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‘Literary Incest’:

Intertextuality and Writing the Last Taboo in the Novels of Iris Murdoch

Emma Victoria Miller

A thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Studies

2011

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Declaration

No material in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other University. The work is solely that of the author, Emma Victoria Miller, under the supervision of Professor Patricia Waugh. An excerpt from Chapter Two, in an earlier form, has been published as "'The Mad Man in the Attic': Playing with Gendered Literary Identity as Object and Muse in Iris Murdoch's *The Good Apprentice* and *The Message to the Planet*," Play, spec. issue *Forum* 2 (2008): 1-19. <http://forum.llc.ed.ac.uk/si2/miller.pdf>. An additional excerpt from Chapter Two, in an earlier version, has been published as "Re-reading H.G. Wells' Social Agenda in *Ann-Veronica* through A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book:* Male Fantasy or Feminist Revolutionary?" *The Wellsian* 33 (2010): 72-85.

Statement of Copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

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Abstract

Throughout her literary *oeuvre* Iris Murdoch displayed a preoccupation with the theme of incest, a consideration which has not previously been examined in a full length critical study. Her portrayal of the incest taboo is examined here in relation to incest as an abusive practice, which is the predominant image of the subject throughout her fiction. Examining the changes in scientific and cultural attitudes to incest in the post-war era, this thesis explores Murdoch's literary interaction with these developments and how her writing reflects and challenges the social perspective contemporaneous with her individual works.

The argument is concerned with the relationship between intertextuality and incest in Murdoch's fiction and how she utilises an intertextual approach to confront dominant literary trends within the Western canon, occasioning the reader to reconsider the views presented by well-known literary and cultural narratives and their modes of expression. The examination of other 'texts' is not limited to the written word but to any art object which conveys a culturally recognised narrative and which relates to her presentation of the incest taboo.

Incest was brought to the public forum partly by the second wave of feminism and the revelation of incest abuse coincided with the public recognition of child abuse more generally and thereby occasioned concern over the rights of children. Accordingly, therefore, this thesis focuses on the impact of a history of patriarchal domination on the suppression of women and children, and how this has affected the ability for incest victims to find a means of expression within a language, and therefore a literary culture, defined and designed by others. Murdoch is approached here through her concern with gendered stories and gendered means of communication, not in order to privilege one sex over the other but, anticipating third-wave feminism, employing them as a means to dispense with sexual difference and sexual expectations, in order to reach an androgynous narrative. Such literary concerns can be seen to draw not only from a process of the cultural evolution of narratives, but also out of the wider literary sphere, to affect social change.

Introduction

Iris Murdoch had a prolific writing career, the author of over forty-eight published works of philosophy, literary and social criticism, poetry, drama; and of course twenty-six works of fiction, most of which have received both critical and commercial success. Her novel writing career commenced in 1954 with the publication of *Under the Net,* and reached its conclusion in 1995 with *Jackson's Dilemma*. Although her fiction considers a wide variety of themes and issues, she repeatedly returns to the theme of incest, a consideration that has been well documented, but never thoroughly analysed.[1] Her 1958 novel, *The Bell,* depicts Nick Fawley, who claims he loves his sister, Catherine, "with a Byronic passion",[2] surely referring to Lord Byron's relationship with his half sister Augusta Leigh.[3] Then there is an ostensibly consensual brother and sister incest featured in *A Severed Head* (1961)*;* consanguinity in *The Unicorn* (1963), as well as the possibility of father-daughter abuse; sibling incest in *The Red and the Green* (1965); father-daughter abuse in *The Time of the Angels*; and these are just the ones that feature incest as an overt theme before 1966. Although there is a flirtatious kiss between blood relatives, aunt and nephew, Morgan and Peter, in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), Murdoch does not offer another prolonged and direct treatment of incest in her creative writing until 1983 in *The Philosopher's Pupil,* where John Robert Rozanov is "obsessed" with his granddaughter, Hattie.[4] In the 1980s incest once again becomes a preoccupation in her fiction with the *The Good Apprentice* (1985) featuring numerous cases of potential incest: between an aunt and nephew, a brother and sister, a father and daughter, and incestuous interest between 'affines'.[5] In *The Message to the Planet* (1989), Murdoch once more returned to the possibility of father and daughter incest.[6] However, I believe that the actual occurrences of incest and quasi-incest[7] may far exceed those that are immediately obvious; arguably, there are allusions to incestuous connections of some degree in almost every one of her novels.

Murdoch is by no means an isolated case in her depiction of incest in fiction. Just prior to the Second World War in 1934, F. Scott Fitzgerald published *Tender is the Night,* which used the abuse of Nicole Warren by her father as a catalyst for the events of the plot. Fitzgerald did not present this incident as a singular situation but extended his criticism of the family relations between the Warrens to make an implied critique of contemporary cultural values and social fashions, and the sexualisation of childhood. He does this through the roles of a number of central protagonists, such as Nicole's sister's nickname of 'Baby Warren', and actress Rosemary Hoyt, star of the movie, *Daddy's*

Girl, whose "body hovered delicately on the last edge of childhood – she was almost eighteen; nearly complete, but the dew was still on her".[8] That Fitzgerald's novel targeted the most revered and influential members of North American society - the wealthy, white Warrens, the psychiatrist Dick Diver, and various characters from the Hollywood movie industry - further emphasised the point that this was a prevalent and deeply rooted problem in the modern Western world. Contemporaneous reviewers and later critics have steered away from blaming the incest theme for the book's modest success and Fitzgerald's subsequent disappointment, attributing the rather reserved sales figures to the Depression, the book's structure, and the characterisation of Dick Diver.[9] However, subsequent amendments to the plot which were occasioned by both *Scribner's Magazine* and Hollywood suggest otherwise. Fitzgerald was obliged to make the sexual abuse only a "suggestion" when it was serialised by *Scribner's Magazine;*[10] and he also had to omit the incestuous rape of Nicole, from the Hollywood film adaptation of the novel due to the censorship laws. In the proposed screenplay Nicole's trauma was explained by a horse-riding accident instead of the incestuous rape indicated in the novel.[11]

With the advent of the Second World War, focussing resources on such problematic domestic issues was less of a priority for political leaders than directing them toward the considerable external threat. This does not, however, mean that there was not a significant problem. The end of the war notoriously brought with it the social retrenchment of the Cold War period, a return to recognisable 'family values', and with the reinforcement of the importance of tradition, an emphasis on a stable and recognisable family unit. As Mary Abbott comments in reference to William Beveridge, an economist who worked on the influential Beveridge Report (1944) which led to the Welfare State reforms:

> In the welfare state envisaged by Beveridge, men were to be the breadwinners, bringing home a family wage. [...] 'Be like dad, keep mum', one of the puns designed to remind the wartime population that 'careless talk costs lives', summed up what Beveridge saw as a fact of family life. But a wife was not '"a mere adult dependent": she was a partner whose work was vital but unpaid'. Beveridge had intended to add the new family allowance, a modest contribution to the cost of rearing two or more children, to the father's wage packet. Pressure from women MP's diverted it to the mother's purse, a last minute triumph by the doughty campaigner Eleanor Rathbone (born 1872).[12]

The assertion of this 'perfect' home life, both during and immediately after WWII, can then be seen in the re-enforcement of traditional gender roles which had been disrupted

during the war, as conscription had left many formerly male-dominated professions depleted and women had been obliged to fill the breach. The political concerns about this disruption of gender roles is highlighted by such war-time propaganda as the slogan: "Be like dad, keep mum", a double entendre which highlights the subordinate role of the wife in the home and the superior position of the husband, not just in a financial capacity but also in terms of the implied ownership of his spouse. When the war had ended, women were expected to return to the role of wife and mother so that life could assume a semblance of its imagined pre-war harmony. A simulacrum of such a life existed for a short period of time, creating a social environment that can be compared to the so-called golden era of Englishness, the Victorian period. Just like the Victorians, the English and the North Americans of the 1950s attempted to present a 'respectable' front of a conventional and therefore 'moral' family life. That Eleanor Rathbone was herself a campaigner for women's rights who was nineteen at the death of Queen Victoria,[13] suggests that society had not developed its approach to gender roles and family life so very much since that period. She was still fighting the same battles, and still only making cursory gains. Abbott also states that the Beveridge Report was written in a style which drew upon John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,*[14] a Christian allegory that was published in 1678 and which was referenced repeatedly in the Victorian period by authors such as William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë and Louisa May Alcott. The report that was intended to improve British society in the 1940s was, therefore, making clear its allegiance to a historical era where women and children had few rights and patriarchy assumed all the power. Writing on the United States of America in the 1950s, Linda Nicholson asserts a similar situation where contemporary culture attempted to replicate "the Victorian ideal" of "wife and mother at home" but with the crucial difference that whereas the Victorian woman in this situation often had the benefit of servants to help her with her domestic chores, the American woman was expected to be both "morally and psychologically fulfilled through house-work and child-rearing". She even echoes the phrase of Abbott's given above, writing that in the States "It had long been the case that the ability to *keep* a wife outside the workforce signalled a man's class status"[15] (emphasis mine). What this seemingly 'ideal' return to a bygone era disguised, however, was a network of frustration and abuse, unvoiced because it would disrupt the illusion of post-war satisfaction that many wanted to believe gave them security. The focus of power onto one group of society, the white middle-class and upper-class male, led to the disavowal or dismissal of the problems experienced by his numerous subordinates.

Michael Freeman asserts in *The Moral Status of Children* that "professional interest in child sexual abuse" can be found as early as 1886 but that nothing extensive was done about the problem until the latter part of the twentieth century; and that even in 1953 when the Kinsey reports revealed "that many children had sexual experiences with adults", this seems to have "caused little concern".[16] The Kinsey Reports were the result of two in depth studies on sexual behaviour in the United States of America led by psychologist, Alfred C. Kinsey; the first volume focussing on men was published in 1948, and the second volume on women was released in 1953. The research was unprecedented in terms of the size of the sample of people used as evidence (Volume 1 "was the largest and most detailed work of sexual science ever conducted"[17]) and the number of sexual activities it considered. It was a best-seller, praised for the extensive frame of its findings, but simultaneously criticised as "immoral, perverse and damaging to the reputation of the United States".[18] Joseph E. Davis points out that Kinsey's 1953 study on women's sexual behaviour reported that about 2 to 4 percent said they had experienced "a pre-adolescent 'sexual approach'" by a male family member[19] and "that 24 per cent of their general sample of 4,441 white adult females reported a pre-adolescent contact with an adult (or adolescent at least five years their senior)".[20] Judith Herman concurs with Freeman's assessment of the Kinsey reports, writing that "the finding that grown men frequently permitted themselves liberties with children, [...] made virtually no impact upon the public consciousness, even though the finding was repeatedly confirmed by other investigators." Indeed, as Herman asserts, Kinsey blamed "cultural conditioning" for adverse reactions to such interference, suggesting that it was the reactions of responsible adults to such revelations that 'disturbed' the child more than the act itself.[21] Herman goes on to state that Kinsey and his colleagues "demonstrated a keen sensitivity to the adult offender" and indicated that they were at risk of being accused of offences where none were intended. How Kinsey's group of researchers defined appropriate behaviour, however, is open to dispute.[22]

Freeman goes on to assert that "[a]llegations of sexual abuse were dismissed as children's fantasies"[23] and this may be partly attributable to Sigmund Freud whose denial of the Seduction Theory later led to criticism of his motives, most notably in J.M. Masson's 1984 study, *The Assault on the Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. Freud's Seduction Theory identified the origin of hysteria as sexual abuse in childhood.[24] Gerald N. Izenberg describes how Freud had "defended" the theory for "two years" prior to his letter to Wilhelm Fleiss denouncing it in 1897. Freud stated that he had carried out psychoanalysis in thirteen cases of hysteria and in each one

infantile sexual abuse had occurred in the patient's history. Furthermore he asserted that as the circumstances of the abuse were only given "with the greatest reluctance, and with visible signs of violent distress", and that there were so many similarities between the cases, it was beyond reason that the connections could be coincidental.[25] He did, however, change his position and developed the theory that led to the Oedipus Complex, moving the focus from parental abuse to childhood fantasy. Masson suggested that Freud's retraction of the Seduction Theory had resulted, not from scientific evidence, but from Freud's desire to protect and further his own professional reputation. Masson states that when Freud revealed his findings on sexual abuse and hysteria "in April 1896 to the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology in Vienna, his first major public address to his peers," he was "met with total silence. Afterwards, he was urged never to publish it, lest his reputation be damaged beyond repair."[26] He did publish his findings, though, in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria', but only a short time later he completely altered his public opinion, a circumstance Masson describes in the following terms: "It was my conviction that what Freud had uncovered [...] became such a liability that he literally had to banish it from his consciousness". Masson goes on to state: "It was a comforting view for society, for Freud's interpretation – that the sexual violence that so affected the lives of his women patients was nothing but fantasy – posed no threat to the existing social order. Therapists could remain on the side of the successful and the powerful, rather than of the miserable victims of family violence."[27]

John Bowlby also criticised Freud in *A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory* stating that "family violence as a causal factor in psychiatry" had been "neglected by clinicians", "[e]ver since Freud made his famous, and in my view disastrous volte-face in 1897, it has been extremely unfashionable to attribute psychopathology to real-life experiences".[28] Whatever Freud's motivations might have been, the assertion of the Oedipus complex as a source of hysteria rather than the abuse previously supposed, may have reduced the number of abuse cases taken seriously and thereby investigated. In addition to this, as Janice L. Doane and Devon L. Hodges state, in *Telling Incest: Narratives of Dangerous Remembering*: "In the 1960s, clinical accounts of incest explain how maternal failures lead fathers to molest daughters";[29] a view supported by many professionals of the period and asserted in studies by Margaret H. Myer (featured in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Work and Human Sexuality*, 1985),[30] Mary Hamer (*Incest A New Perspective,* 2002), and Joseph E. Davis (*Accounts of Innocence: Sexual Abuse, Trauma and the Self,* 2005). Davis even states that some researchers suggested daughters were complicit, because they did not physically fight

against the ordeal.[31] Doane and Hodges assert that: "Individual transgression is at the heart of understandings of incest as a sexual act, but who is the transgressor? A familiar answer, once a staple of psychoanalytic literature on incest is the seductive daughter. This seductive daughter also transgresses in telling an incest story; if she were innocent, she would not tell disgusting tales."[32] Incest was a problem during this period but there was distaste for pursuing investigations into this area. As Mary Hamer states in *Incest A New Perspective:*

