

The Iris Murdoch

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 offers a forum for short articles and reviews and keeps members of the society informed of new publications, symposia and other information that has a bearing on the life and work of Iris Murdoch.

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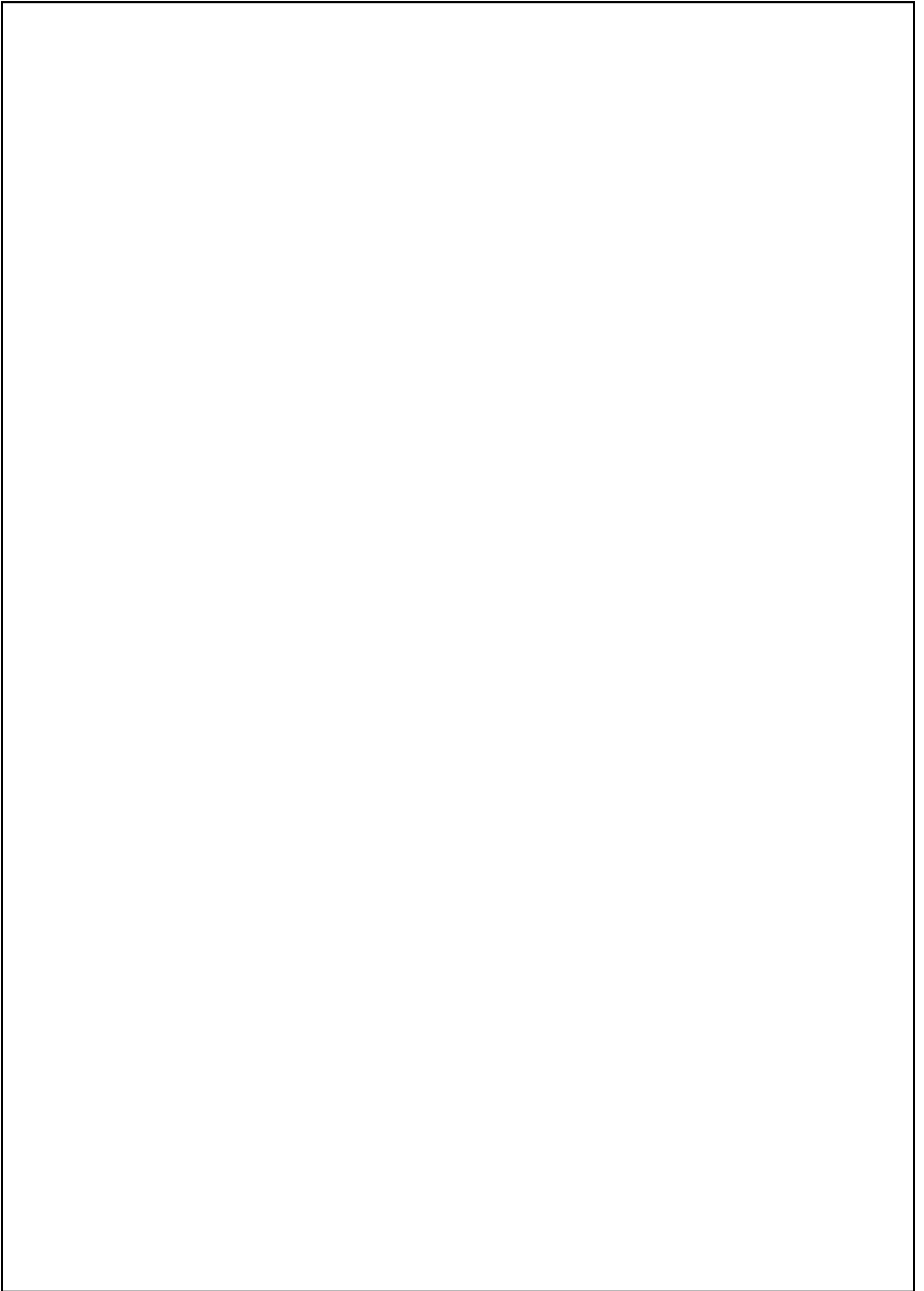
The Iris Murdoch Society actively supports the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies at Kingston University in its acquisition of new material for the Murdoch archives. It has contributed financially towards the purchase of Iris Murdoch's heavily annotated library from her study at her Oxford home, the library from her London flat, the Conradi archives, a number of substantial letter runs and other individual items. 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.

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Foreword: An 'International' Edition of the *Iris Murdoch Review*

2009 marked the 90th anniversary of Murdoch's birth and the 10th anniversary of her death. This second *Iris Murdoch Review* is a celebratory 'International' edition that reflects both the breadth of Murdoch's interest in other cultures and the global nature of research on her work at this time. Her international significance has been clearly evidenced by two factors. First, by conferences dedicated to Iris Murdoch held in 2009 in Turkey and Portugal, and an exhibition on her work held at the University of Barcelona in 2008. Second, by the rapid growth in the international range of the enquiries to the Centre of Iris Murdoch Studies – from America, Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, India, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan and Turkey. Also the critical attention given in this issue to marginal aspects of Murdoch's novels involves them in fresh international cultural and political debates. This attention offers innovative insights into her characters and suggests new cultural significances for the detail of the novels.

