another paranoid delusion:

[33] This and the following review by Ritchie Robinson are reprinted by kind permission of *The Times Literary Supplement*, www.thetls.co.uk. The review by Jeremy Adler was first published on 29 September 2006, p.4, and the review by Ritchie Robinson was first published on Friday September 2nd 2005, p.6.

> He began to laugh dreadfully, I grew terribly frightened, but he said, you laughed in the same way after the death of your mother, and so I thought it was a fit of nerves and that it would pass. He requested some tea, and I calmly handed him his cup. But I had to exchange it for my own, as he said his was poisoned. I have seen this for a full twelve years now, and it doesn't impress me in the least, even though his latest expression horrified me. I drank his poisoned tea and he lay down. His head was very red. He fantasized that he was in a madhouse […]
>
> He said that I was evil and that I had driven him into madness three weeks ago. I was so overcome with horror that I grew cold and called out for help in my misery. Then he explained to me in desperation and with tears in his eyes that I had poisoned myself with the tea which had been meant for him. I was ice-cold, so he mistook me for your dead mother. I don't know where I took the strength, but I suddenly turned hot and feverish, and so he calmed down […] The attack was over.

On another occasion, Canetti called the police about a burglar in the middle of the night. Seven armed policemen arrived. They recognized that he was hallucinating, and it took all Veza's charm to assuage them. Perhaps we may now understand Canetti's original plan that *Auto da Fe* should inaugurate a *comedie humaine* about lunatics in the light of his anxieties, and its abandonment as, in part, a result of his growing ability to tame his demons. Yet it was Veza, not Canetti, who had to carry the burden. Those only familiar with her from her later years, after the war and emigration had taken their toll, will be appalled by what she had to bear from the outset. No doubt exaggerating her looks (she was not yet forty), she complains to Georges:

> I am living under a delusion, too, for is it not a delusion if I, a much-celebrated and envied woman, have for years been able to see only one way out: suicide? I, who despite my age, my wizened appearance, and my white hair, am wooed by the most talented men? [. . .] if I began to tell you about the hell that is my life, you wouldn't believe it. You would weep, as I weep.

Veza links Canetti's paranoia with other, well-known traits – his zest for intrigue and his inveterate lying – while Canetti himself gives a lucid account of his megalomania. All three of them recognize that this literary 'monster' needed to be tamed, and Veza especially cultivates those parts that she, almost alone, recognized as divine, or, to use her own term, 'Hölderlinian'. To help her bring these qualities to the fore, Georges (depicted as a psychiatrist in *Auto da Fe*) provided her with sound medical advice, while Canetti – aged thirty-one – attempted to accustom himself to the discipline of regular work. Pace his hatred of Freud, his unresolved trauma over his father's early death and his mother's compensatory love created an Oedipal triangle, replicated in the relationship to Veza and Georges; this dilemma, perhaps, with its associated guilt, delusions and paranoia, may have impelled his early intelligence into that insatiable genius which could only be fulfilled by the award of the Nobel Prize – a dream that Veza more than once wished for Georges.

The volatility of Canetti's emotions contrasts markedly with the rigidity of his ideas. Indeed, there is something shocking about the inflexibility evident in the philosophy of this 'master of metamorphoses' – Canetti's definition of the writer or Dichter. Almost from the start, he begins his 'book against death'; and the central theses of *Crowds and Power* seem all but formulated in his early observation about the sea, which he understands not as beautiful or sublime, but as a symbol of the masses. The emerging writer seems shaped more by his obsessions than by his insights. Hermann Hesse saw as much in his review of *Auto da Fe*, noting that the novel echoes the mechanical

throbbing of an engine rather than the beating of a human heart. We also witness the birth of the aphorist, flexibly improving his ‘combinatorial skill’, and encompassing a host of fields from music to anthropology.

Beneath Canetti's duplicities, there is a moral will, the enduring humanity that Veza prized. Here, the early letters often legitimize the mature views. Canetti's hatred of the war seems affected in some of the published aphorisms; but the shattering letter about his journey through France in 1935 which reports on the effects of the First World War, witnessed not just on the battlefields, but above all in the fatuous houses erected on the ruins, expresses an outrage and moral sense that cannot but stir the reader to indignant compassion. By 1935, he is certain that the next war will come. Yet it is Veza once again who carries the emotional burden, as she reflects when the Second World War draws to an end:

> I am very ill. As to my physical appearance, you wouldn't recognize me on the street, but as to my psychological disposition, it has worsened, and I had to visit a London hospital twice last month. The last six years have been too much for me and my mind is incapable of imagining gas chambers or similar inventions.

The thought of the people in Belsen never left her. In her grief, it is not Canetti but Georges who sustains her: ‘Only the thought of you is my comfort, health, pride and warmth. It keeps me alive’. As the ‘melancholy’ migrates from Canetti to Veza, Georges increasingly assumes the role of her mentor. She addresses him variously as ‘darling’, ‘beloved son’, ‘*mon très mignon et charmant et très beau-frère*’, ‘delightful beau’ and ‘dear playboy’. She even becomes vicariously gay for his sake, signing off once with ‘all my inverted love’.

Meanwhile, the Canettis' domestic arrangements had grown ever more complex. Following his infatuation with the sculptress, Anna Mahler, he formed a lifelong, increasingly fraught liaison with the painter, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky, and kept a room in her house until the end; yet as early as the late 1940s, Veza assisted him in deceiving her, when he was taken with the novelist, Friedl Benedikt, who herself moved in with Veza. Circumstances less conducive to Veza's health or Canetti's ever-fragile work ethic would be hard to imagine, yet – not without the occasional suicide threat – she drove him to finish his great book.

The letters end in 1959 with the completion of *Crowds and Power* as a natural caesura. With prescient vanity Canetti confesses:

> I am more than satisfied. I know that I have earned a kind of immortality with this book, and if I were to die tomorrow, I would not have lived in vain. I have earned the Nobel prize with it, whether for literature or for peace, of course I won't get it. But that is not the point: I know in myself, that no-one else has penetrated so deeply into the confusions of our century.

If Veza stands out as the central figure here, the life force behind the achievement of *Crowds and Power*, Georges's own, crucial voice is too little heard. Too few of his letters survive. He had to fight his own battle against the tuberculosis which he made the subject of his medical research; and he enjoyed a distinguished career as a scientist at the *Institut Pasteur*. The brothers were united in life by their fight against death, and their names are today linked in the *Prix Georges, Jacques et Elias Canetti*, founded earlier this year, and to be awarded every five years for distinguished work on TB.

The new volume illuminates countless details in the lives of Veza and Elias Canetti, making it essential, irresistible reading, even after Sven Hanuschek's thorough biography (reviewed in the *TLS*, September 2, 2005). One striking twist concerns the relations between Canetti and his closest literary friend during the war, Franz Steiner. Canetti broke for some years with Steiner, accusing him of plagiarism; Iris Murdoch recalled that this rift was caused by Friedl Benedikt; yet from a letter printed here, one can perhaps sense Veza's presence. She may well have put Friedl up to the episode, to stop Canetti wasting his time in talking to Steiner for days on end - in fact, most profitably, as is evoked in *Party im Blitz*.