> Around 1960 when the Alexandria novels[33] were being published, for most people incest could still be contained within the category of fiction. Specialists really knew better, of course, but faced with the challenge of what they knew they drew back. When a young psychologist named John Bowlby did make a move to work on incest, not long after the Second World War, he was warned off it by senior members of his profession and told that it would sabotage his career to make a study of a subject that there was such resistance to knowing about.[34]

To view incest as a widespread problem, would require more victims to speak out, a difficult feat even in the twenty first century when trauma narratives are commonplace on the shelves of bookshops and laws such as the 2003 Sexual Offences Act have extended the definition of 'parent' 'sibling' 'carer' *et cetera* to further protect the rights of children and the vulnerable. To speak out about incest is not only to risk not being taken seriously, it is to risk being accused as a liar or a seducer, and potentially to endanger any sort of family life the victim may have, albeit as part of an unhappy family unit. Before the 1970s, speaking out about incest offered very little benefit for the victims; it is therefore unsurprising that very few individuals did so. The patriarchal structure of British and North American society further problematised the situation. Imbens and Ineke Jonke argue in *Christianity and Incest* that in certain circumstances the Christian religion's emphasis on the superiority of a patriarchal regime has been used unfairly to defend the actions of aggressors and to prevent the victims from speaking out. They write that "church authorities occupy a crucial position with regard to child sexual abuse in two ways: as the protector of male codes and as the perpetuator of the traditional family mentality. […] Everything that falls out of the male code or structure means punishment, damnation, guilt and negation for the girl. Biblical passages offer many boys and men the opportunity to enfeeble the girl, then to rape her, and finally to force her into silence."[35] The Christian religion is not the only religion to have been utilised in this way, and it is not the only established social structure that has been used to manipulate individuals into submission either. Imbens and Jonke refer to political regimes also, the point being that these structures are not to blame in

themselves, but rather it is how they have been used by society at large that causes difficulties, and that any society that privileges one group of individuals over others will inevitably lead to an abuse of that power.

Yet despite the history of reactions to incest abuse, attitudes began to change, and in no small way because of the courage of African-American authors, such as Maya Angelou, whose memoir *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (1969) narrates the sexual abuse of the author by her mother's boyfriend; and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* which features the rape of the child heroine, Pecola by her stepfather (believed at the time to be her father). The advent of the second wave of feminism was also instrumental in changing attitudes to speaking about, and listening to, accounts of subordination, and to asserting the rights of formerly under-represented groups to their physical and mental autonomy. Betty Friedan's ground-breaking work of feminism, *The Feminine Mystique*, was published in 1963 in the UK and the United States. Friedan lamented the 'manipulation' of women's human desires for emotional succour, social acceptability and individual identity to maintain their subordination to men and to contribute to a male-dominated economy.[36] Germaine Greer's 1970 publication, *The Female Eunuch*, was an international bestseller. She complained that women learn to be ashamed of their bodies and thereby lose their confidence, relinquishing their independence as a consequence. Referring to her work in *The New York Times* in 1971, Greer wrote that women were, "[l]ike beasts, for example, who are castrated in farming in order to serve their master's ulterior motives—to be fattened or made docile—women have been cut off from their capacity for action. It's a process that sacrifices vigour for delicacy and succulence, and one that's got to be changed."[37] Such works begged the question: if adult women were powerless to help themselves what chance did children have in such a culture? Lynn Sacco comments in reference to American attitudes that:

> [T]he Women's Liberation Movement set a different tone for the treatment of child sexual abuse. Feminism encouraged the development of women as a group, with their own collective consciousness, advocating the woman's right to control over her own body. Issues of rape and domestic violence were no longer to be seen as individual personal issues, but as socio-political issues. [38]

She mentions Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* (1975) and Erin Pizzey's Women's Shelter Movement, both of which brought incest and abuse in the family to public attention. Incest was no longer a private problem but linked to the wider society and, as this became apparent, publications on incest increased, including testimonies from incest survivors. Fictional presentations of incest in the 1960s and 1970s rose in

line with feminist manifestoes and writings; including those by white, educated, middle and upper-class individuals. Works that feature incest and were published in the West at this time included: Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955 Paris & 1958 New York), Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy" completed in 1962, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor* (1969), and Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* (1978), to name just a few. All of these authors make their references to incest overtly but there were many more writers who left the possibility of incest as a less obvious, but still evident, presence in their works.

Fictional accounts were not the only ones emerging, but also memoirs like Maya Angelou's and later Virginia Woolf's. "A Sketch of the Past" and "22 Hyde Park Gate", Woolf's memoirs published in their entirety in 1972, detail the abuse she suffered at the hands of her half-brothers.[39] Such first-hand accounts altered not only the social attitude to incest as it became a real problem to be spoken about and written down, but it also began to assume a narrative of its own, and not just one of accusation and defence, but one where survivors of abuse were able to assert themselves and tell their version of events in their own terms. The number of cases of sexual abuse referred to paediatricians in Leeds is reported in Freeman's book as increasing from 0 in 1979, to 50 in 1984, and 161 in 1985.[40] Sexual abuse, and thereby incest, was finally emerging from the shadows and becoming a recognised social problem.

So why were so many writers interested in writing about incest in such a challenging period for the novel and, if there is a common factor, was Iris Murdoch influenced by this too? In 1976, during an interview with Stephen Glover, Iris Murdoch stated that:

> I see no reason to leave the English novel tradition unless you have a good reason for doing so. It's a marvellously versatile form; within what looks – and I suppose is – a conventional novel you can do anything under the sun. You can investigate anything, you can use any mode of thought you like, you can use language any way you like. It's a very big house as it were, the novel, within which all sorts of things can happen and a lot of experiment can take place without the reader being necessarily disturbed.[41]

The image of the novel as a house was of course taken from Henry James' often quoted description of fiction in his 1908 preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*[42] but, as with any knowing reference made by Murdoch, she subsumes the concept and ultimately reinvents it on her own terms. The notion of the house and the home were particularly

pertinent to the post-war society Murdoch existed in and wrote for. The national home had been threatened by the onset of the Second World War in 1939, and after the fighting appeared to have ceased, the defence against the threat to the familiar life began to take on a different form, reasserting the traditional and the familial, on the home front itself. The nuclear family with its restrained and conservative culture began to serve as a prototype for the nation, the patriarchal leadership of both shadowing the potential for full female emancipation and encouraging the maternal and traditionally feminine role of the mother and wife. Just prior to the war in 1938 Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* had compared the dominance of the patriarchy to the leadership of a fascist state.[43] She even suggested that within the home and society at large there was an "infantile fixation", a desire for the individual father and for society functioning as a father, to infantilise and control women to stay in the home, even, it was implied, to such a degree that this desire borders on the incestuous, as the male blood relative literally possesses the female.[44] Woolf's argument, however, attracted censure and even disappointment from fans of her usual writing; the critics saw feminism as a subordinate cause to that of the threat of fascism and the tentatively voiced offensive against the incest implicit in societal structures was, perhaps unsurprisingly, pushed to one side.[45] Simone de Beauvoir had written on the West's gender inequality in *The Second Sex* published in France in 1949, and subsequently in English in 1953. Betty Friedan had argued against the male bias and the containment of women under the guises of 'wife' and 'mother' in *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan complained about what she called "the problem that had no name" an issue that she said laid "buried" "unspoken",[46] and this in her thesis was the general plight of women which led to the second wave of feminism. However, there was another problem that had been long silenced: one which was not just a female concern but was assisted out of the shadows by the new women's movement. Incest was also brought to the fore by increased interest in Sigmund Freud, whose theories on psychoanalysis increased in popularity in the post-war period and were utilized increasingly in literary theory. As Donna Cox asserts "during the 1950s and 1960s" psychoanalysis was used "to analyse characters as if they were real people",[47] a circumstance which no doubt altered the social scope of the novel. John Bowlby's theories on attachment also inadvertently helped to direct attention towards incest. Bowlby's studies focussed on the importance of children's actual experiences rather than their mental activity, an approach which was at odds to the majority of his contemporaries who were entrenched in the psychoanalytic thought of Freud, and which led to their criticism of Bowlby's methodology for many years.[48] However, his study on

the importance of human attachment to childhood development (which derived from work with wartime evacuee children) led to a greater understanding of the impact of an absence of secure attachments for a child, if they were neglected or abused in their home. Such problems were at the heart of the West's efforts to re-establish a strong social backbone, and if revealed to their full extent threatened both the individual family and the nation at large. Nevertheless child abuse and consequently incest did emerge from its own mystique and develop its own narrative: and where better to address the biggest threat to the home life of a culture than in the house of its fiction?

Iris Murdoch was one of the post-war era's most forceful proponents of the so-called 'traditional novel'. She was a great admirer of authors who favoured an easily identifiable plot, strong depictions of character, and a sense of social responsibility, such as Henry James, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot. She believed in the fundamental power of story-telling and did not accept that these notions had become outdated, or that the novel was in danger as a relevant literary form. As Andrzej Gasiorek asserts, "the horrors of the war seemed to outstrip the literary imagination", yet conversely there was a fear of a homogenised culture, resulting from the reforms occasioned by the aftermath of the war.[49] Broadly speaking a division developed amongst the intelligentsia over whether writers should react with experimentation in their writing, or if they should return to the traditional novel. Iris Murdoch herself contributed to the discussion when she stated in an interview with W.K. Rose in 1968 that she continued to focus her reading on nineteenth-century authors, partly because she felt contemporary writers were not as good as their predecessors.[50] Yet although she commented in her 1961 essay, "Against Dryness" that it would take "a foreigner like Nabokov or an Irishman like Beckett to animate prose language into an imaginative stuff in its own right",[51] when asked later in the decade if she could see herself writing "a *Pale Fire* or a *Naked Lunch"* she responded, "No, God forbid".[52] For Murdoch these more recent experimental authors were not just great because they were formally unconventional but because they were brave, and forced readers to pay attention to what they were reading, unlike some of her contemporaries whose novels were she felt in the most part, "not *written*".[53] As she asserted in conversation with Jack Biles in 1977 it was a matter of evolving the old to incorporate the demands of a new age, not dispensing with tradition altogether:

> The great models are still there, and, in a way, one is closer to Dickens than one is to Joyce. These great novels offer story and reflection and social comment and so on; they are *more live* models. Though in a sense you can't go back. One's

> consciousness is different; I mean our whole narrative technique is something completely different from that of Dickens. But the model still inspires. I personally feel much closer to Dickens and Dostoevsky than I do to James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.[54]

Murdoch's vision for the novel of the post-war era was, then, one which did not dispense with the social role of the artist, although she was quick to assert that political canvassing was not a concept she felt comfortable with in an artistic medium. Yet as she wrote in "Against Dryness": "The connection between art and the moral life has languished because we are losing our sense of form and structure in the moral world itself".[55] The distinction which she made later in 1977 was connected to 'universality' and again it was about responding in an appropriate fashion to the demands of the period, without sacrificing art to propaganda. The nineteenth-century style of universality where a culture was brought together as one entity within the bounds of its religion, its class structure, and its patriarchal system of leadership, was breaking apart in the latter half of the twentieth century, but the nostalgia and awareness of what was lost, connected to pessimism about the future, was a unifying force in itself and Murdoch utilised this to examine the concerns of the age saying in the same interview, "in a quiet way there is a lot of social criticism in my novels".[56] With this in mind, her preoccupation with the incest theme is particularly intriguing, a theme that with the benefit of retrospect leant itself to a disturbing and deeply buried universality, because there were other reasons why incest in particular was a subject chosen by so many.

Murdoch's treatment of incest in her fiction can be seen to chart the progress of the change in social attitudes to incest theories and concerns. In her early novels such as *The Bell, The Unicorn*, and perhaps, most importantly, *The Time of the Angels*, potential victims are not given a voice and their treatment by their fellow protagonists is not always one of sympathy or understanding. In her 1983 work, *The Philosopher's Pupil,* Hattie (who is the subject of her grandfather's obsessive desire) is given as large amount of narrative space as her grandfather, and the reader is party to her thoughts and feelings in great detail. In this hugely expansive novel a number of characters are given space to present their versions of events. However, the discussion of Murdoch's novels that feature incest as social criticism is particularly problematic because Murdoch has not spoken expansively on the topic of incest in her non-fiction writing or in interviews. Her novels also seem devoid of authorial interference on the subject. The events appear to be presented in a bare fashion without judgement, yet she did draw connections between literature and social responsibility, as in this conversation with Brian Magee:

> It is important to remember that language itself is a moral medium, almost all uses of language convey value. This is one reason why we are almost always morally active. Life is soaked in the moral, literature is soaked in the moral. [...] So the novelist is revealing his values by any sort of writing which he may do. He is particularly bound to make moral judgements in so far as his subject matter is the behaviour of human beings.[57]

She goes on to say, "[t]he good writer is the just, intelligent judge. He justifies his placing of his characters by some sort of *work* which he does in the book."[58] Given that George Eliot and Dickens were described by her as "tremendously propagandist in their own way",[59] it seems unlikely that her work is in actuality devoid of judgement even if that is the impression. It is not always the punishment of evil in fiction that provides the most incisive criticism of society. In *A Severed Head*, *The Bell*, *The Unicorn* and *The Time of the Angels* it seems as if the oppressors are either treated better than their victims in the *dénouement* of the text or that they suffer no worse fate. However, as Brian Boyd has argued most persuasively in his work on *Ada or Ardor*, sometimes it is the results of the actions of the perpetrators that can denote the most searching moral vision and the strongest response in the reader. He argues that Nabokov is a 'moral author' (an opinion quite apart from popular public opinion) and an assertion that seems surprising from a first reading of any one of his controversial plotlines, but perhaps most especially when considering *Lolita* or *Ada or Ardor*; as the former examines the abuse of a young girl and the latter the sibling love affair between siblings Van and Ada Veen, who take advantage of their younger sister Lucette. Their treatment of her eventually leads her to commit suicide by throwing herself in the sea.