Frances White's prize-winning essay¹ on Diaspora is a politicized reading of *The Flight from the Enchanter* that suggests concern on Murdoch's part about the

“The world is just a transit camp”: Diaspora in the Fiction of Iris Murdoch

Diaspora is dispersion, scattering, diffraction. It links with words like adrift, astray, straggling, travelling, and it resonates with losing coherence, throwing into confusion, going off on one's own, wandering, drifting apart, and – further down the scale of dissolution – with disintegrating, dissolving, decaying, decomposing, disembodying, disordering, defeating.¹ This is a catalogue of disconnection and destruction. Such diaspora begins as an external, structural, social occurrence – the diaspora of the Jews or the Irish. But when the links which attach people to their societies are weakened or

Murdoch, like Weil, perceives the devastating effects of diaspora, which can either destroy

apply for an ordinary Ministry of Labour permit, or else ask for naturalization.
[...] [They are on probation] [o]nly in the sense that their permission to be here
at all depends on their work permit. But in fact on

had watched and waited while uniformed men examined her papers; the long

The last words about Nina are that '[s]he was pecul

'Of Jackson's past nothing was said, "A strange kind of human being," Owen had called him' (p. 245). Displacement in the world has become an ontological and metaphysical state in Murdoch's imagination: marginalization has taken centre place. Conradi comments,

Refugees play a significant role in Iris's imaginative universe and fiction alike, displacement hereafter a spiritual as well as a political condition. [...] On being criticized in 1957 for portraying characters in her first two published novels who are misfits, oddities, exiles or displaced, all with something of the refugee about them, Iris replied that 'we are not so comfortable in society as our grandfathers were. Society itself has become problematic and unreliable. So it is that the person who is literally an exile, the refugee, seems an appropriate symbol for the man of the present time. Modern man is not at home, in his society, in his world'. (*IMAL*, p. 239)

And:

In 1982 Iris remarked [...] about refugees in her novels: 'Those are images of suffering, kinds of people that one has met. Such persons are windows through which one looks into terrible worlds'. (*IMAL*, p. 239)

The Flight from the Enchanter was written over half a century ago, but Murdoch's insights into the evils created by diaspora remain contemporary. In the face of the Morecambe Bay cocklepickers, English society seems no more to bother its head about the plight of immigrant workers now than it did then, and in view of the numbers of refugees, exiles and displaced persons in every part of the world in the twenty-first century, Murdoch's critique of political attitudes, and analysis of the attention to the individual which is the chief moral

Dilemmas of Difference: The Polish Figure and the Moral World in Iris Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers*

Dilemmas of difference are central to Iris Murdoch's work and, in *Nuns and Soldiers*,¹ the very

Having met the four main characters in the sickroom

The Count's sacrifices and his 'unselfing' (which engenders spiritual progress) are on a similar moral if not spiritual level: his deferring his courtship of Gertrude for a year out of respect for her mourning; his hiding his disappointment on her remarriage; his despair at losing her; his decision to exile himself to Ireland and even his welcoming of assassination by the IRA in a final self-sacrifice for love. Throughout, self-interest is sacrificed to principles of honourable, predictable conduct and loyal duty. The last part of the novel centres on integration (into society, a group, a married couple), whether into the material and social level or alternatively into an ideological consensus (political, religious or spiritual). Tim and Daisy are both reintegrated into the real world of money and means, renouncing their hand-to-mouth existence. Gertrude is re-integrated into the happily married state. Anne, on realizing the Count's continuing love for Gertrude, decides to emigrate to America, join a community and, through a drastic 'unselfing', aim for union with her own personal Christ.

The Count, the most un-integrated socially of the characters who, in his forties, realizes that his Polish identity is ineradicable, longs most for integration and acceptance. But if, in the end, the Count achieves closer integration into the group of English friends, this is because Gertrude generously (according to some critics), or selfishly (according to others),¹¹ insists that he stays in London, close to her and her new husband, on terms of intimate, if platonic, friendship. The Count agrees to continue as devoted courtier and counsellor. He will at least matter to Gertrude and her husband, who both need his moral support. The Count is finally seen to be satisfied with the mild half-happiness of a secondary role, and perhaps becomes at last a more significant and even sympathetic figure, if not a fully empowered one. Nor is he one of the more convincingly realized of the characters in Murdoch's fiction.

For, on a factual level, many details about the Count lack accuracy, and to those, like this writer, who know anything about Poland or Polish émigrés to England during and after World War II, some are plainly wrong. The Count's antecedents are so unusual as to be improbable, while some assertions describing him verge on the impossible. Is Murdoch using artistic license and, mischievously po-faced, choosing such improbabilities on purpose to play on her own and her readers' ignorance of things Polish? Or has she, dare I suggest, failed in her home-work? Or does she *want*, as she puts it (p. 6), for the figure of the foreigner to be a 'conceptual muddle'? One point she makes does accurately strike home: the Count's suffering from the general ignorance of his acquaintance as regards his fatherland, his feeling invisible and shorn of identity, his disappointment when, after a visit to Poland (in the post-Stalinist era), no-one of his acquaintance shows interest in his trip (pp. 12-13). Nonetheless, I will point out the improbabilities, inaccuracies and mistakes about Poland and the Poles which mar, without entirely spoiling, the figure of the Count.

For instance, with a name like Wojciech Szczepa ski, his being a British civil servant in the Home Office seems unlikely. For years after the War, even British subjects were barred from becoming civil servants unless both parents, even grand-parents, were British-born. The Count's father is a Polish *émigré*, a Marxist who fled Stalin's purges of the Polish Communist Party *before the war*. Said to have been born in England in about 1938 (p. 8), the Count grows up rejecting the Polishness of his parents by refusing to learn his native language (p. 10). After his father's death in 1969 and the earlier, and even more traumatic, death of his brother, the Count tries to learn Polish, but his efforts are so inept that they are laughed at by his mother (p. 12). This detail can shock a Polish reader who knows how seriously the *émigré* Poles took their

¹¹ Graham Hough finds Gertrude 'charming', her charm 'compact of ambiguities', while A. S. Byatt thinks Gertrude 'enslaves' her admirers. See footnote 2.

language and how they, in some cases, forced their children to speak it once it had been learnt in infancy.¹²