Kristian Wachinger, to whom we owe the discovery of these letters, and Karen Lauer are to be congratulated on making this such a splendidly approachable book. It comprises all the known letters between the three, and a helpful commentary. About a third of the letters (by Veza) have been translated from the English. The annotation is discreet but essential. Perhaps I may end with a small, personal addition. The ‘Director’ of the Prague educational institute, the Urania, whom Veza brags about to Georges, was not the Director at all, but the factotum and secretary who invited Canetti to give his first public reading from *Auto da Fe* in Prague in 1937. This was in fact my father, H. G. Adler. A grotesque account of the ‘Kulturbordell’ where Canetti read can be found in Adler's novel *Panorama* (1968), itself a positive riposte to the negativity of *Auto da Fe*. In thanks for that invitation, Veza and Canetti invited him to stay for a week near Salzburg over the summer. Years later (after an intense and dramatic friendship), Canetti vented his wrath on him because he had said that Veza was ‘disturbed’ (‘verstort’) by the war and never recovered from it, a tragic fact to which these letters bear sorry witness, down to the very last word. Yet Canetti himself could only survive Veza's death by denying her slightest imperfection, and - not implausibly – by revering her as a saint.

Jeremy Adler

Ritchie Robertson:'The Great Hater': Review of *Elias Canetti,* by Sven Hanuschek (Munich: Hanser, 2005, ISBN 3 446 20584 5)

Elias Canetti (1905-94) is among the most original, and the most variously talented, of German-language authors of the twentieth century. The fierce, grotesque satire of his one novel, *Die Blendung* (translated by Veronica Wedgwood as *Auto-da-Fe*), written when he was twenty-five, hits the reader like a fist. Some thirty-five years of thought and reading went into his treatise on crowd psychology, *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*). After its publication in 1960, and the reissue of *Die Blendung* in 1964, Canetti at last acquired fame, but it was his arrestingly vivid three-volume autobiography, appearing from 1977 onwards, that attracted world-wide attention and, in 1981, gained him the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The published work, however, represents only the peaks of a vast oeuvre preserved mainly in the City Library in Zurich. Its central massif, according to Canetti's biographer Sven Hanuschek, consists of notebooks. Sporadically from the mid 1920s, and systematically from 1942 to his death, Canetti wrote down his thoughts, usually spending one or two hours a day on this task. Since 2002 these notes have been accessible, though some more personal records are still barred until 2024. They include comments on day-to-day experiences, outbursts of emotion, aphorisms, reflections on crowds, power, and much else. The hand-picked selections which have appeared as volumes of aphorisms from *Die Provinz des Menschen* (1973; *The Human Province*) onwards represent, according to Hanuschek, only one-tenth of the whole. Hanuschek's extensive quotations from these notes enhance the value of his excellent, highly readable, consistently fascinating, and badly needed biography. Any biographer of Canetti has to negotiate some delicate and difficult matters. First, Canetti was married to another gifted writer. Venetiana Taubner Calderon, known as Veza, came, like Canetti, from the Jewish community of south-eastern Europe who spoke Ladino, a language descended from medieval Spanish. They met on April 17 1924 in Vienna, at a public reading by Karl Kraus, and married in 1934.

Veza had some fifteen stories published in newspapers, and soon after the Canettis' arrival as refugees in England in 1939 she wrote, but refused to publish, a short novel, *Die Schild-kroten* (*The Tortoises*). When it appeared fifty years later, it was immediately recognized as ranking among the masterpieces of the – astonishingly rich – literature produced by exiles from Germany and Austria. In the early 1940s, Veza wrote two plays and a novel in English, but these seem to have been destroyed in a state of depression, and increasingly she confined her literary activities to translation (she translated Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* into German) and supporting Canetti's work by taking care of his correspondence (he was a notoriously erratic letter-writer) and pressing him to get on with *Crowds and Power*. Veza Canetti was among those literary wives who have subordinated their careers to their husbands', as Jane Welsh Carlyle took second place to Thomas, or as Willa Muir, the author of two spirited novels, concentrated on translation to enable her husband Edwin to devote himself to fiction and poetry. Eventually we shall need a joint biography of the Canettis, along the lines of Rosemary Ashton's *Thomas and Jane Carlyle: Portrait of a Marriage* (2001).

Another delicate matter, which makes Hanuschek's biography all the more timely, is Canetti's relationship with Iris Murdoch in the early 1950s. In John Bayley's memoir, *Iris* (1998), Canetti figures as 'the Dichter' who 'made love to Iris, possessing her as if he were a god', even while his wife, with her 'sweet face and air of patient welcoming reserve', was present in the same flat. Peter Conradi's biography of Murdoch has added unappetizing details. It is tempting to imagine Canetti as a monster of egoism, and to demonize him in relation to Veza rather as Ted Hughes has been pilloried for his alleged selfishness towards Sylvia Plath. Veza Canetti died (of an unidentified illness) in May 1963, a few months after Plath's suicide, and Canetti, who had recently got to know Hughes, felt like his brother in misfortune. Hanuschek fortunately presents a somewhat more rounded, though not uncritical, picture of Canetti.

A defining event in Canetti's life was his father's sudden death in 1912, which brought him under the exclusive control of his mother. Intending to move the family to Vienna, Mathilde Canetti taught her eldest son German in a month, spurring him on with exclamations of 'I've got an idiot for a son!'. This pedagogical method worked, in as much as German was the language in which Canetti wrote throughout his life. But it also gave him an experience of domestic tyranny. Later, around 1926, Mathilde Canetti, then living in France, did her utmost to separate him from her rival, Veza, by writing him furious letters denouncing Veza as an 'unscrupulous intriguer'. Canetti broke off contact with his mother, but the structure of his autobiography, ending with her death in 1937, confirms how much she shaped his life. Even in 1967 he felt he was still in revolt against the moral authority represented by his mother, as well as the quasi-paternal figure of Karl Kraus. After admiring Kraus fanatically for years, Canetti had discarded his idol when in 1934 Kraus came out in support of the Austrian Corporate State.

This pattern of subservience and revolt indicates the powerful passions that are also evident from *Die Blendung*, which Alban Berg called an 'epic of hatred'. There were tensions also between Canetti and his two younger brothers, Georg and Nissim, who stayed with their mother in Paris (and became respectively, as Georges and Jacques Canetti, a distinguished doctor and an owner of record companies). The novel turns on the antagonism between the book-obsessed sinologist Peter Kien, who Canetti admitted was a caricature of himself, and his brother Georges, a psychiatrist based in Paris. It culminates in Peter's denunciation of the suave and supple Georges as a shameless liar who exploits his patients to feed his own ego.

What must the real Georges have thought of this? Strains between the brothers could be violent. We hear of a dreadful quarrel at the meal-table in 1939, provoked by Elias's inadvertently finishing a cheese and leaving only the rind, whereupon Georges seized it and cried: 'That's what you're like, you leave us only this rind, you are this rind!'. In his notes Canetti admits that he needs someone to hate – a man as 'object of long-term hatred', such as the Austrian emigré Robert Neumann, who served him for years as an 'idol of hatred'. The same theme entered paradoxically into Canetti's reaction to the Holocaust. Once his initial fury against the Germans had abated, he wrote: 'I don't want to hate. I hate hatred'.