> I do not want to suggest that Nabokov wrote *Ada* primarily to expound an ethical system, but the evidence shows that he expended extraordinary artistic energy in documenting via Lucette the demonic side of Van and Ada in a way that the ordinary reader cannot even suspect. Nabokov is not a solemn moralist but his efforts in *Ada* prove beyond all doubt that he was a serious and scrupulous one. A common view of his novels holds that he treats a few characters, creatures of unusual intelligence, often artistically gifted and trilingual or nearly so [...] as favourites and lavishes attention on them while ignoring or heaping contempt upon almost everyone else. Van and Ada seem Nabokov's obvious favourites in *Ada*, but [...] Nabokov throughout the novel criticizes severely their lack of self concern for those they dismiss as immaterial to their own needs and wants.[60]

Such subtle criticism can easily be seen in Murdoch's own work, as can Nabokov's influence, and perhaps also her influence on him. Catherine Fawley also attempts suicide by drowning, and this is also the death of a number of her protagonists of

Murdoch's incest narratives, such as Hannah Crean Smith and John Robert Rozanov. There is even an allegation of incest made against Jesse Baltram in *The Good Apprentice,* who is also discovered dead in the stream near his home. Incest is by no means a new topic to literature but the voice of the victim or survivor of incest is one that has been newly considered in the post-war era and its presentation in fiction seems to lend itself to an intertextual approach. Murdoch's incest novels all reference those of other writers and her work has also been drawn upon by such authors as A.S. Byatt, who has utilised Murdoch's depictions of this theme in her own work. Although this thesis focuses on the novels of Iris Murdoch and the intertextual references utilised by her, the theoretical premise of this study need not necessarily be only assigned to the work of Murdoch and could be usefully employed to consider the work of many of her contemporaries and her literary successors. Later historical works by A.S. Byatt, Margaret Atwood and Jane Smiley also use intertextuality[61] to consider incest in novels either set in this time period or published within it. Margaret Atwood's 2002 novel, *The Blind Assassin* is set during World War II and draws on fairy-tales, science fiction and the realist tradition, interweaving works supposedly by the characters themselves, with allusions to well-known writings which arguably include those by H.G. Wells, José Saramago, Sophocles and William Shakespeare, amongst others. The incest in this novel is not between blood relations but between those related by marriage, the vulnerable Laura, and her brother-in-law, the controlling and sexually aggressive, Richard Griffen. Jane Smiley's 1991 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *A Thousand Acres* re-visits William Shakespeare's *King Lear* in a contemporary setting, explaining the anger of his eldest daughters through earlier incest abuse by their father. A.S. Byatt's *Babel Tower* published in 1996, but set in the 1960s, considers writing and incest in the form of a trial of an erotic work of literature by her character, Jude Mason. The judge draws attention to the influences of other works of literature on Mason's novella, particularly that of the Marquis de Sade and the potentially corruptive effects of such writing. The trial uses that of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as a prototype. The issue of intertextuality and its impact on writing taboos is thereby brought to the reader's attention and Byatt goes on to write on incest again in *Angels and Insects* (1992) and in her most recent novel, *The Children's Book* (2009). Murdoch's influence on Byatt has been well remarked upon not least by Byatt herself. Allusions to Murdoch's plots can be seen in *The Children's Book* particularly; but what is perhaps more pertinent here is the evidence of Murdoch's formal influence on Byatt's writing, and Byatt can arguably be deemed to be developing and improving upon Murdoch's use

of intertextuality. The forms of intertextuality relating to presentations of incest in the post-war period amongst women writers then takes a number of forms, not all of which Murdoch engages with:

1. The writing of alternative versions of well-known fictions in the way that Jean Rhys does in *Wide Sargasso Sea* or Jane Smiley does in *A Thousand Acres*, providing what can be viewed as a critical 'reading' of the texts, interpreting the original source through the fictional adaptation.

2. The utilisation of certain 'grand narratives'[62] with particular twists or alternatives to deconstruct the original arrangement and its political or social implications, such as that of warring brothers and the judgement of a father figure which Murdoch utilises, for example when she repeatedly refers back to a range of versions of the story of Cain and Abel.

3. The juxtaposition of allusions to numerous well-known and well-loved texts, or to the authors of such texts, alongside shocking or disturbing occurrences, to force the reader into re-considering the original material. A.S. Byatt does this in *Babel Tower* in reference to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and to the works of the Marquis de Sade, but also by including real literary authors in this work and in *The Children's Book*. Murdoch refers to literary works in this way on several occasions but not to real individuals, although in *The Philosopher's Pupil* she does credit John Robert Rozanov with the authorship of one of her own philosophical works as well as giving him a friend who was a character in her first novel *Under the Net*.

4. The reconsideration of a popular character type with key differences to occasion a reinterpretation of the original; this can be seen in Murdoch's take on the Byronic hero and the enchantresses from Arthurian myth and legend.

5. One author creating a plethora of different works supposedly penned by characters in the text but actually pastiches of well-known styles and genres from particular periods, and creating a network of connections between the texts inside and outside of the novel in question. This is a technique utilised by A.S. Byatt in *Possession* and *The Children's Book*. Murdoch does something similar when she describes the paintings created by one of her characters, Jesse Baltram, in *The Good Apprentice*, and uses them to provide significance for her own plot as well as referring externally to the possible sources for his character portrayal. Murdoch can be then seen as one of a group of writers experimenting with traditional novelistic forms to investigate the incest taboo.

Yet why is it that fictional incest narratives seem to rely on intertextuality? Perhaps it is a testimony to the moral role of the artist and an acknowledgment of the inability for one text to fully do justice to such a complicated issue and one that could ultimately affect the fundamental structure of our society. As Murdoch stated: "[t]he author's moral judgement is the air which the reader breathes"[63] and therefore it may be the role of the responsible artist to look beyond the room of their own fiction and consider the numerous windows of the house of fiction that Henry James described.

I have termed this kind of intertextual approach as 'literary incest'[64] which is a phrase to describe the interaction between 'texts' which can produce new interpretations of past or contemporaneous texts, thereby providing a 'reading' of another work. These texts need not be limited to literary works but could be interdisciplinary and in the context of my argument I will be extending the term 'text' to refer to art objects that are not written, such as divisions of the visual arts. These works are incestuous because they are broadly self-referential, they draw attention to their own creation in a metafictional sense but they also relate more widely to the culture they have been created within, to the creative process of that culture, and the people expected to engage with the text in question. I will argue that intertextuality is an old process newly named, that it is a fundamental part of our culture which has become increasingly hard to ignore and that it has been usefully employed by novelists in the post-war era to speak of the unspeakable. Murdoch's work like that of many of her contemporaries considers the incest taboo and utilises intertextuality to draw attention to the history of the taboo, this has relevance to the changing attitudes towards sexual behaviour in her contemporary milieu but also to the moral structure of Western society.

The concept of 'literary incest' also refers to Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) which utilises Freud's 'family romance'[65] as a metaphor for the artistic process and the literary 'sons' struggling against the literary might of their forefather in order to create something original themselves. He asserts that they must 'misread' their antecedents' work in order to make their own work new. Bloom states that 'the meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but *another poem - a poem not itself*'[66] suggesting that only within the literary form can literature be assessed and only through another work of its own kind can a text be re-read and interpreted. The very act of 'misreading' a text and overcoming authorial precursors or rivals to make something original that still recognises but is not overwhelmed by another work, is in itself an act of criticism and in the terms of Bloom's argument the precursory text can provide

insights on the contemporary text. Yet the contemporary text can also reveal much about its forerunners. Graham Allen asserts in his book on Bloom's work that, "a proper study of influence means that we can no longer retain the belief that individual texts exist", indicating just such a blurring of textual boundaries.[67] In the twenty-first century the plethora of 'texts' which a reader or a writer may come into contact with are vast and the number of literary interpretations potentially uncountable; literary work no longer remains in the literary sphere but is adapted by theatre directors, movie makers and television producers. Consequently novels are no longer a specifically literary product, rather they have become part of the cultural consciousness; and so are owned by that public, who reinvent and reinterpret novelistic creations on a daily basis. Yet are Harold Bloom's theories on intertextuality and influence becoming increasingly relevant or less so as time passes? We are all bombarded with an increasing number of interpretations of literature in our everyday lives. If the interpretation of 'texts' can be widened to include other art forms such as film, music and the visual arts then the number of potentially interpretative texts becomes uncountable and to a certain extent even untraceable. For 'academic' authors of fiction like Murdoch and later, A.S. Byatt, who have also written literary criticism, some of it utilising an interdisciplinary approach, the number of images and interpretations is further increased to a disproportionate amount.[68] Bloom's argument that 'there are *no* texts, only relationships *between* texts' when extended in this way is a symptom of the contemporary condition then, and consequently to view a novel or a poem in isolation seems to be an impossible task.[69] Yet can it then be argued that writers can still misread the work of a previous author to create a new art object? Or are all works created in the present day incapable of being 'new' in this way, being instead subject to the past to such an extent that the only available modes of artistic creation are the postmodernist notions of parody, pastiche and simulacrum? If there are, as Bloom indicates, no autonomous texts then Patricia Waugh's assertion in her seminal work, *Metafiction* (1984) that all works of fiction are inherently self-conscious by their very nature, enforces the argument that the 'new' literary work unaffected by external sources is obsolete, if indeed, it existed at all.[70] Yet it does not necessarily follow that the creative process is demeaned by this or that the novel itself is challenged in anyway. Rather this can be seen as a part of the novel's development, in line with that of other works of art which have similarly embraced their past and assimilated it into their creative present.

Is this a new activity or have the arts in the distant past drawn on older themes and images? Jean-Francois Lyotard's theory of grand narratives suggests that intertextual

approaches have always prevailed, drawing on common and universally understood themes, but it is these narratives which have to some extent prevented change and perpetuated the silencing of individual accounts of suffering. Part of the aim of writers representing subordinated groups is to break down such narratives and show that they are not the only available literary structure. There is a history of intertextuality, but it is to some extent a re-telling of tradition. What is new is the plethora of narratives available and that they are all of equal importance. A writer such as Murdoch can then set the stories of the past against the emerging voices of the present showing the differences and juxtaposing them for the reader to judge.

Of course the use of a controversial, attention-grabbing topic might have been a response to the difficulties surrounding the future of the novel. This would have certainly been a reasonable consideration in Britain at this time but, if one reflects on the furore surrounding D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960, which was trialled under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act[71] - a novel that dealt with legal and consensual sex between unrelated adults - anyone attempting an even more controversial topic would have been brave indeed. However, after the trial, censorship laws did relax[72] and it would hardly have been surprising if, in response to the attacks on British writing, authors took advantage of the new mood of increased tolerance to focus on a largely neglected and shocking topic which would not only draw attention to their writing but also provide a comment on Western culture as a whole.

This thesis takes Iris Murdoch's key incest narratives concerned with the compromising of innocence, and considers how intertextuality has been utilised to present the taboo, in the process setting up a dialogue between the artistic and literary past, and the literary present. Chapter One is concerned with feminism and Biblical tradition in *The Unicorn* with reference to *The Time of the Angels.* It is important to note that when I refer to 'intertexts' I am not just referring to literary works but also to works of art, theory, and religion.[73] In this first chapter I consider the use of devotional art and theology on the depiction of femininity in these novels before considering the vampiric gothic elements to both works and how these can be argued to relate to sexuality and abuse narratives.

My second chapter considers Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* alongside Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* and how Murdoch inverts this image to present the 'mad man in the attic' instead in novels, such as *The Good Apprentice* and *A Message to the Planet.* Through this mode she reconsiders and renegotiates the casting of victim and villain in the parent-child narrative.

In Chapter Three I focus on *The Philosopher's Pupil*, arguably Murdoch's most complex narrative, and one that has been largely neglected by academic critics. I look at this novel in terms of the incest story between John Robert Rozanov and his granddaughter, Hattie, considering how Murdoch utilises the Victorian novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House* to consider Hattie's plight and compare it with the depictions of women and family relationships in these fictional narratives. I discuss the extent to which this novel can be considered a 'realist' novel by looking at Bran Nicol's essay "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel"; and I go on to look at Nietzsche's relevance to Murdoch's novel.

Chapter Four focuses on Murdoch's enchanter or magician figures and the literary heritage of such individuals, looking back to medieval romance and British and German Romanticism. I argue that Murdoch has made the Byronic hero and the Arthurian enchantress her own by evolving the character-types and amending crucial elements to re-present them in her own style. I review the plot of *The Green Knight* and *The Fairly Honourable Defeat* and look at the potential for incest subtexts to both novels.

Murdoch is then using an intertextual approach to engage with the crucial issues of the post-war age not just in terms of British literature but with wider concerns that impacted on everybody after a war that had involved the world. As long held views were evolving or being rejected, writers were searching for a means to express the changes in every aspect of the intellectual life and Murdoch found a way to do that through intertextuality, an approach that has been, and continues to be, drawn upon and developed amongst artistic practitioners both in Great Britain and internationally. This is not the first extensive work on incest in literature but it is the first to consider Iris Murdoch within the context of post-war writers, the historical developments of the period, and how intertextuality has played such an important role in negotiating the difficulties of the age especially with reference to the family, and ultimately how this has challenged accepted opinion and led to securing social change.

[1] A number of critics have briefly considered the incest in Murdoch's fiction. Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik have offered a more in-depth discussion than most, but due to the length and scope of their chapter (detailed below) it is necessarily acutely focussed. For references to incest in Murdoch's work see for example: Peter J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: Harper Collins, 2002). Avril Horner,"Refinements of Evil: Iris Murdoch and the Gothic,*" Iris Murdoch and Morality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 70-86. Miles Leeson, *Iris Murdoch Philosophical Novelist* (London: Continuum, 2010). Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik, "Keeping It In the Family: Incest and the Female Gothic Plot in du Maurier and Murdoch," *The Female Gothic: New Directions,* eds. Diana Wallace and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 115-132.