Nevertheless, when we meet the Count in his bachelor flat in 1978 (marked by the election of the Polish Pope), listening to the radio as a distraction from pining for Gertrude, he is not at all English-thinking (we ignore his schooling) but spends much time aching over the plight of Poland and the Poles, not so much as *émigrés* but as defeated soldiers, who lost the war, their country and even their capital, Warsaw, in the abortive, heroic attempt of the Warsaw Rising. The most damning error the author makes or editors let pass (p. 9) is about the Warsaw Rising, stated to have begun on the 1st September 1944 instead of the real date of 1st August 1944, and to have lasted five weeks and not the two full months of its actual continuance.¹³ The other historical error is about the Count's father, at the War's start, joining the Polish Air Force under Polish command (p. 10), whereas the Polish Air Force was, in fact, under *British* command, enabling Polish pilots to fight in the Battle of Britain and win renown, if not complete recognition.¹⁴

Furthermore, Murdoch makes her Polish *émigré* almost impossibly patriotic: if he was born in England and rejected Polishness, why so much anguish? How could his father evoke his country's fate if he knew little English and the son little Polish? More plausibly, the Count might, as did other real-life *émigré* Poles of his generation, have tried to escape his tragic heritage by changing his name, getting a well-paid job in a practical profession like engineering, and determinedly marrying an English wife, possibly a nursing lady (like the Irish immigrant, Bernard Shaw) or a lady helpfully typing his manuscripts (like the anglicized Pole, Josef Conrad).

Certain reasons for Murdoch's fictional choices could be suggested. As a member of the Communist Party in her youth, she would have found a more typical *émigré* Pole of right wing political persuasion unsympathetic, and therefore made her Polish figure descend from idealistic Marxists (not, significantly, Communists) rather than from idealistic Nationalists.

political emigrations of the nineteenth century. Yet the Count's relations with Poland and fellow Poles are sparse, neglected in favour of his role as courtly lover.

Murdoch's links to Poles and the Polish were possibly neither close nor wide. No

Italian Influences in the Novels of Iris Murdoch

Iris Murdoch's interest in Italy and things Italian was probably kindled by her friendship with the eminent Italian scholar Arnaldo Momigliano, who became professor of Ancient History at University College, London in 1951, and who instigated Murdoch's lifelong love for the Italian language and for the Florentine poet, Dante.¹ Together they read the *Divine Comedy* in Italian and together they travelled to Italy in 1952, 1953 and 1955.² She subsequently travelled to Italy with John Bayley on lecture tours and on one occasion read a paper in Italian.³ A variety of Italian settings and references to Italian language, literature and art infiltrate Murdoch's novels, and these details add colour and texture not only to their environments, expressing their individual tone, but also help to illustrate the emotional conditions of their characters and subtly reinforce each novel's themes.

Murdoch was always very modest about her linguistic skills, but in *The Nice and the Good* (1968), a novel which explores different forms of love, she draws on her knowledge of Italian and Latin to indicate the force of sexual desire experienced by John Ducane, a civil servant who studies Roman law. He quotes a couplet from the poetry of Propertius, '*Quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes: / non satis est ullo tempore longus amor*' and comments on the strength of the Latin *amor* as opposed to the English *love*.

Baffin's immaturity is underlined by the fact that Bradley Pearson considers her too young to read Dante. He warns her particularly against reading the *Comedy* with the justification that it requires a commentary, adding, 'if not read in Italian, this great work seems not only incomprehensible but repulsive'.¹⁰ *The Bell* is full of references to Dante. Italy is evoked by the train journey with which the novel commences, which in turn mirrors a former train journey through Italy made by the estranged couple, Dora and Paul Greenfield. Dora had been too unhappy then to appreciate the Italian scenery, perceiving Italy as 'full of barren lands made invisible by the sun, and poor starving cats driven away from expensive restaurants by waiters with flapping napkins'.¹¹ Dora is now travelling to rejoin Paul at Imber Court, an English Palladian house set beside an Abbey in spacious parkland with a lake and rivers. The structure of this setting consists of a series of concentric circles, similar to that of Dante's *Inferno* and the name Imber appears to be derived from the Latin *umbra* and the Italian *ombra* indicating that the inmates are merely shades ferried to and fro by Michael Meade or Toby Gashe. Dora, who will undergo trial by water, perceives even the poppies as 'ghostly'. At the close of the story, after the suicide of Nick Fawley, Michael 'did not want for a single moment to forget

Richard Biranne which had been wrecked by Richard's lecherous nature. Paula calls the Bronzino which her husband had defined as 'a real piece of pornography', 'Richard's special

Italy is Murdoch's reward to happy lovers and Martin will not find happiness with Honor Klein, who warns him that their love has nothing to do with happiness (p. 252). In *An Unofficial Rose*, Randall Peronett tries enjoying 'la dolce vita' in Rome with his mistress, Lindsay Rimmer, but the fact that she is less familiar than he would have wished with the works of the great Italian painters is possibly a sign that she will disappoint him in other ways.

The Italian cities which particularly interest Murdoch, Rome, Venice and Florence, are situated in 'a world elsewhere' in the words of Muriel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels* (p. 230). The novel takes place in London, where thick fog renders the atmosphere more sinister and mysterious. Muriel would have liked to escape to San Remo, where, even in winter, she hopes to see the sun, but, like the other characters in this gloomy novel, she remains confined to her own sunless world. Similarly, one of Hilary's many abortive plans in *A Word Child* is to 'educate Crystal and take her to Venice and make her laugh with happiness' (p. 233). In *The Book and the Brotherhood*

Netsuke in Iris Murdoch's Novels

Iris Murdoch paid three visits to Japan during her lifetime (in 1969, 1975 and 1993), which indicates both her popularity among the Japanese reading public and her personal interest in this country. ¹ Peter Conradi confirms that Murdoch's attachment to *The Tale of Genji* led her to visit an Abbot at Ishiyamadera in Shiga prefecture during her 1975 visit.² Murdoch's love for this tale is mentioned also by John Bayley: '[Tolkien and] Lady Murasaki had been inhabitants of her mind',³ and it is well-known that Murdoch borrowed some scenes from this tale in the creation of a few of her own works.⁴

The Tale of Genji, however, is by no means Murdoch's only source of fascination with Japan. When Kingston University acquired Murdoch's Oxford library and opened the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies in 2004, a surprising number of books about Japanese history and culture were to be found there. These include five books by Yukio Mishima, two books on netsuke, two books on Japanese folklore, a book on Zen Buddhism, a book on haiku, a book by Musashi Miyamoto, and a book on Japanese sociology. These books suggest a serious interest in this country and offer Japan as a fruitful avenue of enquiry in Murdoch's work.