When, after living with her for some years, Canetti married Veza, Georges advised him against the marriage with a vehemence which is initially perplexing. Canetti explained that by marrying her he was saving her from the danger of deportation to Yugoslavia, of which she was technically a citizen. But he added, strangely, that she was his 'warmest and most selfless friend', 'now my mother', and that if he wanted 'really' to marry, she would agree to a divorce. From a letter of November 1932 in which Veza refers to 'the great upheaval this summer', Hanuschek plausibly surmises that she had a miscarriage and that subsequently her relations with Canetti ceased to be sexual. Georges, whose correspondence with Veza is among Hanuschek's most important sources, is likely to have known this. In the same letter, Veza promises to allow Canetti 'your freedom, your adventures and mysteries'. For much of their English exile they had separate addresses, first in Amersham and later in Hampstead. While tolerating his relationships with other women, she sought to bring them under control, and she apparently did much to arrange his relationship with Frieda Benedikt (1916-53). Frieda was the granddaughter of Moriz Benedikt, the powerful Viennese newspaper proprietor whom Kraus had denounced, and also published successful novels in English under the pseudonym 'Anna Sebastian'. The resulting *ménage à trois*, which flourished during their early years of exile in England, was enlarged around 1941 by the addition of the painter Marie-Louise von Motesiczky (1906-96). Hanuschek is suitably sceptical about Canetti's rumoured relationships with numerous other women. Relations with Frieda ended around 1945, when, perhaps to provoke Canetti, she took up with a succession of other men. In contrast to the resulting crises, his relationship with Motesiczky petered out into distant friendship. This arrangement, which might now be called 'polyamory', provided for some years a stable framework for the often unhappy and turbulent relationship between the Canettis. A constant problem was their poverty. Unlike his brothers, Canetti seemed incapable of earning a living. While writing *Die Blendung* he lived on the proceeds of translating three novels by Upton Sinclair. Thereafter he was largely supported by his family.

Despite the self-assured manner which astonished his acquaintances, Veza considered him impractical, timid, and unworldly; she wrote of him to Georges, ‘He is an undeveloped, enchanting, gifted child’. But he was also difficult. He worked on *Crowds and Power* in an unsystematic way, buying books in preference to using libraries, and writing only with great reluctance. Veza claimed that she had to be a ‘slave-driver’ to keep him at work, and that she had to threaten suicide to get him even to dictate his text. Canetti in turn felt under surveillance, and referred to Veza as the ‘V3’, after Hitler's planned third weapon of retaliation. Veza told Georges that his eccentricities sometimes brought her close to suicide. Canetti underwent repeated breakdowns with spells of paranoia, while Veza suffered from depression and hysteria. One has the impression that Canetti was postponing adulthood by recreating his difficult relationship with his mother. Hanuschek calls it a love-hate relationship based on mutual dependence; Jeremy Adler, in his sensitive introduction to *Party in the Blitz*, Canetti's recollections of life in Britain, sketches a more positive picture both of Veza's personality – ‘her wit, her sharp tongue, her fiery nature, her suffering, her compassion for the suffering of others’ – and of the indispensable support she gave Canetti in completing his life's work.

After Veza's death, Canetti felt intense grief, no doubt heightened by a sense of guilt. He even came close to suicide. But at the same time he was in love with a remarkable young woman, Hera Buschor (1933-88), who was head of picture restoration at the *Kunsthaus* in Zurich. If one wants evidence that love can change people, this biography provides it. Canetti overcame, perhaps not without difficulty, his jealousy and need to control others (something Hera clearly would not have stood for). Composing his daily notes became less interesting than writing to Hera. He became aware of his own vanity, and rebuked himself for it; in a poem he addresses himself as ‘loudmouth’ and orders himself to keep quiet. The entrancing photographs reproduced both here and in Kristian Wachinger's handsome pictorial biography convey eloquently what an exceptional person Hera Buschor must have been. They married in December 1971, when Hera was pregnant (Canetti was then sixty-six), and their daughter Johanna was born in June 1972. Canetti enjoyed fatherhood, and perhaps the most moving thing in this book is to see the Dichter, the Central European super-intellectual, willingly transformed into an ordinary person who looks after his baby daughter and does the dishes. He can never have expected to outlive his young wife but, after Hera's premature death from cancer, he survived her for six years.

Some of Canetti's energies in these last years went into preparing *Party in the Blitz*, published in German in 2003. Canetti established himself in English society more firmly than perhaps any other *émigré* writer (not counting the numerous exiled scholars who entered British academe). Yet, by his own account, he always felt an outsider, repelled by the studied coolness of middle-class English parties where physical contact, display of emotion, and even interesting conversation were taboo. His evocation of these ‘contact-free parties’ recalls the opening pages of *Crowds and Power*. The book's very first sentence runs: ‘There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown’. Canetti goes on to describe how lonely one can feel within one's inviolate personal space, and how one can long for release into a crowd. Did Hampstead cocktail parties get him started on his book? At these parties, Canetti listened and looked keenly, and some of his acquaintances – Bertrand Russell, William Empson, Arthur Waley – are vividly conjured. Sometimes the vividness is, as Hanuschek says, caricatural: thus Russell is virtually defined by his goatish laugh. Canetti also describes with considerable sympathy the devout sectarian couple with whom he and Veza lodged in Chesham Bois; their apocalyptic fantasies, nourished by an itinerant prophetess, enabled him to understand the world of Blake, the English poet he most admired.

Unfortunately, reactions to *Party in the Blitz*, a compellingly readable book, may be skewed by the unsympathetic section on Iris Murdoch, written in a mood of irritated retrospection. Canetti's surely more complex responses to Murdoch at the time of their affair will not be disclosed until 2024. To be fully appreciated, the book needs to be read alongside Hanuschek's detailed and leisurely account of the Amersham and Hampstead years. For it is his account of Canetti's years in England that is the main strength of Hanuschek's biography. For the Bulgarian childhood, it is difficult to find material to supplement Canetti's own autobiography, though Hanuschek astutely notes that the episode in which the five-year-old Canetti threatens to kill his cousin Laurica suspiciously resembles

an incident recounted by Stendhal, one of Canetti's favourite authors, in *La Vie de Henri Brulard*. Later, Hanuschek valuably supplements Canetti's writings with details about interwar Vienna, but although Canetti was linked by antagonism or friendship to numerous important figures – Karl Kraus, Hermann Broch, and the Communist Ernst Fischer – he was not prominent on the literary scene. With Canetti's exile, this biography really comes into its own, and its wealth of information about London literary circles in the 1940s and 1950s makes an English translation highly desirable.