[2] Murdoch, *The Bell* (1958; London: Vintage, 1999) 104.

[3] Byron's relationship with his sister, although not unequivocally proven is now generally thought to have been of an intimate nature. Paul Douglass asserts in reference to Byron's marriage to Annabella Milbanke that "[t]he marriage started off badly, and Byron's 'attachment' to his half-sister Augusta became obtrusive. By the time he separated from his wife, he had a daughter by her, and probably also a daughter by Augusta." "Byron's Life and Biographers," *The Cambridge Companion to Byron,* ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 82.

Avril Horner also notices the implication of the Byronic connection in *'"Refinements of Evil': Iris Murdoch and the Gothic"* (2010). Horner writes: "Seen in this context, Catherine's suicide attempt and subsequent mental collapse take on a particularly sinister hue" (74-5).

[4] Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil,* introd. Malcolm Bradbury (1983; London: Vintage, 2000) 308.

[5] Affines are defined as those related by marriage, however, as Murdoch draws on literature from numerous historical contexts and because she is so preoccupied with theological morality, throughout this study I have extended the definition to also refer to the possible Biblical interpretation. In this respect, a spouse may refer to the person who one has had sexual relations with; a definition derived from the spiritual bond between persons created by their sexual relations, which is not necessarily dependent upon an actual marriage ceremony. Such a definition means that a common law marriage is as important to the interpretation of affines in a legally recognized ceremony. This is reflected in canon law.

The complications surrounding what the laws on incest relate to in terms of the church was most fully and publically discussed during the reign of Henry VIII when his concern over whether he had committed incest by marrying Catherine of Aragon after she had been formally betrothed to his brother, became part of the argument for dissolving this union so that he could re-marry Anne Boleyn. Whether Arthur and Catherine had consummated the relationship was thought to be the key to deciding if their union had made Henry and Catherine's marriage sinful and unlawful. The issue was raised again when it was revealed that Henry had had an affair with the sister of his new Queen, prior to the wedding. This was widely thought to nullify the new relationship's standing legally, and spiritually, as it could be deemed incestuous. See Susan Frye, 'Incest and Authority in Pericles, Prince of Tyre'. *Incest and the Literary Imagination,* ed. Elizabeth Barnes (Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2002) 41-2.

The Church interpretation of what constitutes marriage differs slightly between denominations of Christianity, and the evidence in the Bible is open to interpretation. It is the spiritual union accepted by God that is the primary concern to Christians, but how important the marriage service and the consummation of the relationship is to this spiritual union, is unclear, and therefore arguable. See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of these issues.

Contemporary law recognises that if a person has been in a position of care to another during their childhood they are also considered in loco parentis; and thereby even if they are not blood relatives, sexual relations may still be considered incestuous. For more information see the 2003 Sexual Offences Act <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>.

[6] The incidents of incest in Murdoch's work are primarily heterosexual and therefore I have focussed on examining the situation in these terms. Homosexual incestuous abuse received even less attention than heterosexual abuse in the years immediately following World War II; and generally it was considered to be rarer. Whether this is fact or not is open to dispute, particularly as the legalisation of homosexuality between consenting adults did not occur until the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, see: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/60. However, evidence can be found elsewhere in literature of a social awareness of homosexual incest: James Joyce arguably refers to homosexual incest in *Ulysses*, see: Susan Sutliffe Brown, "The Joyce Brothers in Drag," *Gender in Joyce*, eds. Jolanta W. Wawrzycka and Marlene G. Corcoron (Gainesville, FL: UP Florida, 1997) 8-28. Murdoch does present potentially abusive homosexual relationships but these are not incestuous. As Murdoch was a great proponent of gay rights and was aware of the sensitive situation legally regarding homosexuality in the post-war years it is probable that she steered away from depicting same-sex abuse in order to not compromise the efforts for equal rights for homosexual people. See Iris Murdoch in interview with Jeffrey Meyers for her views on "gay lib" in *From A Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction,* ed. Gillian Dooley (Columbia SC: South Carolina UP: 2003) 233.

[7] By 'quasi-incest' I am referring to a relationship between blood relatives that exceeds that which is usually deemed socially acceptable, but does not technically contravene legal or religious rules of propriety: such as flirtatious conversation, seeing each other in a sexual light or being sexually possessive about a family member, but they would not actually have sexual relations. Another

example would be actual sexual relations between individuals who, it is implied, have cast each other in family roles.

[8] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night* (1934; 1959; Middlesex: Penguin, 1998) 12.

[9] For early reviews see: *F. Scott Fitzgerald The Critical Reception* Ed. Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Lenox Hill, 1978). For an overview of the critical reactions to the novel see William Blazek, and Laura Raltray, Introduction, *Twenty-First Century Readings of Tender is the Night,* ed. Blazek, and Raltray (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2007) 1-15.

[10] Blazek, and Raltray, 5.

[11] Alan Margolies, "Fitzgerald and Hollywood" in *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald,* ed. Ruth Prigozy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001). Margolies comments that in the "sanitized" adaptation of the book Nicole's mental disorder results from 'a physical injury' as the censorship laws prevented the inclusion of incest (194).

William Blazak and Laura Raltray also discuss "the moral minefield of incest and rape" referring to the "riding accident that triggers a brain disorder to avoid the novel's more sinister explanation of Nicole's madness". *Twenty-First Readings of Tender is the Night*, 5-6.

[12] Mary Abbott, *Family Affairs: A History of the Family in 20th Century England.* (2003; London: Taylor and Francis e-library, 2005) 85.

[13] Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London: UCL Press, 1999) 834.

[14] Abbott, 85

[15] Linda Nicholson, "The Myth of the Traditional Family," *Feminism and Families*, ed. Hilde Lindemann Nelson, 33-34

[16] Michael Freeman, *The Moral Status of Children* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1997) 256.

[17] Miriam G. Reumann, *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender and Identity in the Kinsey Reports* (Berkeley, CA: California UP, 2005) 21

[18] Reuman, 2.

[19] Joseph E. Davis, *Accounts of Innocence: Sexual Abuse, Trauma and the Self* (Chicago, IL: UP Chicago, 2005) 31.

[20] Davis, 33.

Herman writes that the Kinsey study on women "had accumulated the largest body of data on overt incest that had ever appeared in scientific literature."

Judith Lewis Herman with Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1981) 17.

[21] Herman, 16.

[22] Herman, 17. Herman wrote that, "[w]hile Kinsey and his associates dared to describe a vast range of sexual behaviours in exhaustive detail, they declined to specify what might be involved in the "bestowing" of grandfatherly – or fatherly – affection upon little girls."

[23] Freeman, 256.

[24] For an overview of the theory and the issues surrounding it see: Gerald N. Izenberg, "Seduced and Abandoned: The Rise and Fall of the Seduction Theory," *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*. ed. Jerome Neu. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991) 25-43.

Izenberg, however, does describe "the most serious criticisms" as "tainted by prior assumptions and faulty logic" 26. Therefore it is worthwhile also reading Jeffrey Masson's *Assault the Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985).

[25] Izenberg, 26.

[26] Jeffrey Masson, xxx.

[27] Masson, xxxiv-xxxv.

[28] John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge,1998) 87.

[29] Janice L. Doane and Devon L. Hodges, *Telling Incest: Narratives of Dangerous Remembering from Stein to Sappho* (Ann Arbor MI: Michigan UP, 2001) 141.

[30] Margaret H. Myer, "A New Look at Mothers of Incest Victims," *Feminist Perspectives on Social Work and Human Sexuality,* eds. Mary Valentich and James Gripton (New York: Haworth Pr Inc: 1985) 47-58.

Myer considers studies from the 1940s to the 1980s which assert the involvement of the mother and/or the seductive behaviour of the daughter. Myer attempts to reassess the roles of mother and daughter.

[31] In *Accounts of Innocence : Sexual Abuse, Trauma and the Self,* Joseph E. Davis writes that "[i]n the majority of cases, researchers reported, the father did not use force or threat of force, and

daughters neither actually resisted his sexual advances nor provoked them (Gebhard et al. 1965; Mausch 1972; Riemer 1940; Sloane and Karpinski 1942; Tormes 1968; Weinberg 1955). Rather the most common response by daughters was one of passivity, at least at the beginning. Accounting for this passivity led researchers to ask if, at least in some cases, some type of gratification-seeking or personality disturbance might explain why the child allowed the relationship to begin (or) to continue.

Most of the larger studies in the incest literature portray the environmental circumstances surrounding the incest as distinctly unfavourable to all but passive resistance by a young daughter (Gebhard et al. 1965; Mausch 1972; Rieman 1940; Weinberg 1955)" (51).

He goes on to explain that it was discovered that other forms of pressure were utilised such as "threats, elaborate rationalisations and false information" as well as bribes; and that "some writers found assessing the extent of a daughter's cooperation unfeasible". He refers to Gebhard and his associates who assert that "the authoritarian position of the father makes the difference between threat, duress, acquiescence, and willingness almost impossible (1965:207)" (51).

[32] Doane and Hodges, 47.

[33] The diaries of Lawrence Durrell's daughter, Sappho, were posthumously published and suggested that she had been in an incestuous relationship with her father. Durrell's motivations for featuring incest in his fiction have therefore been publically queried and so I have not included his writings in the list of works on the incest taboo later in this section. For two different views on the situation regarding the Durrell family see: Mary Hamer's *Incest A New Perspective* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002) and the *New York Times* article by Roger Cohen "A Daughter's Intimations," August 14, 1991.

[34] Hamer, 9-10.

[35] Annie Fransen Imbens and Ineke De Putter Jonker, trans. P. McVay. *Christianity and Incest* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1992) viii.

[36]Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique.* (1963; New York: Norton, 2001).

[37] Germaine Greer, 'Opinions That May Shock the Faithful' Review of *The Female Eunuch* By Judith Weinraub. New York Times, 22 March 1971.

[38] Lynn Sacco, *Unspeakable: Father-Daughter Incest in American History.* (Baltimore MD: John Hopkins UP, 2009) 3.

[39] In her memoirs Woolf details how she was abused by her half-brother Gerald Duckworth as a child (69); and she writes that "the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" (155). "A Sketch of the Past" and "22 Hyde Park Gate" in *Moments of Being*. Ed. and introd. Jeanne Schulkind. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976) 69-138; 140-156.

[40] Freeman, 265.

[41] Murdoch, interview with Stephen Glover, Dooley 34.

[42] Henry James, preface, *The Portrait of a Lady*, by James (1881;Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 41-56.

[43]Kate Millett similarly wrote that, "[a]uthoritarian governments appear to favour patriarchy especially; the atmosphere of fascist states and of dictatorships depends heavily upon the patriarchal character". *Sexual Politics.* 1970. (Urbana, IL: UP Illinois, 2000) 158.

[44] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, introd. Hermione Lee. (1938; London: Hogarth Press, 1991). In *Three Guineas*, Woolf compares the treatment of women to Sophocles' story of Antigone (daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta) and her rebellion against Creon. She also looks at what she refers to as the "infantile fixation" in society, by examining the stories of fathers who wished their daughters to remain unmarried and dependent on their resources. When referring to the case of Elizabeth Barrett and her father she writes: "Mr Barrett's emotions were strong in the extreme; and their strength makes it obvious that they had their origins in some dark place below the level of conscious thought" (149-155).

For further discussion on this issue see Merry M. Pawlowski's *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictators' Seduction.*

[45] Robin Mujumdar and Allen McLaurin, eds. *The Critical Heritage: Virginia Woolf* (1975; London: Taylor & Francis, 2003).

[46] Friedan, 5.

[47] Donna Cox, "Psychoanalysis," *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*, eds. Katherine Cockin and Jago Morrison (London: Continuum, 2010) 155.

[48]Bernice Laschinger, "Attachment Theory and the John Bowlby Memorial Lecture 2006 A Short History," *Trauma and Attachment: the John Bowlby Memorial Conference Monograph 2006*, eds., Sarah Benamer and Kate White (London: Karnac Books, 2008) 6.

[49]Andrezj Gasiorek, *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995) 2.
[50] Murdoch, interview with W. K. Rose, Dooley 27.
[51] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," ed. Peter J. Conradi, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (1997; Middlesex: Penguin) 292.
[52] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 287-295.
[53] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 292.
[54] Murdoch, interview with Jack I. Biles, Dooley 64.
[55] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 293.
[56] For Murdoch on "universality" and the novel see: interview with Michael O. Bellamy, Dooley 48.
[57] Murdoch, interview with Brian Magee, Conradi, *EM* 27.
[58] Murdoch, interview with Brian Magee, Conradi, *EM* 28.
[59] Murdoch, interview with Michael O. Bellamy, Conradi, *EM* 45.
[60] Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's Ada: The Place of Consciousness.* 2nd ed. (Christchurch NZ: Cybereditions Cooperation, 2002) 113.
[61] In the context of this study I will be using the term 'intertextuality' to mean any 'text' that refers to another 'text' in any way, whether that be directly or indirectly. The definition of 'text' includes not just written documents but any form of art object, such as painting, oral tales, sculpture, or film. The relevance of this approach to the contemporary work on intertextuality is asserted by Mary Orr in her 2003 book *Intertextuality Debates and Contexts:* "intertextuality is the culminating critical term for processes of cultural interconnectivity centred on the printed text. [...] 'Intertextuality' as the generic name for interactions of 'text' is indeed fitting and applicable to any electronic medium concerned after the closed form of text. Film is then 'text', as is an opera, a radio play and a television documentary, all of which can be canned." (170) Orr, however, states that the term "cannot be strictly applied to relational operations before the printed book". I disagree with this and I also do not consider that a written text need necessarily be involved for the term to be used. I therefore refer to Graham Allen's assertions regarding Ferdinand Saussure: "Saussure's notions concerning semiology make intertextuality's use in studies of non-literary art forms understandable. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure looked forward to a new science, semiotics, which would study 'the life of signs within society' (Saussure, 1974:16)" (174). This approach is particularly relevant to the discussion on incest in relation to Iris Murdoch's work, both because the topic has struggled to be voiced (and where voiced, heard and understood) in the language systems already in place, but also because Murdoch has written on 'the net of language' in her essay "Art is the Imitation of Nature" and in the interview, "Literature and Philosophy: A Conversation with Brian Magee." In both instances she considers that language is not a transparent medium, but that it is tainted by the speaker and the listener with their own interpretations of what is said or written down. If people interpret speech or texts slightly differently then language cannot convey the truth, rather it offers a version of reality. Language is therefore a system of signs which are generally but not necessarily specifically understood. Such an assessment suggests that Saussure's argument applied to intertextuality is particularly appropriate to Murdoch's approach and her literary concerns.
For a general history of intertextuality, the coinage of the term by Julia Kristeva and its subsequent development through the utilisation of the concept by theorists such as M. M. Bakhtin, Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes, Gérard Genette, M. Rifaterre and Harold Bloom both Allen's book and Orr's provide a comprehensive analysis on the arguments utilised. Graham Allen. *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*. (London: Routledge, 2000). Mary Orr. *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).
[62] The phrase, 'grand narrative' derives from Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* (1979), where he defines such narratives as those that aim to reach a definitive explanation of existence. See: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, foreword, Frederic Jameson (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984).
[63] Murdoch, interview with Brian Magee, *EM* 28.
[64] Mark Llewellyn refers to A. S. Byatt's *The Children's Book* as being "an incestuous text: in its narrative of interrelationships at levels of thought, emotion, and bodies, Byatt's novel engages with the three elements of the incestuous interpretative drive already mentioned: aesthetics, ethics and psychoanalysis." His definition of what makes the text itself incestuous, however, is different from mine, concentrating primarily on content rather than structure. "'Perfectly innocent, natural, playful': Incest in Neo-Victorian Women's Writing," *Neo Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of bearing After Witness to Nineteenth Century Suffering*, eds. Marie-Luise Kohlke & Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam, Neth: Rodopi. Gutleben) 133-160.