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whom pieces continually fell as off a moulting bird' (p. 93).

These ubiquitous animal images are strengthened by frequent mention of animals in conversation. The references in Mischa's speech have particular significance because they emerge in an abrupt and uncanny way:

'I saw a sad thing as I was coming along', said Mischa.

'What was that?' asked Rainborough.

'A bird with only one foot', said Mischa. 'How would it manage with only one foot to hold on to a branch in a storm?'

Rainborough neither knew nor cared. He was beginning already to have that uncanny feeling which he remembered having had so often in the past during conversations with Mischa. He never knew how to take Mischa's remarks. (p. 131)

At another time Mischa starts unexpectedly to confide a childhood memory while looking through pictures of the place where he grew up. He speaks of the extremely short lives of newborn chickens given to the children as prizes in the fair every year. His eyes fill with tears as he recalls his sadness as a small child when the little chicken died only a day or two later. In the same tone of love and pity, however, he abruptly confesses the next moment that it was after this experience that he started to kill small animals:

'I was so sorry for them,' said Mischa. 'They were so defenceless. Anything could hurt them. I couldn't – stand it'. Mischa's voice became almost inaudible.

'Someone gave me a little kitten once,' he said, 'and I killed it.'

[...] 'So poor and defenceless', Mischa murmured. 'That was the only way to

h(S)-4(o), h(S37)-2()-60(t)-2(o)126 save -601(i)-2(t) S(-601(i)-8ve)4(-608s)-1(s)-1(.)-70(If')3(-160(t)-2(f

collection serves as an indicator that he is the 'god' of animals and thus, by extension, women. His netsuke collection is Mischa's world in miniature.

Finally and most importantly, there is a magical power in netsuke itself, which works to reinforce the energy already surrounding Mischa. When Annette asks Mischa, 'Was it magic?' the answer is, 'No, or only in the way in which magic can be part of ordinary life' (p. 192). Mischa apparently knows that netsuke was both a utilitarian tool and a talisman for Japanese people.¹⁰ Murdoch believed that the renewal and continuation of Christian religion could only be realized by releasing God and Christ from supernatural myths that many contemporary people have difficulty in believing.¹¹ In this sense, the Japanese, who prayed for everyday luck, not to the transcendental God beyond their reach but rather to the netsuke under their sleeves, were people who understood a demytho

such a deep scar in George's heart that he has since led a destructive life. It is Stella McCaffrey, George's intelligent Jewish wife, who owns the netsuke in *The Philosopher's Pupil*. Shortly after being almost killed by George in the opening scene of the novel, Stella disappears. The presence and significance of netsuke are paradoxically conveyed by their absence:

Stella had, some time ago, moved into her own room the little collection of Japanese netsuke, gifts from her father, which had once stood upon the sitting-room mantelpiece. She had ranged them upon the white window-sill facing the end of her bed. George burst in with this hammer, eagerly anticipating the work of destruction. But the window-sill was bare. He looked about the room, opened the drawers: gone. The little gaggle of ivory men and animals had disappeared. Stella must have come, foreseeing his rage, and taken them away. [...] George felt a pang of jealous misery and frustration. (pp. 139-40)

It is clear Stella has already withdrawn her netsu

The *Karasu Tengu* (half-bird and half-human mountain deity) emerging from an egg

think that this would be rather dull and of course they are anxious to startle their friends by writing something rather odd, and also they imagine that it's more original to write about something rather odd. I think the artist that has worked for a long time in his craft is less concerned with any desire to shock or any desire to search for oddities. He can find plenty of oddities without looking for them.²²

As her writing career matured, monstrous figures such as blue-eyed and brown-eyed men and supernatural labyrinth-like houses disappeared from her novels. Probably netsuke, a little oriental magic merged in everyday life, appealed to Murdoch earlier as an effective symbol for certain themes. But it is also a positive sign of how everyday objects can be religious, and a negative sign of how people are vulnerable to the power of false gods.

John Bayley wrote in a letter to the author that '[Murdoch] was interested, but not greatly' in netsuke, and he informed me that 'she had given all [her netsuke] away to friends (each as a gift gesture) by the time she became seriously ill, & before she died'.²³ I think these words are proof of her great love and interest in netsuke. Netsuke were treasured by Stella because they were 'tokens of her father's love', and Benet never forgot that his netsuke had been given to him by a friend, long ago (p. 140). An act of netsuke giving was special for Murdoch, because it was a token of her love. Netsuke, a small oriental magic, , a13(,)-1en -120]TJ4 nta smam

**‘It was badly done, indeed, Bradley’: Iris Murdoch, Jane Austen and the
Novelist as Moralist**

Literary analysis is, amongst other things, a matter of comparison. How great is a writer? What are they doing? Are they reactionary or revolutionary? These are questions that can be

qualifications, undergo a succession of tests, and are finally rewarded ...⁴

There is, of course, a great deal that is different about Austen and Murdoch. Murdoch is a very twentieth-century novelist: her work is European, influenced by existentialism, blackly comic, inherently sexual. Richly various, it embraces gothic and surreal incident and plot; postmodern and metafictional devices, operatic, and even soap-operatic, effects. Austen, on the other hand, although publishing much of her work in the second decade of the nineteenth century, is a very eighteenth-century writer: her style is often Johnsonian, her subject matter apparently small and tightly controlled: for Janeites these are novels of the parlour, romantic comedies. There is an argument for Murdoch's novels occupying the 'masculine' side of literature through their engagement with the traditionally masculine discourse of philosophy, their closeness to the 'thriller', and their first-person male narrators. By contrast, on the surface at least, Austen's fiction can be read as romance, the stereotypically female domain, and as having given birth to an industry of escapist Regency entertainment.