The wider significance of Canetti's residence in England has two main aspects. First, he belonged to a network of *émigrés*, including two other versatile writers who continued to work in German, Franz Baermann Steiner and H. G. Adler. Despite the work of the latter's son, Jeremy, in editing their writings, too little is generally known about this fascinating intellectual circle which flourished, almost overlooked, in a British setting. Both Steiner and Adler came originally from Prague. Steiner was an anthropologist, who taught at Oxford and published a well-known study of taboo. He is gradually becoming recognized also as a major poet, whose often opaque work shows the impact not only of Hölderlin and Rilke but also, as Canetti himself notes, of Yeats and Eliot, fusing them into a highly individual mode of utterance. Canetti recalls in *Party in the Blitz* how he and Steiner shared a consuming interest in myths and used to discuss them for days on end. Adler first met Canetti in 1937 when he invited the novelist to give a public reading in Prague. A few years later, Adler was transported to Theresienstadt and thence briefly to Auschwitz, before being transferred to Buchenwald. He put his horrific experiences to use in two important scholarly studies of the Holocaust, and also established a reputation as a novelist and poet in German. All this work was written in London, where Adler arrived in 1947. His friendship with Canetti was close but often tense, as Hanuschek recounts. One source of friction is suggested by the dedication Canetti wrote in a copy of *Crowds and Power*: 'To H. G. Adler who lived what I only thought'.

Canetti and his relatives had escaped the Holocaust; Adler had survived it, and his first wife and her mother had perished in Auschwitz. It is noteworthy that the explicit reflections on the Holocaust in *Crowds and Power* are among its weakest parts. Canetti maintains that the mass degradation and destruction of Jews in the 1940s was a symbolic compensation for the mass degradation of currency in the German inflation of the 1920s. The millions of dehumanized victims corresponded to the millions of marks suddenly required for every transaction. This seems hardly more than a conceit. Elsewhere in the book, without mentioning the Holocaust, Canetti reflects on the covert satisfaction and sense of power felt by the survivor as he wanders through a cemetery among the graves of people he has outlived. While there is some unwelcome truth in this reflection, its limitations are shown by the many Holocaust survivors who feel not satisfaction but guilt at outliving so many others.

Whatever the weaknesses of *Crowds and Power*, it also benefited – and this is the second important aspect of Canetti's residence in England – from his contact with English anthropology. Second-hand bookshops yielded much information about events from Imperial history which he could interpret as mass phenomena: the self-inflicted mass starvation of the Xhosas in 1857, or the 'lamenting pack' formed by the Warramunga of Central Australia. His acquaintance with the anthropologist Mary Douglas drew his attention to her study of the Lele people of the Congo, whose relation to the forest supported his theses about mass symbolism. Above all, perhaps, Canetti is indebted to a virtually forgotten book by Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1953). Trotter was the brother-in-law of Ernest Jones, but a devotee of Nietzsche rather than Freud. In his reflections on 'gregariousness and the future of man', Trotter surmises that the human race will presently form a single unit, like the bee-hive. The members of this unit will need to draw on human sensitivity to develop successful modes of intercommunication. Canetti's equivalent to 'intercommunication' is *Verwandlung* (transformation), a major theme in *Crowds and Power*, where it means a kind of empathy based on identification, an alternative to the merely external unity that exists within a crowd.

Besides this intellectual stimulus, Britain not only gave Canetti much to observe but suited his empirical cast of mind. In Canetti's fiction and plays, everything is on the surface. Passions of greed,

hatred and vanity are enacted so openly that any search for latent meaning is futile. *Crowds and Power* works not by argument but by ‘thick description’, especially of rituals (the rain-dance of the Pueblo Indians, the Muharram festival of Shi'a Islam, and many more), which makes explicit the emotions that Canetti takes to be animating them. Canetti's account is interspersed with apodictic statements which in turn link *Crowds and Power* to his favoured genre, the aphorism.

The collections of aphorisms Canetti published in his lifetime, which fill two volumes of his ten-volume collected works, have now been augmented by a group of texts of which Canetti wrote out a fair copy, probably for Marie- Louise von Motesiczky's birthday on October 24 1942. Jeremy Adler's edition includes a facsimile of Canetti's neat handwriting with a facing-page transcription and an afterword which provides an admirable introduction to the art of the aphorism as Canetti practised it. This genre is firmly established in German literature (Lichtenberg, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kraus, Kafka), and Canetti went back further, poring over the hermetic dicta of the Presocratics. A single example, ‘Man is the measure of all animals’, illustrates how Canetti can vary a familiar truism and thus provoke new thoughts about our relation to the animal kingdom. There are also reflections, extending sometimes over two pages, on Chinese poetry, the Old Testament, and various forms of obsession, besides brief evocations of emotional states (‘She lives in a desert of expectation’) and counter-factual fantasies of how things might be: ‘All weapons are abolished and in the next war only biting is allowed’.

The uniform edition of Canetti's works, symbolizing his acceptance as a canonical author, has now been enlarged by an assemblage of his occasional essays and speeches, along with a number of revealing dialogues and interviews that were originally often published in inaccessible places. Although this volume contains an index to the entire series, the edition is wisely called *Werke*, (Works), with no claim to completeness. Besides the two new volumes discussed here, we can be sure that the massif of notebooks in Zurich will yield many more publications, and all those intrigued and troubled by Elias Canetti's complex personality, as well as his works, will look forward with particular eagerness to the release of personal material in 2024.

Ritchie Robertson

Alison Scott-Baumann: Review of *Iris Murdoch: A Reassessment* edited by Anne Rowe (London: Palgrave, 2007, ISBN 0-230-00344-3)

This fine book is offered to us as a large hall of reflection, using Murdoch's own words to frame an interdisciplinary collection of essays. What does the book set out to do? Anne Rowe has brought together a strong cast to write about Murdoch and theology, philosophy and fiction. This, then, is an ambitious project and a much needed one, as Murdoch is famous for using different registers for different purposes; her philosophical writings are separate from her novels, and in interviews she often expressed herself more bluntly about feminism and gender, for example, than in her written texts. Her novels are rich embedded forms of debate on these subjects, yet with varied interpretations possible. These are some of the dilemmas to be faced, and here are some of the ways in which this anthology sets out to discuss them. Her narrative voices are male, so where does this place Murdoch as an emancipated female voice? Murdoch's thought inhabits a complex land where tension is created between philosophy, secular morality and religious belief, so how can we debate Murdoch's ideas such as unselfing? Murdoch denies the philosophical intentions of her novels, and yet they contain rich philosophical conversations that Socrates would have relished, so can we debate the implied presence of Kant, Wittgenstein and other major figures and, if so, how? Anne Rowe and fifteen other Murdoch scholars take up the challenge of separating these themes in order to analyse them rigorously, and yet also develop tentative and interesting juxtapositions of other literary and philosophical figures.

It is valuable at this point to analyse briefly the structure and content of *Iris Murdoch: A Reassessment*, with critical commentary: Peter Conradi initiates the debate masterfully with a thought-provoking comparison of Murdoch and Dickens, the latter analysed through Orwell. Anne Rowe contextualises the chapters within a 'large hall of reflection' with six mirrors: Theology, Philosophy, *The Saint and the Artist*, Literature, Gender, Sexuality and Feminism and Negative Capability. She sets the stakes high: does Murdoch's work flout the distinctions she advocated, through her own interdisciplinary practices and, if so, what implication does that have for her study of human beings in the process of moral transformation?

The Theology section contains debate from three authors about what Stephen Mulhall defines as Murdoch's fusion of philosophy, secular morality and religious belief. Maria Antonaccio finds fresh spiritual ethics in Murdoch's work that offer a challenge to the soulless utilitarianism of modern secular societies. Stephen Mulhall points to Murdoch's admiration for Jesus, and shows how her rejection of the idea of a personal god makes it difficult for her to see the similarities between her ideas and those of Christian doctrine. Mulhall sees opportunities to continue the debate between Christianity and Murdoch's concept of the Good. Saguna Ramanathan employs a Derridean deconstructive approach to show how Murdoch used her knowledge of Eastern religions to deconstruct her experience of Christ: multiple gods and beliefs based on spiritual need, embodied in a range of characters in her novels.