[65] Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances," (1909) *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock, introd. Hugh Haughton (London: Penguin, 2003).
[66] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, (1973; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 70.
[67]Graham Allen, *Harold Bloom: A Poetics of Conflict* (New York : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994) 18.
[68] Byatt has written extensively on the connections between the visual arts and literature, in *The Matisse Stories* (1993), and also in her literary criticism such as her 2001 work, *Portraits in Fiction.*
[69] Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) 3.
[70] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction,* (London: Routledge, 1984).
[71] Dawn B. Sova. *Literature Suppressed on Sexual Grounds.* 2nd ed. (New York: Facts on File, Inc.:2006) 138-142.
[72] Susan Watkins, "Gender, Sexuality and Post-War Literature," *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*, eds. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison (London: Continuum, 2010). 163-168.
[73] See note 61.

Chapter One

'A Voice of One's Own'[1]: Possessing the Female Narrative in *The Unicorn* (1963)

Iris Murdoch made it clear that she did not wish to be associated with the term 'feminist';[2] but she certainly had sympathies with the situation of women in her contemporary society. In conversation with Harold Hobson in 1962, Iris Murdoch commented that, "[t]he emancipation of women is only just beginning – and there are signs of a reaction against it already. Did you see all of those letters in *The Times* recently saying that girls ought to be educated for marriage and the home? Nonsense." She goes on to assert that "the notion that women are inferior is deep, very deep, even in our fairly sensible society and it does nobody any good."[3] Women's rights were once again coming to public attention. In 1953 Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, (originally released in French in 1949), had been translated into English for the first time; and in 1963 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published in its entirety. Friedan's work questioned the validity of still ascribing to the traditional view that women should be caregivers with little formal education, and few career opportunities beyond the expected role of wife and mother. She refers to the wives in this situation as 'child-brides', unable to realise their autonomy due their husbands, objectification of them;[4] and she also dramatically describes the home for such women as "a comfortable concentration camp".[5] By making these comparisons Friedan echoes Virginia Woolf's arguments in *Three Guineas:* that the patriarchal oppression of women was akin to a fascist regime and that women were infantilised by this subjugation. Woolf's view also indicated that the infantilisation of women had a sexual element, even within the family. The father's authority over his daughter, reflected, in her opinion, the controlling of women in society at large, and the father's say in his daughter's sexual future, supported by the national patriarchy, arguably disguised a subconscious desire to possess his kin.[6] Woolf's argument inverted Freud's influential description of the Oedipus Complex which assigned the desire for possession to the child, not the parent. As Woolf had experienced sexual abuse herself, her assertion can be seen as an indirect refutation of Freud's theory that cases of incest could be explained away as childhood fantasies, thereby excusing the perpetrators.[7] The notion of 'giving away' a woman in some traditional Christian marriage ceremonies, by a father to his son-in-law, is consequently tarnished with a suggestion of incest. Indeed the husband's transformation from outsider, to son of the family, indicates that incest is to a degree an implicit element of

the structure of society, the re-naming consequently indicates that a daughter is married to her father's son – thus her brother. [8]

In the same year that Betty Friedan's study appeared in bookshops across England and the United States, Iris Murdoch's *The Unicorn* was published in the United Kingdom. Murdoch had written on incest before, most notably in *A Severed Head* (1961), but this was the first time she had written so directly about abuse and the subordination of women. In *A Severed Head* the incest is between adult siblings and there is no doubt that the main female protagonist, Honor Klein, is a strong and capable individual, although the psychological motivation behind the incestuous relationship is not examined in detail. In *The Unicorn* just what constitutes strength and vulnerability is questioned, challenging the reader to re-consider their preconceptions of femininity and human relationships. Murdoch utilises *ekphrasis* to interrogate definitions of femaleness and the accepted roles of women in Western culture, specifically in terms of the relationship between art, society and the Christian religion. She invokes numerous famous paintings through her descriptions of individuals in *The Unicorn* confronting the aesthetic expectations of women and questioning how women are interpreted visually, especially when metaphorically speaking they do not have a voice.

Hannah Crean-Smith is debatably one of the most problematic of Iris Murdoch's heroines. She could be argued to epitomise the enigma of the female sex: appearing to both personify numerous female stereotypes and yet to defy them at the same time. Hannah is portrayed as embodying a confusion of binary oppositions: Madonna and whore; innocent fairy-tale princess and vengeful witch; the passive victim and the calculating murderess; the unattainable lady of courtly devotion and a promiscuous adulterer. Hannah's story is quite obviously set in the modern age (by virtue of the frequent mention of travel by train, cars and aeroplanes), she is also described as being the proprietor of property and extensive land, and yet she appears to be a willing participant in her unlawful imprisonment by her husband. Hannah is surrounded by various figures, predominantly male, who attempt to define her and describe her history in their own terms; but conversely she is not offered the opportunity to tell her own story and it is even intimated that she does not even comprehend her own narrative.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) provide an interesting point of comparison to Murdoch's novel, which is nestled within the time frame of second-wave feminism. Historically the former works are positioned in the first wave of feminism although *Three Guineas* anticipates second-wave feminism. Woolf's assertion that a woman requires 'a room of her own' in order to

write is an extension of her regret that women's voices are not sufficiently represented, and that where women's narratives are published they are often preoccupied with their subordination rather than prioritising their creative enterprise. The idea that a woman would be able to write if she had a room of her own and enough money to live on was developed in *Three Guineas*, where it was implied that this in itself could not secure sufficient autonomy for independent thought to triumph and, crucially, be expressed. *A Room of One's Own*, as the title implies, focuses on the individual and suggests that the solution lies in particulars; *Three Guineas* shows awareness that the problem is much larger than this and is ingrained in the fundamental structure of society. Twenty-five years later Murdoch's novel asks whether money and privacy are of any value to independence, and whether even independent thought can be achieved if an individual is mentally ensnared by the appropriation of her narrative by others.

i. Iris Murdoch and women's liberation

The reader meets Hannah Crean-Smith through the agency of her newly appointed governess, Marian Taylor. Marian eventually learns through one of the servants and an admirer of Hannah, Denis Nolan, that she has been immured in her own property, Gaze Castle, and has not been allowed outside of the garden for the past five years by the decree of her reportedly violent husband, Peter. Hannah's original imprisonment however, commenced seven years prior to the start of the novel when she was found to be committing adultery with Pip Lejour, an occupant of Riders, the only other gentrified house in the otherwise relatively uninhabited landscape. The discovery of the affair led to a tussle between the husband and wife on the cliff top which resulted in Mr Crean-Smith falling and becoming somehow maimed. Peter then left Hannah to the mercy of his newly appointed jailer and one time serf and lover, Gerald Scottow, while he allegedly embarked on an affair in New York with another man. Hannah was originally allowed to roam freely within her own land until she attempted to escape to her father's house after two years and then was confined to the garden, at which point in time she was also subjected to the additional interference of two distant cousins, Violet and Jamesie Evercreech who came to live at the house in the dual roles of servants and prison wardens. The reader is not shown that Hannah is subjected to any physical enforcement of her imprisonment; on the contrary it seems that she accepts it voluntarily although perhaps not sanely. During the course of the narrative Hannah's situation is observed by the inhabitants of Riders: her former lover, Pip; his father, Max (a scholar of Plato); Pip's sister Alice, and Effingham Cooper, who was once a pupil of

Max Lejour. Alice is seems to be suffering from an unrequited love for 'Effie' who in turn is enduring an unconsummated passion for Mrs Crean-Smith. The plot is archaic in its treatment of women, and in its portrayal of masters and servants.

Although admittedly not a strident speaker for the feminist cause Iris Murdoch certainly had sympathies with women as a group and their marginalization. In the year prior to the publication of *The Unicorn,* Murdoch asserted in conversation with Harold Hobson, that she did not believe in the superiority of men, and that women deserved just as "tough an education, academically speaking [...] otherwise, as human beings, they are being cheated, they are being made smaller and less free". She goes on to acknowledge that "men are still trying to suppress women".[9] However, Murdoch's interest in feminism can perhaps best be described as a hope for equality, not to displace either sex at the expense of the other. She displays through her fiction and her critical writing a desire to establish a sexlessness, something androgynous that dispenses with the struggle between the sexes all together, and which would therefore if achieved, lend a purity to her discourse where the concept of the 'truth' she prizes so highly in her philosophical work might be sought by her characters without taint of the bitterness of repression nor the struggle for tyranny. As Murdoch stated in her 1976 interview with Michael Bellamy, she was interested in the female cause because women are human beings and should be treated as such, not because she was necessarily a 'feminist'.[10] Her use of male first-person narrators (Murdoch never employed a female first-person narrator in her novels) can therefore be seen as an attempt to reach a non-gendered or androgynous narrative. Murdoch's desire to achieve such a narrative is closely related to a very similar argument put forward by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) who laments the effects of the suppression of one sex by the other on the success of female novelists. She goes on to discuss at some length how an androgynous narrative where a particular gender is no longer an issue, would improve the writing of a number of authors; and this, Woolf is at pains to point out, is achievable by both men and women alike, although admittedly the repressor is less likely to be distracted by such injustices than the repressed. In a much quoted passage, she criticizes Charlotte Brontë for being distracted by the politics of her gender and allowing her own frustration become apparent in her writing of *Jane Eyre*, whereas she praises Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* for remaining free of such personal anxieties.[11] It is interesting to note that not only did Iris Murdoch express admiration for Virginia Woolf but she also stated that one of the two primary influences for *The Unicorn* was *Wuthering Heights.*[12]

Although there are obvious parallels between *Wuthering Heights* and *The Unicorn,* most notably in the Gothic-Romance elements to both texts, the two opposing houses in a wild landscape;[13] imprisonment of characters in the two novels and at the centre of the plots a tormented and violent love affair; perhaps it was not just the content of Emily Brontë's tale that intrigued Murdoch. Contemporaneous reviewers of *Wuthering Heights* were shocked to learn that it was penned by a woman so it may have been the famously masculine style of the writing and drawing of the characters of *Wuthering Heights*[14] which served as influence for Murdoch's novel. This is a consideration that Deborah Johnson seems to support in *Iris Murdoch* where she refutes Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's argument that male impersonation in literature may undermine a woman's artistic effort and claims that in some cases such as that of Emily Brontë, it may instead strengthen their approach. Johnson writes that Emily Brontë's "*ironic* use of male narration, Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights*, as one of several 'voices' in the narrative, is a more flamboyant subversion of 'explicit cultural norms', and may be closer to what Iris Murdoch is doing with her male narrators".[15] The narrative framing in *Wuthering Heights* is not used in the same way in *The Unicorn* but the story is ultimately divided between a number of different narrative voices, none of them particularly reliable. Although in *The Unicorn* Murdoch does not use a first-person narrator but a third-person omniscient narrator, there are occasions throughout the novel where the male characters narrate Hannah's history through their speech – a task that is never given to one of the female protagonists. Although the presiding voice of the third-person narrator gives the reader insight into Marian's thoughts, Marian does not actually narrate parts of the story. It is particularly striking that Hannah is never asked to relate her own story and makes no attempts to do so. Of the characters that are involved in the action it is Denis and Pip who get the opportunity to also narrate at length. In *Wuthering Heights* the entire tale is narrated by Mr Lockwood, the other narrative voices are mediated through him but even in this sense neither Catherine nor Heathcliff describe their own story, and the same is true of the Crean-Smiths. As Guy Backus writes:

> […] both Hannah and Heathcliff are approached chiefly through other characters. This latter feature aids us in feeling an ambivalence in Heathcliff: one which, having been compared to the source of both Civilization and its Discontents, is easy to duplicate in Hannah using Murdoch's Janus-faced notion of *Eros*.[16]