The strength of Austen's work, however, is its ability successfully to marry psychological realism and romance within a closely observed economic and material context. In Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good*, the large cast, the depiction of consciousness, and the comic ending, create what is, in formal terms, an 'Austenian' as well as a Shakespearean novel. As Peter Conradi has noted, Murdoch wrote within the same tradition as Austen: both novelists focus on an apparently limited world and its manners, where the arrival of an outsider can disrupt a 'court'.⁵ By the end, Murdoch's joyously over-formal ending – where the dog goes off with the cat – highlights her awareness of the close she is obliged to make. Austen speaks similarly at the end of *Northanger Abbey*:

The anxiety [...] can hardly extend, I fear, to the b

owe much to Austen, as well as to the Gothic tradition, and, it might be argued, Murdoch could not have written them if *Mansfield Park* had not been written.

Both writers also believed that fiction was important and were unashamed in their claims for its worth. Both use their novels to self-referentially comment on the status of the form. Here is Austen, famously, in *Northanger Abbey*:

‘Oh! It is only a novel!’ replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference, or momentary shame. ‘It is only *Cecilia*, or *Camilla*, or *Belinda*’; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language. (p. 58)

While here we have Anne Cavidge in *Nuns and Soldiers*:

Anne had been reading *Little Dorrit*, it was amazing, it was so crammed and chaotic, and yet so touching, a kind of miracle, a strangely naked display of feeling, and full of profound ideas, yet one felt it was all so true!⁸

The uniting idea here is that of *truth*: the novel for both Jane Austen and Iris Murdoch is a place for humour, for entertainment, but also for enlightenment as to human nature.

What emerges through such comparisons is the underpinning of a shared moral framework which unites these two seemingly very different authors. Although by no means a philosopher, in her fiction Austen mirrors and contributes to intellectual change in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She followed Locke and the empiricists and, in doing so, wrote in the wake of the decline of absolutisms and metaphysical certainties. Kant’s questioning of rationalism destabilised the ability to rely upon previously assumed truths beyond the realm of experience. In the wake of the rise of individualism and the beginnings of libertarian thinking it seemed that each individual must make their way, through education and discovery, to be fit to take up a place as wife, mother, or patriarch. There was no question of abolishing the old systems, but that is not to say that there did not need to be *improvement*. The novels propound an ethic of kindness and charity, of duty to one’s kin, no matter how irritating they may be. A model of goodness might be Mr Knightley, with his gifts of apples and pork to the Bates. Yet Austen is willing to admit that living like this, and obeying the rules, as Elinor does in *Sense and Sensibility*, can be exhausting: Marianne’s life can seem a much more attractive alternative. Once again, of the two sisters, is one nice, and one good? Which is the most appropriate virtue? *Sense and Sensibility* is thus a moral investigation, in the same way that the quietness of Harriet is contrasted with the allure of Emily in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, and the self-dramatization of Edward is set against the apparent passivity of white, formless Stuart in *The Good Apprentice*. Who really is the good apprentice? Murdoch wants us to ponder this, but plants a firm clue. At the end of the novel, Stuart, a kind of modern Fanny Price, is reading Austen’s *Mansfield Park*. Both Murdoch and Austen are aware that virtue and goodness, while necessary, are not always very interesting, and that dynamism and energy can have understandable allure.

8

An Unofficial Rose, like *The Nice and the Good*, is a book with debts to Austen. A.S. Byatt has suggested that it springs from Lionel Trilling's essay on *Mansfield Park* which sees Fanny Price as part of a tradition of suffering heroines.⁹ This is a novel where young Miranda is given a set of Austen novels and, significantly, fails to engage with them, just as Gertrude does not get on very well with her reading of Austen in *Nuns and Soldiers*. It contrasts the virtue of Ann Peronett with the wit and sparkle of characters like Emma Sands and Lindsay Rimmer. *Mansfield Park*

For more information, visit <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199561244.001.0001>

I Shall Bear Witness: H.G. Adler and the Holocaust - Kings College Library Bequest

‘One of the great intellectual scandals of our time,’ wrote the Czech-born Professor of German at Yale, Peter Demetz, ‘is that the important books of novelist, poet and Holocaust survivor H.G. Adler, both the personal ones and those in search of historical truth, have yet to be translated into English [...] I see Adler in the Shoah as a companion to Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel’.¹ This scandal – highlighted by Demetz but uncomfortably familiar to many others – is about to be corrected.

Adler died in 1988 in relative obscurity in England, but is now increasingly recognized as a founder of Holocaust scholarship.

Theresienstadt 1941-45: Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft, an account of a single camp, published in German in 1955, will finally be read by a wider audience. At the same time, one of his most significant novels, *The Face of an Involuntary Community*,

Hans Guenther, who lived in Bohemia and Moravia respectively, describes how assimilated Jews were torn from their Judaic faith. His memoirs were Austrian and overlapped with his time at the University and gained attention but was prevented by an unsuccessful attempt to publish. Friends already in 1941 to a labour camp. In 1942 he was deported to his parents.

Almost as significant as his writing, both reading and writing.

¹ Robert Fine and Charles Turner eds., *Social Theory After the Holocaust* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

² Editor's note: H.G. Adler was a childhood friend of Franz Steiner. Adler comforted Murdoch in November 1952 after Steiner's death. He told her 'you loved him and one day of love tells you more than years of friendship'. (Peter Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* [London: HarperCollins, 2001], p. 339.)