In the Moral Philosophy section, Edith Brugmans addresses Murdoch's belief that it is impossible to live a life without values. Using *An Accidental Man* as an example, Brugmans explores the Kantian elements of good action: it should not be our personal desires, but our respect for the other person that provide the key to our personal value system. Letters and party talk are important mechanisms in the novel; both create possibilities for a form of solipsism that can encourage moral scepticism. Brugmans shows how Murdoch rejects moral scepticism, while also qualifying Kant's idea of the good will; nothing, not even a good will, is good without qualification, but everything has some sort of goodness in it. Samantha Vice's chapter is about the ego and the moral distortions we allow through our desire for consolation and order. She conjures up the risks of attempting to decentre from one's own ego in order to understand another person. In order to explore the idea of the self further, we will need to go beyond neutral concepts of the self. Christopher Mole, like Samantha Vice and Maria Antonaccio in this volume, analyses the famous parable of the mother-in-law and her

daughter-in-law from Murdoch's essay *The Sovereignty of Good*. He also uses *The Nice and the Good* to look at the almost impossible task of striving to be virtuous by really looking at the world around us, a form of decentring and unselfing.

The section on *The Saint and the Artist* revisits the tension between the spiritual and the secular, a tension that Conradi, Antonaccio and others identify as pervasive in Murdoch's work as a philosopher and a novelist. Maria Antonaccio provides a balance between artist and saint that shows how Murdoch's 'anti-puritan puritan' approach inspires asceticism and artistic creativity, not only in her novels, as commonly accepted, but also through her philosophical writings. Bran Nichol develops well a theme he has explored elsewhere, namely that Murdoch's theory of the novel is also a theory of ethics. Here he uses French philosophers (mainly Lyotard, Baudrillard and Barthes) to consider her development of narrative devices for exploring the ways in which her characters often delude themselves into mistaking chance for design. If we believe in forces and coincidences that have deep significance, this can lead us to deny free will and renounce our capacity for good actions.

In the Literature section, four authors analyse Iris Murdoch's influence on the reading public and on other novelists. Nick Turner concisely summarises her rise to fame, her entry to the 'nonce' canon of both academic and popular acclaim and her fading from the public's bookshelves. Yet he shows that her 'moral philosophy of fiction' is still influencing writers such as Toibin, Gale, Smith, Shields and McEwan, and cites such influence as part of Bloom's definition of canonicity. Priscilla Martin focuses on Henry James as a profound influence on Murdoch. Martin uses the comparison to identify an interesting paradox: James's commitment to containing the incalculability of life within neat literary structures is very different from Murdoch's insistence upon reflecting the 'absolute contingency of existence' in her own much more open novel forms. Furthermore, Martin shows how James's comedic tone leads in fact to a dark and tragic world view; whereas Murdoch's tragic plotlines are more often suffused with hope, because characters (and readers) may emerge from them wiser. Alex Ramon addresses the explicit ways in which Carol Shields attributes Murdoch's influence, and the stylistic and thematic resonances that can be detected in Shields's novels. Ramon draws on Dipple's work on Murdoch's use of party talk and letters to create both self-revelation and self-protection, and shows the similarities with Shields's 'multi-voiced' fiction. Anne Rowe explores the 'duet' relationship that she finds between Murdoch's *The Black Prince* and McEwan's *Atonement*: each challenges the idea of literary text and yet simultaneously develops the morality of the novel form. She shows other parallels and creates a vibrant sense of common purpose: both writers struggle with similar issues such as crises of truth, of authorship and of love, in different ways.

The section on Gender, Sexuality and Feminism considers androgyny and bisexuality and the role they play in Murdoch's life and her novels. Tammy Grimshaw draws on Foucault's work and emphasizes the pseudo-pederasty and platonic bisexuality of many relationships in novels such as *The Good Apprentice*. She shows that there is more work to be done on expressions of gender and sexual identity and gives numerous examples in which Murdoch's work can illuminate that work. Altorf uses Le Doeuff's work to reveal inspiring new ways of analysing Murdoch's use of imagery and especially the image of woman. The notion of the *philosophical imaginary* can be applied to Murdoch's rich repertoire of imagery to show how she developed a way in which the reader can literally see 'the idea of woman' differently through her novels.

In the final section entitled 'Negative Capability' we are given a privileged glimpse of Peter Conradi's biographical insights. He explores oedipal and narcissistic elements in Murdoch's life and work and the attendant ambiguities about relationships and sexuality. Conradi deploys Keats' term 'negative capability' (used of Shakespeare) to describe Murdoch's capacity to create characters who seek to understand others compassionately without becoming desperate about the sheer unfinalisability of the task. Rivka Isaacson's chapter provides a good ending, a consideration of the allegorical relationship between the proteins and pathogens that create the havoc that leads to Alzheimer's disease, and the ways in which Murdoch created characters who must choose whether to act usefully or chaotically. Isaacson focuses on *The Word Child* as a novel with particular relevance for understanding the consequences of wrong choices, and the symmetry that resembles that of

Alzheimer's disease, functions in the life of Hilary Burde as a repetition of mistakes with pathological repetition. This book is generally well edited, except perhaps for an over-working of the M and D parable. There are good connections made between, as well as within, chapters. A more detailed index will enhance the second edition and serve to demonstrate just how rich the authors' arguments are in taking account of all six themes, regardless of the theme they are emphasizing.

Iris Murdoch: A Reassessment presents robust, new material, building on excellent work from Bayley, Conradi, Dipple, Dooley, Schweiker, and others, as well as work already done elsewhere by the current authors. How does it achieve this? What makes this anthology special is the way the authors conjure up the real world 'in front of the text' (as Paul Ricoeur expressed the ethical responsibility of both the reader and the text). The work of the reader of Murdoch is a challenge to make sense of the referential potential of her work. We see here with new interdisciplinary material the refreshing delight of engaging with complex plots and characters. Murdoch offered to help us transform our thoughts about life and about ourselves; she wrote about unselfing; she used metaphor, allegory, symbolism and parable and these are approached here with close textual analysis. Ambiguity and ambivalence were close companions for Murdoch, because of the 'surplus of meaning' in life, as Ricoeur described it. If we are to choose well how to think and act, we will benefit from her use of the ambiguity and ambivalence of sexuality and gender, of motive and action, of truth and possibility, of unselfing and the ego, of philosophy and religion and many other phenomena. This text will help us to explore, through her work, as she expressed it in her essay *Against Dryness*, 'a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the capacity of persons'.