Catherine and Heathcliff are kept at a distance from the reader and guarded by multiple layers of narrative; Lockwood narrates Nelly's story, who in turn relates the main

action. Hannah and her husband, Peter are similarly enmeshed in a web of other voices. Obviously this playful approach to who tells the story gives the impression of further expanding the distance between the author, and the details of the plot. The use of characters from various social backgrounds, different genders, and those who have different relationships with the central protagonists, however, also creates an impression of reliability about the novel; in the same way that a number of witnesses who establish a similar picture at a court case make the final verdict appear more trustworthy. Arguably for the Victorian Emily Brontë a male first-person frame worked better than a third-person narrator to maintain the integrity of her plot in a period where women authors were considered less able than men, this was a technique her sister Anne also employed in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. That Nelly Dean, the female housekeeper actually voices the majority of the narrative through Mr Lockwood's mediation means that she need not concern herself about sustaining a believable male voice throughout the entirety of the plot. However, for Murdoch, writing in the early 1960s to choose a particular character to assume the responsibility of the narrative would have defeated her purpose, because the mystery of Hannah's background is actually one of the key strengths of the novel. Murdoch ensures that although there are characters with varying degrees of knowledge about Hannah, there is no one but Hannah herself who knows exactly what happened over the full course of the seven years since her initial imprisonment; yet she does not disclose this information. Whereas Lockwood remains largely independent of the story of the Heights and its occupants, Marian, who is the outsider to Gaze at the start of the book and so in theory could have taken up that position, does not remain on the outside but is quickly involved in the plot. It is therefore necessary to have a third-person narrator to oversee the proceedings to give the impression of narrative neutrality and therefore reliability. Another alternative would have been to pursue the unusual course that Murdoch utilises in *The Philosopher's Pupil* which has a narrator who is at once a direct witness to events and yet also an outsider not being named as anything other than 'N', and who also arguably does not interfere in the main events of the plot. However, this novel was published twenty years post the creation of *The Unicorn* and may not have served Murdoch's purposes as well as the third-person narrator, as N is revealed eventually as male which may have been interpreted by readers as indicating a gender bias.

ii. The female myth in *The Unicorn*

There is a tendency amongst critics of Murdoch's work to focus on the allegorical and mythic aspect to *The Unicorn* and thereby to criticise Murdoch for her characterization. A.S. Byatt writes in *Degrees of Freedom:*

> […] whilst it is clearly fair and accurate of the critics to point out that this book, seen as a novel, has a thinness, a lack of interesting life in the characters, these comments serve as much to point the real need we seem to feel for a novel that *has* life in the old sense, as to dismiss the myth we have, which has surely a right to stand or fall as myth. And I do not propose to criticize the characters here as one might legitimately criticize Randall, for being two-dimensional. They are occasionally boring which is another matter and more serious. […] But the myth here I find coherent, and interesting.[17]

She goes on to say that "the book can in some sense be called allegorical".[18] Admittedly the novel does not contain familiar everyday occurrences but that does not necessarily make it unrealistic. As is the case with all of Murdoch's novels and something which she herself has admitted openly, she likes to include incidents which although perhaps something that the reader is not accustomed to experience, could nevertheless occur in the right context and with the right mix of personalities.[19] The loss of Rain Carter's car into the pool in *The Sandcastle*; the raising of the ancient bell by Doris and Toby precipitating Catherine Fawley's suicide attempt in *The Bell;* and even Annette swinging on the chandelier before running away from school in *The Flight From the Enchanter;* are all such incidents which seem fantastic in isolation and have been deemed so on occasion, but they are certainly not impossible, as the attention to detail in the mechanisms of each incident confirms. *The Unicorn* is slightly different from these novels, though, in that the entire plot rests on a seemingly fantastic scenario, in a way that Murdoch's other novels do not. In her other works that include imprisonment, whatever additional complications there are to the situation, there is always a simple reason for the imprisonment itself: in *The Time of the Angels* Elizabeth's immersion has been explained through disability; in *The Message to the Planet* Marcus Vallar is contained due to potential mental illness; and in *The Good Apprentice* Jesse Baltram also suffers from mental illness and may in addition to this be violent. Hannah's acceptance of a punishment for a "crime"[20] which is never made clear in the text, and her *choice* to enter into an apparently medieval way of living, are quite distinct, yet it would be a serious error to dismiss this novel as 'thin' or 'unbelievable', because Murdoch is deliberately playing with the reader's tendency to do just this and on more than one level.

From A.S. Byatt's *Degrees of Freedom* to Guy Backus' recent philosophical work dedicated solely to *The Unicorn*, critics have searched in vain for a 'key'[21] to this most convoluted of works. It is, however, the enigmatic quality of Hannah's predicament that reveals Murdoch's skill, especially if it is considered in the light of a feminist discourse, and particularly one with a specifically religious bent. Murdoch said of *The Unicorn* in the Rose interview, "In a way it is about the spiritual world itself, the curious connections there are between spirituality and sex".[22] It is clear from the title of the novel that it has its roots in religious myth. The unicorn, as Max Lejour points out to Effingham, is a term used for Christ but he is careful to assert that Hannah is not Christ-like.

> 'I'm not sure that I understand,' said Effingham. 'I know one mustn't think of her as a legendary creature, a beautiful unicorn -'
>
> 'The unicorn is also the image of Christ. But we have to do too with an ordinary guilty person.'
>
> 'Do you really see her as expiating a crime?'
>
> 'I'm not a Christian. By saying she's guilty I just mean she's like us. And if she *feels* no guilt, so much the better for her. Guilt keeps people imprisoned in themselves. We must not forget that there *was* a crime. Exactly whose probably doesn't matter now.'[23]

Hannah is 'an ordinary' person, perhaps a guilty one, but the issue of her guilt is never resolved in the novel so it is not possible to prove either way. She is not a mythical creature certainly, although her isolation away from the hustle and bustle of society, from towns and cities, politics, news, and contemporary culture, does make her seem out of the ordinary. She is still a human being, but one in an unusual situation. There is, within the novel - by Hannah and the people that surround her - a tendency to mythologize her situation, to glamorize it; perhaps to make it more bearable for some, and more exciting for others. Marian comes to Gaze to flee an aborted attempt at a love affair which she had hoped was the long awaited "event"[24] in her life; it is easy to see how she might want to see the happenings at Gaze as her 'event' instead. Similarly Effingham who comes to Riders on a holiday away from his post as a Civil Servant in London, and from his incisive and efficient colleague Elizabeth, is also looking to Hannah's drama as a diversion, something different, and again, out of the ordinary. He wonders why he doesn't "react more simply" and concludes that it is because he finds "it all somehow beautiful". [25]

Hannah has also cast herself in the role of doomed heroine, of ascetic, of religious mystic, and of courtly lover. She remains away from society, keeping to the house, apparently chaste since her love affair with Pip and dressing in appropriately

romantic attire: long medieval style gowns, long romantic hair that hangs loose and is reminiscent of a portrait by Edward Burne-Jones or John William Waterhouse; and she has a governess or lady's companion in her employ. All of these details are deliberately archaic. It would be easy to see Hannah as ignorant of her actions but late in the novel when it seems her vigil is at an end and her husband will return, the reader is led to believe she is intimate with Gerald Scottow - it is not clear whether this is an act of violence or mutual consent - and when her role has broken down leaving her as a flawed and very human, woman, she states:

> 'A dream. Do you know what part I have been playing? That of God. And do you know what I have been really? Nothing, a legend. A hand stretched out from the real world went through me as through paper.'
>
> […]
>
> Marian shivered. She wanted to break the mood which was being imposed. She did not want to hear these confidences, to know these plans. She said, with an attempt at briskness, 'Playing God? Surely not. God is a tyrant.'
>
> 'The false God is a tyrant. Or rather he is a tyrannical dream, and that is what I was. I have lived on my audience, on my worshippers. I have lived by their thoughts, by your thoughts – just as you have lived by what you thought were mine. And we have deceived each other.'[26]

Even at this stage Hannah is attempting to give herself a new role in the drama she sees being enacted around her saying, "I must live it all through from the beginning, since everything up to now has been a false start. *Now* is the start."[27] Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* that there is a tendency for oppressed women to see themselves cast in imagined roles in order to make the mundane nature of their existence more interesting; and to try and see it as subscribing to the ideal images of femininity they were given to aspire to as children and as adolescents:

> Richly endowed with her misunderstood treasures, woman shares, in her own eyes, the tragic hero's need for a ruling destiny. Her whole life is transfigured and becomes a sacred drama. In her solemnly selected gown she stands, simultaneously a priestess in sacerdotal robes and an idol adorned by the hands of the faithful and presented for the adoration of the devotees. Her home becomes the temple where her worship is performed.[28]

Admittedly Beauvoir was referring to women who were obliged to be housewives as a result of patriarchal cultural domination and were therefore being unable to fulfil any kind of independent adventure role of their own, but their situation is not really so very different from Hannah's, as Beauvoir writes:

> It is always difficult to describe a myth; it cannot be grasped or encompassed; it haunts the human consciousness without ever appearing before it in a fixed form. The myth is so various, so contradictory that at first its unity is not discerned: Delilah and Judith, Aspasia and Lucretia, Pandora and Athena – woman is at once Eve and the Virgin Mary. She is an idol, a servant, the source of life, the power of darkness; she is the elemental silence of truth, she is artifice, gossip and falsehood; she is healing presence and sorceress; she is man's prey, his downfall, she is everything he is not and that he longs for, his negation and his *raison d'être*.[29]

Hannah's myth is therefore not unique but ubiquitous to all women in various guises. This may account for some critics describing Hannah as an allegory, and she is deliberately portrayed in allegorical terms, but in Hannah's case the situation is so extreme that the human creature underneath the role play is difficult to see. Hannah's immediate circle serves as a microcosm of society in this respect, casting Hannah, the imprisoned female, in a number of guises, several of which Beauvoir lists above. As Hannah, like many women is not described in her own terms but relies upon the narratives of others, particularly men, she is re-invented by them and as a consequence loses sight of herself.

Virginia Woolf famously stated in *A Room of One's Own* that, "it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry".[30] Hannah Crean-Smith has both of these things as Denis indicates, "Hannah Crean-Smith is a rich woman, was a rich girl, rich in her own right […]. This house and all of this land for miles belongs to her"[31] and yet she is depicted as not only incredibly physically lethargic ("Marian was amazed at how much they seemed to sleep"[32]) but also without any particular motivation to use her mind to study or to create anything. Even the reading of *Le Cimetière Marin* and *La Princess de Clèves* by Marian and Hannah is accompanied with an unusual degree of lethargy, and they are described as "almost" falling "asleep over" the latter "at eleven o'clock in the morning."[33] The very title of the poem by Paul Valéry, 'the graveyard by the sea' suggests the extreme lack of life in favour of somnolence in this community. Of course it seems logical to attribute Hannah's lack of creativity to Woolf's assertion that, "[t]he whole of the mind must be wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fullness. There must be freedom and there must be peace."[34] Murdoch is making a point throughout *The Unicorn* that material attributes count for very little when one does not own one's own life or to put it another way, one's own narrative. Hannah may appear to be free in body and to have financial freedom to a certain extent

(there is certainly no sign that anyone at Gaze prevents her from spending as she wishes, as her purchasing of expensive clothes shows), yet she does not act as a free woman. Hannah is constrained by what Woolf refers to in *Three Guineas* as 'the infantile fixation',[35] the infantilisation of women by keeping them at home under the auspices of male authority figure. Denis says that "Gerald is Peter now"[36] but what he omits to say is that as she has been passed from Peter to Gerald, she was also passed from her father to her husband. Peter assumes archaic rights of property over Hannah as his possession.[37] She is his to bestow, as she was her father's to give to him, and her father's refusal to assist her is evidence of this fact, he is no longer responsible for her. Hannah's imprisonment in her home for rebelling against Peter can be seen as a metaphor for the way society kept women subordinated to men and in the home, as Woolf and later Friedan asserted they may have been able legally to work but they could not have the education to make applying for a position a fair competition, and even if they secured a post, they could not earn equal pay. Hannah's education is a 'lady's' education, informal and focussed on the arts and appropriately ladylike languages, French and Italian. Like a Jane Austen heroine she has also been educated in how to dress and to charm. [38] She has few skills to help her survive in the outside world. Marian too, although more capable, is defined by her relationship with Geoffrey, and it is this that directs her to Gaze. The only independent woman in the novel, Elizabeth, has not been married and epitomises Woolf's fears for women entering the competitive fray as described in *Three Guineas.* Woolf stated that if a woman entered Cambridge as it was in 1938 she would not concentrate on "how she can learn, but how she can fight in order that she may win the same advantages of her brothers".[39] Elizabeth is described as both "a relentless career woman" and "a relentless woman", she is "sharp-witted" and in Effingham's opinion "far too clever".[40] This suggests Effingham's misogyny (and by extension of his symbolic role as representative of the civil service, society's misogyny) but also the impact that such attitudes might have had on women's behaviour in the workplace. The very fact that Murdoch's novel so closely resembles Woolf's feminist works, published in 1929 and 1938 respectively, indicates that the treatment of women had not altered greatly, and that sexual equality remained a distant goal to Murdoch's generation, as the imminent Second Wave of Feminism served to prove.

iii. Christianity and female archetypes

In *The Unicorn* Murdoch attempts to go even further back in time to test the patriarchal structure of literature and she does this by connecting Hannah's story to two specific yet interlinking literary traditions, the representation of courtly love and the depiction of the most influential women of Western culture pertaining to Christianity: Eve, the Virgin Mary (or Mary of Nazareth), Mary Magdalene, Hannah mother of Samuel, and Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. The text abounds with reference to these women, the myths surrounding them and their respective histories.

The stories of Eve, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene are particularly pertinent to the tale of Hannah. Hannah is depicted as both virgin and whore, the two roles famously, if not wholly correctly, associated with these women. As Marina Warner writes in *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*:

> […] St Mary Magdalene [...] together with the Virgin Mary, typifies Christian society's attitude to women and to sex. Both female figures are viewed in sexual terms: Mary as virgin and Mary Magdalene as whore – until her repentance.[41]

Hannah's past has her deemed rightly or wrongly as a 'whore' and her long and chaste imprisonment sees her associated with a nun or religious hermit especially considering the religious emphasis she herself puts upon her position.

> '***Forgive me***,' said Hannah.
>
> 'For what?'
>
> 'For so shamelessly crying out for love.' […]
>
> 'Well – you know that I love you,' said Marian. She was surprised to hear herself say this. It was not the sort of thing she came out with usually. Yet it seemed quite natural here, or as if it were compelled from her.
>
> 'Yes. Thank you. I think, don't you, that one ought to cry out more for love, to ask for it. It's odd how afraid people are of ***the word***. Yet we all need love. Even God needs love. I suppose that's why He created us.'
>
> 'He made a bad arrangement,' said Marian smiling. […]
>
> 'You mean because people don't love Him? Ah, but they do. Surely we all love Him under some guise or other. We have to. He desires our love so much, and a great desire for love can call love into being. Do you believe in God?