³ *The Face of an Involuntary Community : History, Sociology and Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁴ H.G. Adler, *The Journey*, trans. by Peter Filkins (London: Random House, 2008).

⁵ The H.G. Adler Collection at King's College, London can be consulted at:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/iss/library/spec/collections/indiv/>

⁶ All quotations from Jeremy Adler are taken from a conversation with the author.

Homer with him. This ability to give artistic expression to his experiences was a key factor in his survival. He said later that, although at first he had not expected to survive, he decided that, if he did, he wanted 'to represent it in two different ways. I wanted to explore it in a scholarly manner and so separate it from myself completely, a

Der Kaiser Von Atlantis, written by his friend Viktor Ullman, which was given to him after Ullman's death in the camps. But in 1947, with the onset of communism, Adler fled to London and there resumed contact with former friends including the sculptress Bettina Gross, whose mother he had seen shortly before her death in Auschwitz. Bettina Gross became Adler's second wife.

One of the most poignant personal pieces to have survived, on show recently at King's but part of a private collection, is a much folded pencilled note on a scrap of paper from Gertrud, offering him food. The rest of the archive comprises 1,100 books, pamphlets and journals – a wide range of material including one exceptional rarity, *Bilder Aus Theresienstadt*, a picture book containing eighteen hand coloured lithographs by the Dutch artist and fellow prisoner, Jo Spier. This book, grimly reminiscent of a holiday souvenir album, was produced in an edition of ten copies, probably as a propaganda exercise for the Red Cross inspection visit to the camp in 1944. Only two other examples are known to survive, neither of them in the UK. It is not hard to imagine the pain involved in producing such a bogusly beautiful work of art which depicted life in Theresienstadt with its camp orchestra, sham shop facades, its own money and coffee shop. Yet after the war Spier faced opprobrium for having produced this.

Another key document is *Der Anti-Nazi*, a booklet containing summaries of Nazi policies and ideology along with counter-arguments to be used against them. This was published on fragile pre-war paper as a collection of loose leaves in a cardboard portfolio intended for ease of access during public meetings where a whole book such as this was banned and anyone found with such an item risked serious punishment. Restoration of this one extraordinary item, finally inserting each sheet in a Melanex pocket, cost £300.

Jeremy Adler recalled that he was 4 or 5 when he first saw some of the items in his father's library. 'I remember pulling down a book and looking at these ghastly photographs. It was part of my earliest consciousness. My parents never attempted to suppress or deny anything,' he tells me. 'With my father writing seventeen or eighteen hours a day the camps were a constant presence in my life. My father referred to them as *'die Boese Zeit'* (evil times).'

Although the Adlers had little money, Jeremy insists that his parents shielded him from

sentimentalised. The cultural gap was, for the English at this time, impossible to bridge. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that others used his carefully researched material – and in those pre-Google days that involved many hours of searching – in a more accessible way. For example W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) freely plundered the more difficult, older volume.

The same determination to document was echoed by H.G. Adler's second wife's mother, who packed up the family possessions and sent them to England in advance of her own transportation to and death in the camps. Jeremy, an only child currently writing a long novel himself, now has the weight of guardianship of these items too on his shoulders. 'It's a question of preserving the heritage of a whole group of people and the memory of those people,' says Jeremy. 'My father gave a name, a soul and a spirit to what would otherwise remain a number'. How did Adler senior avoid bitterness? I am not, of course, the first to ask but Jeremy Adler takes his time to answer the quest

**Priscilla Martin: Review of *An Iris Murdoch Chronology* by
Valerie Purton (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) pp.ix+256 £55**

Until Palgrave launched their series of Chronologies I had supposed the term to mean a skeletal list of events and publications at the beginning of a biography or critical work. Valerie Purton, who has also published a Coleridge chronology, offers much more in her volume on Iris Murdoch. She provides all the factual information yet available to her for each year, month and day of Murdoch's life. Sometimes this information is apparently trivial. One entry for January 1959 records, 'IM stays overnight in Oxford after teaching', rather than returning home to Steeple Aston. (Perhaps I am missing a sub-text.) The daily programme for the Bayleys' 1975 British Council visit to Japan is given in full, including, twice, '(Sun) Rest day.' Sometimes, since Purton includes political events such as war, elections, strikes, demonstrations and terrorist attacks, the information is of major importance.

As Norman Page, General Editor of the series, points out in his Preface, 'most biographies are ill-adapted to serve as works of reference [...] since the biographer is likely to regard his function as the devising of a continuous and readable narrative [...] rather than a bald recital of facts' (p. viii). It will often be quicker and more convenient to dip into this detailed kind of chronology simply to find out what was happening when. One might add that the biographer ideally organizes his or her account as much by theme as by chronology but that this patterning can have its own kalpb(t)]TJ 24 (t)-2(t)-hat o a02 0 T5.1852(s)-1()-290-2(on i)-2(s)-1(, o)-f2(

correspondence was involved in her work for the Tyn

Robert J. Baker: Cheryl Bove and Anne Rowe, *Sacred Space, Beloved City: Iris Murdoch's London* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008)

The city has no center other than ourselves.

Orhan Pamuk

Many of Iris Murdoch's readers have sensed that her depictions of London say much about her characters, and Cheryl Bove and Anne Rowe now demonstrate that London was an intricate register of her characters' moral states under Murdoch's abundant, loving regard. Bove and Rowe contend, 'For her, the city has the power to speak to the soul – her own, her characters' and her readers' alike' (p. 1). In Murdoch's hands, London became the locus of her moral and metaphysical interests as well as the setting in all but two of her twenty-six novels. In the end, Murdoch's delight in the city was a delight in the Good.