Dr Alison Scott-Baumann, University of Gloucester, UK

The Third International Conference on Iris Murdoch: Iris Murdoch: Morality and the Novel, held at Kingston University London, September 2006

Conference Report by Dr Alex Ramon

The third International Iris Murdoch Conference, held at Kingston University on the 15-16 September 2006, once again proved a stimulating and highly enjoyable event which confirmed the healthy state of Murdoch studies and the seemingly inexhaustible range of fresh perspectives on and approaches to her fiction and philosophy. The organisational skills of Anne Rowe and the rest of the Kingston team ensured a smooth-flowing conference and a warm, welcoming atmosphere, as almost one hundred delegates from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the US, Canada, France, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Japan, Egypt, Australia, and Norway, academics and admirers alike, arrived for two days of discussion and debate, as well as an opportunity to explore the ever-expanding archive of Murdoch's books and papers held in the University's Centre for Murdoch Studies.

Once more, the heterogeneity of topics and methodologies made choosing between panels an extremely difficult task: sessions on subjects as diverse as Murdoch and the Gothic, Murdoch's London, Buddhism, The Novelist as Moralist, The Demythologised Christ, Intertextuality, and seminars on individual novels and philosophy texts left participants entirely spoilt for choice. Thus the following remarks should be interpreted not as an exhaustive survey of the conference but simply as a personal and necessarily partial account of what one delegate was able to attend.

In an introductory lecture which beautifully evoked the critique of 'high-mindedness' so central to Murdoch's writing, Peter Conradi emphasised Murdoch's definition of the novel as an essentially comic form, illustrating the implications of her work's 'ambiguous serio-comic play' with delightful anecdotal detail and examples from the fiction. This was followed by Professor William Schweiker's plenary, 'The Moral Fate of Fictive Persons: On Iris Murdoch's Humanism', a dense but lively and accessible examination of the interrelatedness of Murdoch's fiction and philosophy writing. Reading her work as 'a bulwark against the dangers of fantasy and fundamentalism', Schweiker placed Murdoch's philosophy in the context of the current revival of interest in humanism. His perspective was endorsed by a subsequent panel which explored the centrality of concepts of love, respect and compassion to her writing. The afternoon session began with Professor Justin Broackes's plenary, 'Reading *The Sovereignty of Good*,' a rigorous analysis of Murdoch's seminal philosophical text. Later, two sessions dedicated to specific novels – *The Sea*, *The Sea* and *Nuns and Soldiers* – sent delegates back to these classic texts with much to think about and discuss.

The second day of the conference began with Professor Richard Todd's plenary 'What is Jackson's Dilemma?' which offered a thought-provoking reassessment of Murdoch's last novel. Todd's reading strove to extract the text from the narrative of Murdoch's mental deterioration and to present the novel as an experimental work whose 'flaws' may be a more integral part of its design than has been acknowledged. His presentation opened the way for a more general discussion of the intentionality (or otherwise) of Murdoch's 'mistakes'. Murdoch's engagement with issues of gender and sexuality was the subject of one of the following panels, as Sabina Lovibond explored Murdoch's equivocal feminism, Miles Leeson discussed the portrayal of homosexuality in her fiction (linking her work to the novels of Alan Hollinghurst), and Gillian Dooley examined her presentation of male adulterer figures. The enlightening deployment of feminist and queer theory in these papers affirmed delegates' willingness to read and interpret Murdoch's work beyond the parameters advocated by the author herself.

The afternoon gave us Mark Patrick Hederman's 'Iris Murdoch, Morality and the Novel', and surely no plenary in recent memory has elicited so much affectionate laughter from an audience. A

panel dedicated to the reception of Murdoch's work in Spain yielded three clear and compelling papers on issues arising from the philosophy, and an illuminating discussion by Alfonso López of his experience of teaching Murdoch's work to Spanish students (see pages 18-22 of this *Review*). This session in particular left delegates with the heartening sense of 'Murdoch studies' as a truly international community. Throughout, coffee breaks and buffet lunches offered the opportunity for more informal discussion, and ensured that stomachs as well as minds were fully nourished during the two days of the conference.

But it did not end there! On Sunday, delegates had the opportunity to undertake a Murdoch-themed London walk, led by Cheryl Bove. A group of fifteen met up at Murdoch's home tube-station Gloucester Road and walked to Kensington Gardens, making a stop at St. Stephen's Church (site of Hilary Burde's pilgrimage following Clifford Larr's suicide in *A Word Child*, and the church where T.S. Eliot was a warden for twenty-five years), and passing 29 Cornwall Gardens, Murdoch's London address from 1972 until her death. Once in Kensington Gardens, the opportunity to see such 'icons' of her fiction as the statue of Peter Pan and the Two Bears fountain 'in the flesh' proved a moving as well as an enjoyable experience, and one which reaffirmed the centrality of London to Murdoch's literary imagination. This is to be the subject of a forthcoming book by Anne Rowe and Cheryl Bove, which will feature other such Murdoch-themed walks. We look forward to the publication of this, and of course to the next conference. Until 2008!

Dr Alex Ramon, University of Reading, UK

The Third Iris Murdoch Conference: A View from Japan

It was like a dream come true for me, to be able to attend an International Iris Murdoch Conference. I had never expected the chance to do so. I had neither studied abroad nor attended an international conference before. When I received the conference programme by e-mail from Penny Tribe, I found the conference would be open to all Iris Murdoch readers. Though my maps didn't show Kingston, the Kingston University website helped me to locate the venue, a B&B near the university, and also how to get there. Having decided to stay in London for ten days, I flew to the Iris Murdoch Society Conference. It took about twelve hours from Narita to Heathrow by Virgin Atlantic. The world of Iris Murdoch, which was vague in my mind when I arrived, was clarified at Kingston University.

Iris Murdoch's works have continued to enchant me for more than twenty years. In my busy life, reading her books has been tantamount to restoring my own self as if it were a kind of meditation. As a part-time lecturer in English, I teach at a few universities. At Hosei University, where I teach, the annual Murdoch conference of Japan is scheduled to be held this year. I read *The Sandcastle* (1957) and *The Bell* (1958) at first in translation. After 1980 I began to read her works in the original. Her stories were so interesting and absorbing that they didn't allow me to look up any difficult words in a dictionary. Her plots often led me from my usual way of thinking. Characters in her stories were sensitive, eccentric, attractive and immature as well. Their minds, however, were filled with peculiar and comical thoughts. I tried to look into their inner worlds and imagine the world of the novel from each of their points of view. Murdoch's novels appeared different according to different points of view like a kaleidoscope. I felt like a character in the novel or one of the audience in the drama. The story stimulated my imagination all the more. The vivid scenes in her novels changed in accordance with the characters' inner landscapes. Whenever I finished reading one of her novels I felt I had gone through some strange, steady and relieving experience. I was enchanted by her novels. To enjoy her works was most delightful, but to know her was difficult. One moment I felt I was holding her, but the next moment I found it was only a piece of fragility and I forgot the story; nevertheless visual images in her novels stayed firm. All the same Murdoch remained too deep for me.

The conference helped me a lot in understanding her philosophy. I attended all the plenary and four parallel sessions, which I had to choose. I would have liked to have attended all the other sessions and seminars that I was forced to give up. I've read her philosophy, though I cannot say I was able to understand it. The lectures helped me greatly to grasp the frame of Murdoch's moral philosophy. When I heard William Schweiker's lecture, I found that her philosophy was not the same as I had thought it to be. I realised that the background of Christian theory is so different from that of Buddhism that I should not try to understand it by analogy to the Japanese ideas from Zen Buddhism, where Eros is denied and Buddhists control their desire for loving. They dedicate themselves to love, dismissing their ego from their mind. Love without ego exists in their life as an essential part of their thought, where desires are removed. Self exists without ego, though this has no meaning in Christian terms.