> 'No,' said Marian. She felt no guilt at this admission, she was too firmly held in the conversation. She had not realised that Hannah was a religious person. She never went to church. 'You do?'
>
> 'Yes, I suppose I do. I've never really questioned it. I'm no good at thinking. I just have to believe. I have to love God.'
>
> 'But suppose you're loving – something that isn't there?'
>
> 'In a way you can't love something that isn't there. I think if you really love, then something *is* there. But I don't understand these things.'[42] (Emphasis mine)

Hannah's choice of words here further emphasises the Christian element to her beliefs, phrases such as: 'the word' and 'forgive', relate specifically to Christianity, to John 1.1 and Matthew 18: 21-22[43] respectively, and her supposed suffering in order to atone for her sins fits with the Christian ethos. Furthermore the names given to the central triad of protagonists in this text refer to Biblical characters. Hannah is the Hebrew version of Anna or Anne, and St Anne was reputed to be the mother of the Virgin Mary. Marian is a derivative of Mary and Ann together and also is reminiscent of Miriam[44] and Mariamne,[45] both thought to be closer to the original form of the name borne by Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary than the more modern, 'Mary'. Marian was also thought to be "bestowed among Roman Catholics in honour of the Virgin Mary".[46] Peter is a direct reference to St Peter the disciple of Christ and one of the four apostles. The reference to Christ through the analogy to the unicorn has already been noted. However, none of the characters of *The Unicorn* are given one parallel Biblical character to emulate in accordance with their given names; rather Murdoch uses these associations to play with ideas of myth and religion, and, ultimately the truth of the narrative.

Hannah's name is associated with two Biblical characters who overcame infertility to conceive due to the grace of God: Hannah the mother of Samuel, and Anne or Anna, purported to be the name of the Virgin Mary's mother. Marina Warner asserts that "Samuel, prodigy child and wise adult, is Christ's prototype as mythic hero, and his mother Hannah is Mary's forbear, a relationship so close that by the second century Mary's mother was called Anna, another form of the name of Hannah, according to the legendary Book of James".[47] Anne's conception of Mary, furthermore is believed by the Catholic Church to be the Immaculate Conception which means that Mary was not conceived in sin. Mary, therefore was free from "all taint of original sin" associated with humanity since the Fall, and she was consequently suitably pure to mother Christ. Yet, as Marina Warner asserts, "[o]f the four declared dogma about the Virgin Mary –

her divine motherhood, her virginity, her immaculate conception, and her assumption into heaven – only the first can be unequivocally traced to Scripture, where Mary of Nazareth is undoubtedly the mother of Jesus".[48] Hannah, however, does not resemble the mother of Samuel, Anne, or Mary in that she is not a mother figure and somewhat strangely considering her sexual activity and the archaic attitudes to marriage exhibited in the novel there is no mention of a past pregnancy. The reader is led to believe that Hannah is decidedly unworldly and yet considering she is reported to have had at least two prolonged sexual affairs, it seems odd that she has not conceived. The emphasis on Hannah and Anne is important, however, in the context of the Immaculate Conception and the religious attitude to sexuality that the novel is examining.

> Through the virgin birth Mary conquered the post-Eden natural law that men and women couple in lust to produce children. Chaste, she escaped the debt of Adam and Eve. Thus the seeds of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which was declared in 1854 and spares Mary all stain of original sin, were implanted during the ascetic movement of the fourth century.[49]

Hannah is viewed as 'virginal' due to her seven years of chastity and her apparent 'choice' to live in what appears to be a similar way to a nun. Denis indicates as much to Marian in their first discussion of Hannah's history:

> 'But I still don't understand. Does she *want* to stay here?"
>
> 'Perhaps. You must know that she is a religious person.'
>
> […]
>
> 'I just can't imagine it. Staying so long in one small place. I'm surprised she hasn't run mad.'
>
> 'There are holy nuns in the convent at Blackport who live forever in smaller places.'
>
> 'But they have faith.'
>
> 'Perhaps Mrs Crean-Smith has faith.'[50]

Even Hannah suggests her long vigil has had religious purpose to it: "Ah, Marian, it is possible to go on and on to suffer, to pray and to meditate, to impose on oneself a discipline of the greatest austerity, and for all this to be nothing, to be a dream."[51] Indeed, part of Hannah's allure to those around her is her long chastity; as soon as that has been ruined by her encounter with Gerald, they lose interest: Effingham thinks he is enamoured with Alice, Denis loses his virginity with Marian; and Marian, who has no particular romantic interest in Hannah, wants to leave: "[…] If only Hannah would go. There was a moment of suffering, a moment of birth, that must be gone through before the new life could be born".[52] Later she thinks, "[h]ow funereal it was, talking about her as if she were dead or at least gone".[53] It is as if with the breaking of her vow of chastity

Hannah has died to her admirers, the sign of ordinary human frailty has made her no longer a subject of interest to them; and to a certain extent she is no longer a blank canvas to impose whatever future they like on her, as she has shown that she is not a fiction but part of the same reality as them. When Hannah discusses her thoughts on herself as a false god and tries to start everything again from the beginning it is perhaps to regain the hold her chastity gave her, as it certainly empowered her, increasing her uniqueness and making the men prize her more as a creature to possess or to rescue. Marina Warner refers to the traditional power of virginity:

> That the mother of God should be a virgin was a matter of such importance to the men of the early Church that it overrode all other considerations, including the evidence of revelation itself. Classical metaphysics contributed to the development of the belief, but the root of it was the Father's definition of evil. Sexuality represented to them the gravest danger and the fatal flaw; they viewed virginity as its opposite and its conqueror, sadly failing to appreciate that renunciation does not banish or overcome desire. It is almost impossible to overestimate the effect that the characteristic Christian association of sex, sin and death has had on the attitudes of our civilisation.[54]

It has been so long since the events that led to Hannah's imprisonment that the others do not see her as a human capable of normal sin, as Effingham indicates when, "[h]e looked down at Pip with awe and envy. This boy had known the simple Hannah of the ordinary world."[55]

The garden imagery in *The Unicorn* is also important to a Biblical connection between Hannah's story and that of Mary and Eve. Hannah's garden, however, is not a paradise; it is a prison which she has not left for five years. The landscape in general is described in frightening terms even when complimentary, and Marian's first impression is that, "[s]he had never seen a land so out of sympathy with man."[56] There is nothing Edenic about the land surrounding Gaze, the garden is not portrayed as a welcome haven away from the rest of the scene but as, "an overgrown garden with a few bedraggled fir trees and a monkey puzzle".[57] This further indicates that any associations with the story of Adam and Eve from Genesis in *The Unicorn* refer to after the Fall. The restriction on Hannah's freedom is a punishment but it also serves to keep her away from temptation and therefore to preserve her fidelity to her husband, despite his own adulteries. This symbolic association between virginity and the cloistered garden is elaborated upon by Marina Warner in reference to Mary of Nazareth:

> Mary's virginal womb was prefigured in the sensual praises of the *Song of Songs*: 'A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed' ('Song of Soloman' 4:12). The

> same intact maidenhead is concealed behind the words of the Lord to Ezekiel: "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, therefore it shall be shut" (Ezekiel 44:2).[58]

Hannah is attempting to absolve herself by her suffering and her chastity to return to a point before she committed her 'crime' but of course this is impossible. The emphasis on the garden does serve to connect the two extremes she attempts to personify though. Mary was seen as a second Eve; through her purity she had, as the quote from Marina Warner above indicates, "escaped the debt of Adam and Eve." She goes on to assert:

> Christian art seized on this suggestive strain, the *gauduim* in the midst of *tristia*. For example, the Sienese master Giovanni de Paolo's gem-like predella panel painted around 1445 (now in the National Gallery, Washington) shows Adam and Eve handed from paradise by an angel, while Mary seated in a pavilion in the same garden of paradise receives the news of the Incarnation from another angelic messenger.[59]

As Iris Murdoch took up teaching at the Royal College of Art shortly after her completion of *The Unicorn* it is likely that there would be the influence of visual art in this novel, especially considering her fascination with painting elsewhere in her work. The notable scenes in the garden see both Hannah and Marian there together, firstly before the music evening when Hannah and Marian have the discussion about religion given above, and then when Marian tries to abduct Hannah with Effingham's assistance in order to free her from her penance. Not only does the garden image with both Eve and Mary present, connect to the garden imagery in *The Unicorn* suggesting Hannah's dual characterisation as temptress and chaste devotee; but it also indicates that Marian can be seen as a Mary of Nazareth character in some respects placed as a possible 'virgin' in opposition to Hannah as the 'fallen woman'. Marian's virginity is never unequivocally stated but she is shown not to have had any serious relationships prior to the start of the novel and to be something of an innocent. The character Hannah most resembles is Mary Magdalene, famed for being the 'penitent whore'. Iris Murdoch had a personal interest in Mary Magdalene, even casting herself in this role with her Oxford tutor, Donald MacKinnon, in the role of Christ, as Peter J. Conradi writes in his biography of Iris.[60] Hannah's story as it is embellished by those that surround her with very little concern for the truth, more closely resembles that of Mary Magdalene's as it is understood in popular culture. As Marina Warner writes:

> In the *Golden Legend*, Jacopus de Varagine tells us that Mary was the proprietor of the town of Magdala, while her brother Lazarus owned "a large part of Jerusalem" and her sister Martha the town of Bethany. "And for so much as she shone in beauty

> greatly, and in riches, so much the more she submitted her body to delight." But penitence led her to Christ, and after she had washed and anointed his feet, she became his close friend, to whom he first chose to appear.[61]

There may be little historical truth or canonical scriptural support for many of the occurrences in the *Golden Legend* but the very extravagance of the claims it makes are easily associated with Hannah's own story. This quote from the *Golden Legend* is very reminiscent of Hannah's situation; she is the rich young woman, who gave her body and then repented.

The use of Christian art throughout the text further enforces the Virgin-whore duality throughout the novel and the association between Hannah and Mary Magdalene; and Marian and the Virgin Mary. Hannah's physical appearance is quite obviously intended to associate her with the Magdalene in visual art. Susan Haskins writes on Mary Magdalene that:

> The predominant image we have of her is of a beautiful woman with long golden hair, weeping for her sins, the very incarnation of the age old equation between feminine beauty, sexuality and sin. […] She appears in countless devotional images, scarlet-cloaked and with loose hair…"[62]

Hannah is similarly attractive, something that is remarked on repeatedly throughout the text. On Marian's first meeting with her employer she describes her as, "not exactly beautiful, yet strikingly lovely. She had a tangle of reddish gold hair and eyes of almost the same colour".[63] Further on through the text Hannah's hair is drawn attention to, when Denis cuts it for her. Her hair is usually loose and described as "plentiful";[64] both of which characteristics were deemed as indications of "moral laxity" in Christian art work.[65] Mary Magdalene is frequently depicted with uncovered or partially uncovered, loose gold-red hair. Jusepe de Ribera depicts Mary Magdalene with long golden hair in *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1620s),[66] as does Annibale Caracci in *The Dead Christ Mourned ('The Three Maries')* (about 1604).[67] In contrast, Marian is shown to have short neat dark hair but the attractive, engaging maids at Riders that Effingham lusts after are also red haired. One maid, Carrie, is even brought into the story by accidentally betraying Effingham's plans to run away with Hannah, and also because she donates a lock of her hair to Pip Lejour for his fishing bait. This latter incident is indicated by Guy Backus to show that Pip and Carrie may have had a more involved relation,[68] something which is possible, and would further emphasise the binary opposition between the two distinct groups of women. Susan Haskins remarks that throughout art history "gold" hair has been considered the aesthetic "ideal" and blonde

hair has often been associated with purity. During the Renaissance red-gold hair was particularly popular with women even going to great lengths to dye their hair this colour. However, Haskins also asserts that loose, long, thick hair is a sign of "moral laxity";[69] and red hair has, according to Victoria Sherrow, been associated in many cultures with a "tempestuous nature", "witchcraft", and it was even thought to be the hair colour of Judas Iscariot.[70] The display of such an abundance of attractive reddish-blonde hair therefore depicts Mary Magdalene as both extremes of her role: a seductress displaying her charms but also a woman purified and redeemed through Christ. Hannah can be seen to exemplify a similarly ambivalent role until her sexual liaison with Gerald. This dual nature associated with golden hair which incorporates both blonde and red, is also shown through the character of Alice Lejour, who also has golden hair but her hair is short, suggesting restraint. However, her mother was "reputedly a beautiful redhead"[71] so it seems probable that she, like Hannah has a red hue to her hair, to characterise it as not simply blonde. Alice is also eventually depicted as a temptress, because of her attempted seduction of Denis, but the predominant image of her through the text is as a non-sexual woman, pure and unattractive, which her short hair indicates, providing a comparison to Hannah's sexual appeal and her long hair. Alice's hair conveys the restraint usually associated with the Magdalene's opposite, the Madonna.

The Virgin Mary, unlike Mary Magdalene, is frequently depicted with hair that is concealed at least in part by a veil which removes any ambiguity about her intentions; the concealing of her hair makes it clear that she is not displaying her charms and trying to entice the opposite sex. *The Visitation of the Virgin to Saint Elizabeth* (around 1515) from the Workshop of the Master of 1518,[72] *The Virgin and Child* (1496-1505) by Marco Basaiti[73], and *Lamentation* (1515-1523) by Gerard David,[74] are three of innumerable depictions of Mary of Nazareth dressed in blue, which as Marina asserts "is the colour of the Virgin"[75] and with her hair modestly covered. This restraint of her hair mirrors the restraint of her person and consequently is a sign of not only virtue but of a conscious absence of sexual allure. Marian's hair is dark and short, suggesting a similarly virginal appearance, and she also conspicuously wears blue, favouring a blue cocktail dress that is in the course of the narrative deemed to be inelegant compared to the items Hannah has chosen for her. That the blue dress is both favoured by Geoffrey, the object of her past unrequited love, and also that it is unsophisticated, shows that it hearkens back to the simplicity of her previous existence and an unconsummated passion. Hannah's elegance is attributed to her being "beautifully trained"[76] in how to dress, indicating artifice and wealth have influenced her choices. This makes Marian

appear to be making a journey from innocence or naiveté to knowledge and corruption. Similarly the unattractive and unfriendly maids at Gaze have dark hair covered with a cap, providing a contrast to the sexually appealing maids at Riders.