In announcing their aim, Bove and Rowe write, 'Her novels detail and celebrate London with an acuity which matches that of more celebrated "London writers", such as William Blake, Charles Dickens and Virginia Woolf. This book attempts to redress the balance and establish Murdoch amongst their ranks, because her plots thrive equally on the city: its buildings, icons, pubs, river and most of all, its people' (p. 1). While Blake and Dickens often focus on the alienation and corruptions that were among the byproducts of urbanization and industrialization, Murdoch concentrates largely on groups of friends in middle-class settings. Murdoch does know something of the underside of urban life, as she demonstrates in *Henry and Cato* and in her own life. Bove and Rowe observe, 'In London she intensified her experience of life, fostering morally dubious relationships so as to understand the darker side of humanity, her own as well as others', which informs her novels' (p. 6). Unlike Blake and Dickens – or even Maugham, who sets his first novel in the slums of Lambeth and whose characters find relief only in the idyll of an excursion into the country – Murdoch tends to rejoice in the city and to take deep pleasure in the streets, buildings, the River, and even the furnishings of the city's houses.

Bove and Rowe also offer an array of astonishing insights and glimpses into the world that Murdoch knew and delighted in. They show along the way that London, like art, was a vertex by which one could come to the moral awareness that Murdoch championed in her philosophy and her fiction. In this, London became not only Murdoch's beloved city but also a sacred space, one in which her characters and her readers could learn to be attentive to the otherness of reality and, so, undertake the unending pilgrimage toward the Good. As Bove and Rowe point out, 'Her London settings influence her characters subconsciously and serve as spiritual resting places, and landmarks, if they are given proper attention, can alert characters to an understanding of what lies within themselves' (p. 2). They go on to argue that readers' absorption into the beloved spaces Murdoch selects as her settings allows them, like the characters, to enter into the sacredness of the city – and of reading.

Sacred Space, Beloved City begins with a preface by Murdoch's biographer, Peter Conradi, and an introduction by the authors. The six chapters, each of which begins with a quotation from Murdoch's novels, take up in turn the City of London, a series of buildings, the Post Office Tower, Frampton's Peter Pan statue, and the River Thames. The chapters are each divided into two parts – a critical essay that traces Murdoch's sense of a particular area or feature of London followed by a guided walk through that area of the city. The chapters are splendidly illustrated with line drawings by Paul Laseau, which frame and evoke the monuments, buildings, and bridges of London. Several chapters pursue the special interests of Bove and Rowe – the roles that architecture and painting play in Murdoch's imagination. The

walks surely are the result of the walking tours that Bove led for her students and for many Murdochians after the biennial conference. The book is completed with an extensive gazetteer that indexes the London places mentioned in Murdoch's fiction.

The first chapter, 'Architecture and the Built Environment in *Under the Net*,' draws attention to the meticulousness with which Murdoch traces Jake Donaghue's pub crawl, swim in the Thames, and riverside picnic. In his progress, Jake is cognizant of Wren's churches as he moves from pub to pub. Bove and Rowe explain that 'Murdoch equates the secular spaces of the pubs with the sacred spaces of the churches that hover over them' (p. 15); the association, they argue, indicates that the pubs have taken on an ecclesiastical function, providing a space for fellowship and confession. They might go further but

she continued to be drawn to it during her years as a mature writer and thinker. She and her husband often walked to Peter Pan's statue from their nearby Cornwall Gardens flat, and he has said that she was 'very fond' of it. (p. 84)

Using *An Unofficial Rose*, *Word Child*, and *The Good Apprentice*, Bove and Rowe demonstrate that the innocence of Peter Pan constitutes a kind of perversity, particularly when it is found in adults who refuse responsibility or

spaces which enshrine the possibility, as well as the difficulty, of becoming good. Bove and Rowe have done an additional service, for they will donate proceeds from the sale of this volume to the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies at Ki

Sabina Lovibond: Review of *Iris Murdoch's Ethics: A Consideration of her Romantic Vision*, by Megan Lavery (London and New York: Continuum, 2007)

Megan Lavery undertakes to establish a positive connection between the philosophy of Iris Murdoch and the tradition described in this monograph as 'philosophical romanticism', following a collection edited under that title by Nikolas Kompridis (2006). The task is a challenging one, because Murdoch – as Lavery recognizes (p. 75) – is naturally understood as a critic of the romantic tradition, whose damaging after-effects she sees reflected in the fixation of twentieth-century ethical theory on heroic individual will as the (supposed) source of value. Thus in *The Sovereignty of Good (SG)* 'to be romantic is to take refuge in the exaltation of [...] suffering freedom' (Lavery, p. 77), rather than to confront the more genuinely instructive realities of death and chance; while in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (MGM)* (p. 40, quoted by Lavery, p. 80), Murdoch is still anxious to distance us from 'the drama of the Romantic Movement, as involving the liberation of the individual into an open space wherein to *construct* his morality'; she seeks to respond to 'the Western philosophical tradition's *romantic break* with Plato's theory of truth' (Lavery, *ibid.*).

Lavery is on the track of an interesting, and probably correct, insight in attempting to see past Murdoch's official anti-romantic stance and to connect her thinking with 'romanticism'

responsiveness to their excess [...] Humility is formally similar to irony but without drawing attention to the self' (pp. 61, 62, 63).

It is unfortunate that a claim repeated several times in the course of the book (pp. 7, 37, 57, 66, 74, 88) – indicating, presumably, that Lavery attaches some importance to it – appears to rest on a misunderstanding of the passage in *SG* which is cited in its support. The claim in question is that Murdoch designates Plato and/or Kant as 'the great romantics'. The sole supporting evidence is from *SG* p. 85, where Murdoch writes:

I do not think that any of the great Romantics real

some responsibility for the numerous garbled versions of personal names, especially non-English names, appearing in the Index – e.g. Michelle [*sic*] Le Doeuff, Casper [*sic*] David Friedrich, Kierkegaard [*sic*], McTaggart [*sic*]; and it's *Alison* or *A. E. Denham*, not *Ann* [*sic*] as in the Index and at p.18, and not *D. E.* [*sic*] *Denham* as in the Bibliography.)