At the party after the first day of the conference, like a film freak in the midst of movie stars, I was excited as a fan of Murdoch in Murdochland. Peter Conradi was there and he had given a lecture about her 'Laughing at Pain' that morning, and helped to further my interest in another subject – 'laughing' – as well as philosophy. English jokes are hard for me to understand and 'laughing' is not easy to translate. We Japanese have, however, a tradition of 'laughing' like Kyougen, a comical play in a Noh cycle. On the list of delegates were many names of writers I had read. It was a real delight for me to meet them, and furthermore I was able to talk with participants from all over the world.

I had a happy time on the Iris Murdoch walking tour guided by Cheryl Bove. The landscapes I had been impatient for were waiting for me. I had long thought that London was the city of Dickens, but now London began to show itself in Murdoch. I began to see London through Murdoch's works. London became so full of Murdoch's scenes. I sought the scenes of the novels in the landscape: in Hyde Park, the scene of the dog Anax in *The Green Knight*; The Serpentine and the Peter Pan statue

in *An Accidental Man*. Even stones and leaves reminded me of her novels. Cornwall Gardens, a little park in front of Murdoch's apartment, reminded me of a scene in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. While walking in the park we talked about personal matters, the previous lectures, books and Mark Patrick Hederman, who was as attractive as his speech. I remember a story I heard from a member about 'an episode with Iris': when her philosopher husband and she met at a restaurant for the first time, Iris's first words were 'Do you believe in God?' She said Iris was outstanding. After walking we had lunch at a restaurant near Gloucester Road station, where we celebrated the success of the conference and Anne Rowe's hard work and thanked all the staff for their contribution to the conference. I spent three days in a warm, comfortable atmosphere. I met many kind-hearted people; they inspired me as well as the conference, lectures and speeches.

Otsuki Miharu, Chiba University, Japan

Report on the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies

Acquisition of Iris Murdoch's London Library

Kingston University and the Iris Murdoch Society have now bought the contents of Iris Murdoch's library from her London flat at Cornwall Gardens in Kensington. Murdoch kept a base in London until she died in 1999 and, although this library is much smaller than her Oxford library, which was acquired by Kingston University in 2004, it has several annotated texts that complement the existing one hundred annotated texts in the Oxford library. The annotations in the London library are written in books on education and politics, and will be invaluable to future researchers on Murdoch's work. The London library also contains some items of personal significance to Murdoch. These include the leather-bound inscribed copy of *The Sea, The Sea* presented to her on winning the Booker Prize in 1978; the inscribed first editions of her novels that she had given to her mother; inscribed books from lovers, teachers and friends; her Book of Common Prayer, and the bible inscribed 'with love from Grannie' given to Murdoch when she was ten years old (and with many underlinings in ink). Now that Kingston University holds Murdoch's Oxford Library, her London Library, Peter Conradi's working archive amassed during the writing of Murdoch's official biography, and many important letter-runs, manuscripts, and other documents, the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies has become an unparalleled, world-class source of information for researchers on the life and work of Iris Murdoch.

Archive Report

Between 19 July 2006 and 31 July 2007 there were 77 visits to the Iris Murdoch Archives, including 42 visits during the Murdoch Conference in September 2006. Researchers from outside the UK visited from Australia, Sweden. Norway, Turkey, the USA, Spain and Ireland. Other researchers from the UK, Germany, Taiwan, Brazil, Italy, Greece, Spain and Germany were helped by email correspondence.

Short Reviews and Notices

The following are short reviews of books tangentially related to Murdoch studies

Frances White on *A Life of H.L.A.Hart: The Nightmare and the Noble Dream* by Nicola Lacey (Oxford: OUP, 2004)

This biography of Herbert Hart (1907-1992) is of tangential interest to Murdoch scholars. Hart, who was Jewish, read Classics at New College, Oxford and, after practising as a Barrister (1932-40) and working with MI5, returned to New College to teach philosophy. In 1952 he was elected Professor of Jurisprudence at Oxford. Hart's wife, Jenifer (née Williams), was a colleague of Murdoch's at St Anne's College, but nothing merges from this connection in Lacey's biography. Murdoch is noted only twice in the index, as are Philippa Foot, Mary Warnock and Elizabeth Anscombe – John Bayley not at all.

Hart's complex character, self-doubt, and troubled sense of sexual identity, along with his Jewishness, offer similarities to many such characters in Murdoch's fiction, but nothing in this biography suggests any direct connection between Hart and Murdoch. The main point of interest from the Murdochian angle lies in the portrait Lacey paints of the Oxford 'Scene' during the era when Murdoch and her husband John Bayley were in their prime. This emerges clearly in Stefan Collins's review of *A Life of H.L.A.Hart*: 'we are dealing here with a prize example of an academic class at the apogee of its intellectual confidence and social standing, a case that cries out for exploration in historical and collective terms'. Collins finds 'the most interesting thought one may take away from the narrative is the empowering effect of an academic culture that was socially secure, politically liberal, and intellectually confident […] a small group who set the pace in the subject that had the highest prestige in the university that took its pre-eminence for granted in a society that had an immense accumulation of self-confidence' (The Modern Law Review Limited, 2006, pp.108 & 112). This 'Chinese Box' of layers of sociological and psychological implications could prove illuminating as general background to the academic ambience and philosophical world in which Murdoch lived, and against which she wrote her own philosophy.

Anne Rowe on *Marie-Louise Von Motesiczky 1906-1996* edited by Jeremy Adler and Brigit Sander with contributions by Jill Lloyd, Brigit Sander and Ines Schlenker (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2006)

This sumptuous volume gives an account (in English and German) of the life of the painter Marie-Louise Von Motesiczky and exhibits her work between the years 1920 and 1970. It offers, for the first time, an educated interpretation of the artist's work. Motesiczky had a complex relationship with Elias Canetti that lasted more than twenty years, and by extension with Iris Murdoch and Franz Baermann Steiner. She painted striking portraits of all three (see 'Painting the Author: The Portrait of Iris Murdoch by Marie-Louise Von Motesiczky' by Ines Schlenker in the *Iris Murdoch Newsletter* 15, pp.1-4). This volume was published to mark what would have been Motesiczky's 100th birthday. Amongst the paintings illustrated here is a double portrait of Elias Canetti and Franz Baermann Steiner (in vehement discussion); two portraits of Elias Canetti (each painted from drawings or photographs and memory as he refused to sit for her) and a double portrait of Motesicsky and Canetti. The catalogue also exhibits the portrait that Iris Murdoch commissioned Motesiczky to paint as a

farewell gift to St Anne's on Murdoch's leaving the college in 1963. The painting shows Murdoch 'looking a little dishevelled with an absent, dreamy expression in front of a stormy sea, in which the bow of a ship can be seen'. Murdoch apparently saw the portrait before it was completed. She found it remarkably accurate, noting in her diary on 16 February 1964, 'I think it is wonderful, terrible, so sad and frightening, me with the demons. How did she know?'