To conclude with another worry about the substance of the book, Lavery's affirmation of Murdoch as an implicitly feminist thinker (p. 7) poses some pressing questions about the nature of feminism. She is right to point out (p. 43) that Murdoch has done much to enrich analytical moral philosophy with examples taken from everyday, often female-centred, experience; also right, I dare say, to discern some sexual politics in Murdoch's championship of unassuming, 'invisible' virtue or sainthood in opposition to the 'masculinist, romantic paradigm' (p. 86). Still, feminism can hardly rest content with the observation – however incontrovertible in itself – that the social contribution of women and other 'humble' individuals is undervalued. How, if at all, is the idea of 'using our 8 Td [(eh3n)-10(w)28w a

Nick Turner: Review of Afaf (Effat) Jamil Khogeer, *The Integration of the*

that the 'superficial sentimentalities' are related to the female; and to the idealisation of the efficient housewife. Then again, we should remember that women in Saudi Arabia *are* leading much more restricted lives than Western women, and that leading an intellectual life would often only be possible by the parallel assumption of roles we in the West have come to think of as outdated. It's very much a question of who the book is marketed for, and being read by.

This does take us to the nub of the issue, and my only other complaint, which is that perhaps the book doesn't quite deliver what it promises; I began to feel that Khogeer's heartening enthusiasm was carrying her away, and there was rather too much storytelling and commenting on character, with a great part of the discussion of *The Sea*, *The Sea* focusing on Charles Arrowby, before we got to the women. The central thesis seemed to disappear. It might have been better, perhaps, to lose the subtitle and its reference to women, for the only conclusion Khogeer can really come to based on that is that 'women are the best judges of their own problems' (p. 179), and that Drabble and Murdoch are doing very different things. Rightly, Khogeer points out that Murdoch 'is more concerned with human beings in general without making a distinction between men and women. She believes that individuals are unique and valuable regardless of gender' (p. 181). Now Drabble's novels, particularly the first five, clearly foreground contemporary women's lives in terms of marriage, work and motherhood, so the juxtaposition with Murdoch is a tricky one and needs careful management.

What might have helped the argument is (although it does rather pain me to say it) a strong theoretical line on which to hang the points about gender, and perhaps some use of the wonderfully dubious remarks Murdoch herself made (e.g. 'What's all this about women's studies? Why can't we just have studies?'). Although Khogeer discusses Deborah Johnson's

A few comments on Willemsen's paper. The section on Murdoch's concept of

**Daphne Turner: Review of *Memories of an S.O.E Historian* by M.R.D. Foot
(Pen and Sword, 2008)**

M.R.D. Foot appears in Peter Conradi's biography of Iris Murdoch as someone who knew her at Oxford, had a brief affair with her during the war, and eventually married her flat-mate at Seaforth Place, Philippa Bosanquet. Those who read his *Memories of an S.O.E Historian* will find a lot of interest. It gives an account of his upbringing in an army family: he was taught to shoot and ride; his main father-figures were his grandfather and his grandfather's butler. He was excellently taught at Winchester, served in the army for all six years of the war, ended as an intelligence officer in the SAS, was captured in France and exchanged for a German 'E-boat ace'. He went back to Oxford, taught there and at Manchester, and became an internationally-known historian, specializing in clandestine warfare.

As he tells this, he builds up a picture of the intricately inter-related world of the British Establishment. Even in his account of his ancestry there are spider-webs of association. For example, his great-great-grandmother's sister married Sir Leslie Stephen's brother James, whose daughter married a nephew of Florence Nightingale ... He knows what happened to all his contemporaries at Winchester and follows them into church, politics, the armed services. He knows everyone, and has a fund of anecdotes about many of them. It is a world of rich and poor, a fixed class system, educational privilege, who-you-know, conviction of British superiority - and male. I can think of only one woman in the book who belongs to his public rather than his private life. This is Judith Brown, a Cambridge historian who later held a chair at Oxford and whom Manchester did not want to appoint to a lectureship because she was a woman. M.R.D. Foot saw she 'had to be appointed', and fought for her, and she was.

Would one want such a world back (assuming it has in fact gone)? Perhaps - if one were born both male and privileged. It certainly produced men of admirable qualities, such as M.R.D. Foot, people with courage, conscience, integrity, responsibility, aesthetic sensibility and wide information. At twenty, he was commanding men in war-time and doing it sensitively. He is also aware of the privilege gap and prepared to bridge it. He brought a retired railway porter to dinner at Keble. In Bonn (1948) he gave up a room and generous food in a hotel for an uncomfortable bunker and 900 calories a day with the German students he was about to teach. A less admirable product of the same system was heard to comment, 'Bad business ... Gone native'.

He says specifically that it was not his intention to sketch his private life. But it is not totally ignored. He was sexually bullied at school; his father deserted his mother; he had a brief, unsuccessful affair with Iris Murdoch; he has had three wives and two children; he lost his Oxford job and much prosperity because of divor

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that the Iris Murdoch Society presents this second issue of the newly re-named and re-designed series of *The Iris Murdoch Review* (formerly *Iris Murdoch Newsletter*). It continues to be published by Kingston University Press Ltd. 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. At the time of the first edition of *The Iris Murdoch Review*, Cheryl Bove retired as American Editor but remains on the Editorial Board. Peter Conradi and Avril Horner continue in their roles as Consultants, with Anne Rowe as Editor and Frances White as Assistant Editor. All past editions of the *Iris Murdoch News Letter* and *The Iris Murdoch Review* are available on the website for the Centre of Iris Murdoch Studies.

Thanks are due for the efforts of all those involved in the editing and production of all the past issues of the *News Letter* and the previous edition of *The Iris Murdoch Review*.

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