Excerpt from 'The Man from Nowhere', by Peter J.Conradi, published in the *Guardian*, 3 February 2007

Concerning the writer H. E. Bates who lived in the same village, from around 1950, as John Bayley's parents in Kent

'When [H.E.Bates] was writing about Pop Larkin in *The Darling Buds of May* series, the youngest son of Bates's friends and neighbours the Bayleys, John, had married Iris Murdoch. The absurdly moth-eaten Brigadier in the Larkin chronicles is based on Murdoch's father-in-law Major Bayley, who liked watching cricket on HE's TV. There is even a dowdy blue-stocking named Iris Snow, "the oddest female [Pop] had ever seen in his life". This parody of Murdoch is painfully funny: she sports school-girl socks, a rough school-girl bob and an air of bloodless surprise, and is given to words like "ossuary" that Pop thinks *très* snob. She experiences difficulties aligning her breasts and is mad about relics, saints, and France itself. She alternates silence with sententious speeches. Bates rewards her francophilia with a French waiter. Murdoch had just won accolades, of a kind that now escaped him, for *The Bell*'.

Arin Fay has published a series of paintings on Writers & Texts which includes a piece depicting Iris Murdoch and Francis Marloe from *The Black Prince*. The work is accompanied by a short essay, both can be found on her website: http://www.arinfay.ca/, under Between the Lines.

Mariette Willensen has an essay, 'Impersonal Love: Murdoch and the Concept of Compassion' published in the forthcoming collection of essays *Mitleid* (*Passion and Compassion*) edited by Ingolf U. Dalferth (Tubingen: Mohr, 2007, ISBN 978-3-16-149430-7). This essay is based on the paper which Wllemsen gave at the Third Iris Murdoch Conference (2006), and although some of the essays in this collection are in German, others, including Willemsen's, are in English. The publishers offer this description of the volume: 'Is compassion an emotion or a virtue? What characterizes a Christian understanding of compassion? What is its relation to the Passion of Christ, to mercy and to love for ones fellow human beings? The authors of this volume examine these issues from the perspective of cultural studies, philosophy and theology. In discussion with the Aristotelian definition of compassion, biblical traditions such as the story of the Good Samaritan and the views of Luther, Nietzsche, Bonhoeffer, Nussbaum, Murdoch, Roberts and Winch, among others, they attempt to delineate the complex landscape of the manifold uses of a controversial concept'.

Iris Murdoch's Holy Fool

The following letter was published in the New York Review of Books (12 April, 2007). It was written by Peter Conradi, in response to an article entitled 'Cracks in the House of Rove' by Jonathan Raban.

To the Editors:

In his recent fine review of Andrew Sullivan's *The Conservative Soul: How We Lost It, How to Get It Back* [*NYR*, 12 April] Jonathan Raban identifies the character of Hugo in Iris Murdoch's first published novel, *Under the Net* (1954), a holy fool, with Sullivan's mentor Michael Oakeshott. Murdoch herself thought she based Hugo on Wittgenstein's pupil Yorick Smythies (as I showed in *Iris Murdoch: A Life*, 2001). Her journals assert this; and when Smythies died in 1982 she even wrote this death into the novel she was then composing, *The Philosopher's Pupil*. Of course the character of Hugo could have composite origins, and the Oakeshott possibility is a novel one that would surely interest Murdoch admirers. Is Raban's source for this identification Sullivan himself?

Peter Conradi
London

Jonathan Raban replies:

I defer to Peter Conradi on this. My only source for suggesting that Hugo was based on Oakeshott is the Michael Oakeshott Association, on whose Web site an extract from *Under the Net* is published, along with the cautious speculation, 'Some of Oakeshott's friends and students believed the character of Hugo in this novel was based on Oakeshott'. Alerted by another reader, I checked the relevant pages of Conradi's biography of Murdoch, which convincingly show that Yorick Smythies is much the more likely candidate, although, as Conradi says, Hugo might be a 'composite', and firmly identifying fictional characters with real people is always a slippery business.

A Panel on Iris Murdoch

A Panel on Iris Murdoch entitled 'Reconstructing Space in Iris Murdoch's Novels' was held at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, on Thursday 22 February, 2007. The panel was organized by Barbara Heusel, on behalf of the Iris Murdoch Society. The papers were: 'Murdoch's N- Game: Pointing Readers to Literary Analysis' (Barbara Heusel, Florida State University); 'Murdoch's Claustrum' (J.Robert Baker, Fairmont State University); 'London Landmarks in the Novels of Iris Murdoch' (Cheryl Bove, Ball State University) and '"An Area of Perpetual Seedy Brouhaha": Soho in *The Black Prince*' (Anne Rowe, Kingston University London).

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that the Iris Murdoch Society presents this first edition of the new *Iris Murdoch Review* which intends to build on the success of the former *Iris Murdoch News Letter***.** The *News Letter* began in July 1987, and the first four issues were edited by Christine Ann Evans who was at Harvard and at Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts. John Burke from the University of Alabama edited issues 5-8 which were published between 1991 and 1994, and Cheryl Bove took over as Editor for issue 9 in 1995. Peter Conradi joined the editorial team in 1996 as European Editor and Anne Rowe joined as Assistant Editor. In 1998 Peter Conradi became Consultant to the *News Letter* and Anne Rowe took over as European Editor with Cheryl Bove remaining as American Editor. In 2005 Professor Avril Horner joined as Consultant and Frances White became Assistant Editor. Cheryl Bove will now retire as American Editor but will remain on the Editorial Board of the *Iris Murdoch Review*. Peter Conradi and Avril Horner continue in their roles as Consultants, Anne Rowe as Editor and Frances White as Assistant Editor.

Thanks are due for the efforts of all those involved in the editing and production of all the past issues of the *News Letter*, but they should go particularly to Cheryl Bove, whose unstinting support and professionalism have been in no small measure responsible for the survival and continuing success of the publication.

Call for Papers: Intertextuality and Interdisciplinarity
Kingston University London, 12 & 13 September 2008

Kingston University is pleased to announce the fourth Iris Murdoch Conference which will be held at Kingston University in 2008. This Conference will celebrate interdisciplinary links to be found in Murdoch's work, for example with philosophy, theology, art, music, drama and poetry. We would also encourage fresh insights into how psychoanalysis and science is represented in her work, and into her changing status in relation to recent shifts in critical theory. Papers on more specific links with individual writers, artists, theorists, thinkers and contemporaries are also welcome. In addition, we encourage papers for panels on specific topics or aspects of individual novels, and on research and teaching interests.
Organizer: Dr Anne Rowe (tel: +44 (0)208 547 2000)

Abstracts of up to 300 words to be sent by 30th May 2008 to: Lisa Hall (tel: +44 (0)20 8547 7853), Iris Murdoch Conference Administrator, Kingston University London, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Penrhyn Road, Kingston, Surrey, KT1 2EE

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To become a member and for subscription rates, contact Penny Tribe
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The Iris Murdoch Review is published on behalf of the Society by Kingston University Press. Kingston University London, is the long-established centre of excellence in the field of Irish Murdoch Studies and is home to the ground-breaking Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies, an unparalleled, world class source of information for researchers on the life and work of Iris Murdoch.

http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/research/Iris_Murdoch/index.shtml