Even more intriguingly, in early paintings of Mary Magdalene she is "naked by implication, for, with few exceptions, her body is generally covered from head to foot with hair".[77] Although Hannah is not similarly spared from immodesty simply by her hair she is frequently in her gold dressing gown an item that gives the impression of her being covered gold in the same way and also indicates that she in a state of undress. Susan Haskins explains that, "the body was regarded as the source of sin and, in Christian iconography, its various states of dress and undress signify some kind of moral judgement"[78] and that whereas nakedness could be a positive attribute in the depictions of some individuals, for Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt (also considered a prostitute) it "always relates to their femaleness and their sexuality". Titian (whose painting, *The Flaying of Marsyas,*[79] was a favourite of Murdoch's and was used to great effect in her fiction) painted a number of depictions of Mary Magdalene with hair that is golden-red in hue.[80] Mary Magdalene is similarly presented, dressed in gold fabric in a number of depictions, such as Carracci's *The Dead Christ Mourned ('The Three Maries');*[81] Rogier van der Weyden's *The Magdalene Reading,*[82] in which a glimpse of gold fabric can be seen beneath her green overskirt; and Artemisia Gentileschi's *The Penitent Magdalene*[83] whose Magdalene is particularly provocatively attired as Haskins describes:

> She too is caught in the moment of conversion as she puts her hand out to reject the jewels – attributes of the *vanitas* – as is the mirror in which her profile and pearl earring are reflected which doubles, as in Caravaggio's painting the vehicle of the truth. She wears a sumptuous low-cut gold damask gown over a chemise. […] (The gold of the Magdalene's gown may relate to the liturgical colours for her feast day which were white and/or gold, the latter referring to the Contemplatives. She also wears gold in Barocci's Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene and gold and green in Domenichino's Ecstasy [St Petersburg].[84]

A great number of devotional images appear to have influenced the visual impact of Hannah and every time the colour of her clothes is brought attention to it can be linked to a painting of Mary Magdalene. In Caravaggio's *The Conversion of the Magdalene* (1598)[85] she wears lilac, and in Bartolmé Esteban Murillo's *Mary Magdalene,*[86] Jusepe de Ribera's *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1620s)[87] and Frederick Sandys' *Mary Magdalene Tears, Idle Tears* (1862),[88] Mary Magdalene is depicted in mauve. This is the colour that Hannah wears to the music evening, and to examine her jewellery

in the garden with Marian. Rogier Van Der Weyden's *The Magdalene Reading* (Pre. 1438);[89] *The Crucifixion* by the Workshop of the Master of 1518;[90] and Bernadino Luini's *Conversion of Mary Magdalene* (1520),[91] all show her wearing green which is the colour Hannah wears to meet Effingham. However, perhaps the most relevant paintings to Hannah's story are Caravaggio's *The Conversion of the Magdalene* (1598),[92] referred to by Haskins above, and Barnadino Luini's *The Conversion of the Magdalene* (1520),[93] both of which are close replicas of the scene where Hannah and Marian sit in the garden looking at her jewellery with the mirror. Both paintings depict Mary Magdalene and Martha (reputed by some to be Mary's sister) and show them wearing expensive outfits made with huge amounts of material, but whereas Martha's are conservative, Mary's are ostentatiously rich, and colourful. In Caravaggio's illustration Mary is seated with her arm leaning on a looking glass, a comb on the table in front of her symbolises her concern with appearances, and Martha is talking to her, presumably trying to persuade her to lead a more Christian life. In Luini's portrait there is no mirror but Mary is wearing a conspicuous piece of jewellery hung upon her *décolletage*, and has, like Hannah, long auburn hair. It is easy to see Hannah as Magdalene, and Marian as Martha, the more sensible of the two. Martha is also the Biblical character depicted as doing the housework whilst Mary listened to Christ (Luke 38-42), and here again there is a parallel in that Marian is certainly the worker whereas as Hannah is the one who remains at leisure. Hannah, just like Caravaggio's Magdalene, wears "a light mauve dress of heavy grained silk with a tight high bodice". She wears "a gold chain around her neck" and looks "like some painter's dream of 'ages far agone'".[94] However, in the scene from *The Unicorn* it is Hannah trying to entice Marian to emulate her and it is at this point that Marian firstly seems to see the allure of this dramatic alternative existence.

> Hannah had just clipped round Marian's neck a necklace of little pearls and rubies set in gold. She stared at herself in the mirror. The necklace was like something out of the Victoria and Albert Museum. She had never even remotely coveted such an object. It seemed to change her, to change even the blue dress. Something, whether it was the necklace or the golden light or the mirror itself, enchanted by so often reflecting the lovely face of its owner, made her for a moment see herself as beautiful.[95]

It is also, as the quotations given earlier show, Hannah whoattempts to convince Marian to believe in God, whereas if Hannah is seen as the sinner it should be Marian in the virtuous role of Martha. Yet, what kind of a god Hannah is extolling the virtues of worshipping is not clear. She never states that it is the Christian God she is referring to,

and going on her later claims over her own 'false god' status it could be deemed that Hannah wants Marian to see her as someone to idolise if only for her attempt to emulate the contemplative life.

Mary Magdalene, it has recently been claimed, has been misrepresented by popular culture which further enforces the connection to Hannah who also suffers from a misrepresentation of her own history. A catalyst for the research that has led to the renaissance of her image was the discovery and later publication of a number of Gnostic texts, known as such because they emphasise salvation through the spirit and personal mystical experience with the divine.[96] These texts, which feature many of the individuals known through the New Testament, portray a unique picture of the relations between the sexes in the group surrounding Jesus. As Haskins describes, "the Pistis Sophia, in which Mary Magdalene appears, was sold in 1785 to the British Museum from the collection of the antiquary Dr Anthony Askew" and the Gospel of Mary was bought in Cairo 1896.[97] It was not, however, until 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, when a number of other non-canonical biblical texts were discovered that the Gospel of Mary gained the attention of the general public. These books had a strange history, and it is likely that the Early Church had attempted to suppress them as heretical.[98] When discovered in 1945 by Muhammad Ali al Samman, his mother burnt several of the texts perhaps fearing the result of revealing their contents. There is no knowing what they contained; others were sold on the black market.[99] As the Gospel of Mary was first translated from the Coptic to French in 1955; it is sufficiently likely that not only could Iris Murdoch have heard of the furore surrounding these texts, but that she may have actually read the Gospel of Mary herself and been effected by the different picture this creates of Mary Magdalene. She may also have been aware of the potential affect this could have on the patriarchal structure of the Church and of society. As Haskins states:

> […] some of the documents are remarkable for their unique interpretations of the role of Mary Magdalene. Among the groups of disciples who appear in these Gnostic writings are characters who also appear in the New Testament so that one quite naturally finds Peter, Thomas, Philip or James as revealers of Christ's mysteries; but in an extraordinary contrast with the presentation of the community around Christ in the synoptics, and in subsequent interpretations, these groups incorporated women – such as Salome and Martha and especially, Mary Magdalene - and do not appear to have differentiated between their roles. In the Gnostic writings the women's importance is also stated, rather than merely hinted at as in the New Testament: they are disciples. It is a woman, Mary Magdalene, who has a major role in several of these writings, and is the only

> female figure from the New Testament to have one of the apocryphal texts, the Gospel of Mary, named for her. The Gnostic Mary Magdalene contrasts, strongly, therefore, with the figure that emerges from conventional interpretations of the New Testament. [100]

It is clear from the, albeit incomplete Gospel of Mary that the author saw her as having a privileged position amongst the disciples, and subject to some jealousy from the others, especially Peter as a result of this, such as the occasion when Mary attempts to share a vision she has had from Christ with the rest of the group:

> Then Andrew began to speak, and said to his brothers:
> "Tell me, what do you think of these things she has been telling us?
> As for me, I do not believe
> that the Teacher would speak like this.
> These ideas are too different from those we have known."
> And Peter added:
> "How is it possible that the Teacher talked
> in this manner with a woman,
> about secrets of which we ourselves are ignorant?
> Must we change our customs
> and listen to this woman?
> Did he really choose her and prefer her to us? [101]

A similar scenario occurs in the Pistis Sophia (a later Latin text which is likely to be derived from the originally titled, Questions of Mary, and is referred to in Epiphanus but is now a lost text).[102] Peter is reported as being infuriated that Mary continues to speak while the men remain silent but Jesus says that anyone might speak if they so choose.[103] According to Haskins the canonical gospels also indicate that Mary had a more important role than is general thought in popular culture.

> The gospels of Mark and John describe how, after his resurrection, Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene. Yet within only a few generations of Christ's death, the Orthodox Church was emphasising following Luke's account of the resurrection, that Christ had appeared first to Simon Peter (24:34: 'The Lord has arisen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon') […] But the assertion that it was to Peter that Christ first appeared, in face of the Mary Magdalene tradition, had, it has been argued, an essentially political end: it legitimized the claims of these men to assume authority within the Church. [104]

Susan Haskins is joined by David Tresamer and Laura-Lea Cannon in their Preface to *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* in arguing that Mary Magdalene's reputation has been significantly altered throughout history for a variety of reasons but on a number of

occasions to further promote the importance of men over women, and to impress upon women even further the identification of women with sexual sin. Tresamer and Cannon write that it was not until 1969 that the Catholic Church officially stated that Mary Magdalene was not a "whore".[105] Both of these books on Mary Magdalene explain that she was wrongly identified with other characters in the Bible. Some of these are: the unnamed 'woman sinner' who cries at Christ's feet in Luke 7:36-50;[106] the adulteress who is to be stoned in John 8:3;[107] and with the 'woman of Samaria' who had 'five husbands' John 4: 4-42.[108]

Hannah has suffered a similar fate to Mary Magdalene in that her history is not her own. Her ability to speak has also been hampered by her oppression in favour of male dominance, and as if to direct the reader to the Biblical reference, the leader of masculine power in *The Unicorn* is also called Peter. The 'crime' that Hannah is supposed to have committed is both her adultery with Pip Lejour and that she may have deliberately pushed her husband off the cliff top in their ensuing argument. Hannah does not talk about either of these events directly. Marian learns about her history through Denis Nolan, yet even before he begins talking, Marian gives his story a religious bent by stating, "the moment of revelation had come".[109] He says that, "[s]he is shut up by her husband because she deceived him and tried to kill him".[110] There doesn't appear to be any evidence, though, or indeed any reliable witness to attest that Hannah did indeed intend to push Peter off the cliff; that it didn't happen accidentally without her involvement, he may have stumbled, or she may have pushed him away as an act of self-defence. Denis does continue to state that Hannah was married "very young" and that her husband was also her "first cousin" which although legal serves to further immerse her in a relationship which is described by Denis as "violent". Peter Crean-Smith is also termed by him as a "runner after women".[111] How much Hannah can be blamed for either of these 'crimes' is something that is left purposively enigmatic but what is important is that the crimes are part of Hannah's story, and whether she accepts them or not does not matter particularly to the reader, or to Hannah, because they have been attributed to her anyway. She is not given a voice of her own and even if she were, the idea of her 'owning' these crimes has become so immersed in the group consciousness that surrounds her she probably would not be believed. It is when Marian threatens to ask Hannah for her own story that Denis is moved to talk in the first place. Yet why is it so terrible that Hannah should be asked about her own life,especially considering that Marian has a justifiable reason for wanting to know what it is she is herself becoming involved in? Max Lejour also states that it doesn't matter

whose crime it was when he is questioned by Effingham but his point is different; he considers it fundamentally unimportant to Hannah as a person to know whether she attempted to murder her husband, but not with the motivation to condemn her as many of the others do, rather to try and deal with the situation as it has manifested itself. He sees that she is blamed for the crime and that something did happen to Peter as a result (directly or indirectly) of her actions, and that Hannah has accepted this. Max seems to be implying that the initial catalyst for her long punishment is no longer as relevant to what to do next, as how the situation stands in the present. In this it seems that Max has ceased to see Hannah as a person, rather she has become a theoretical preposition to him. Max may not be trying to condemn Hannah in the same way that Gerald or Violet are, but his method no more helps Hannah to find autonomy than theirs. However, in the terms of the novel Murdoch does not need to state what the truth is because the very point she is trying to make is that people, women especially, are subjected to being defined by myths that are not necessarily reality and this can have potentially terrible consequences.

The second, and only other time, Hannah's past is narrated is when Effingham asks Pip Lejour to explain the situation to him. Again Effingham chooses not to ask Hannah directly and even then it is clear Hannah has become something 'other' to Effingham, as Hannah says when they are first reunited in the novel, "I'm a story for you. We remain on romantic terms."[112] As her comments on herself as a false God shows, Hannah has become enthralled with the idea of herself as a heroine in a fiction; albeit a notion she may have dispelled herself at any time. In addition to this there is an emphasis on translation throughout *The Unicorn*, which again puts the focus on knowledge and methods of conveying information. Marian is employed because she can speak French with Hannah and they read both *Le Cimetière Marin* and *La Princesse de Clèves* in French. The reader is also told that Denis, much to Marian's surprise speaks French and it is likely that Hannah also speaks Italian as the original advertisement issued from Gaze asks for a governess with knowledge of both French and Italian, although they do not attempt any literature in Italian in the course of the novel. Marian also starts to learn Greek under Effingham Cooper's tuition, and Effingham states that he looks forward to reading Greek with Max when he goes to stay at Riders, Max is of course proficient in Greek as he is a scholar writing a book on Plato. The emphasis, however, is not just on communication but also on fiction and philosophy, neither of which are necessarily associated with action. As a philosopher and an academic Max's working persona extends into his treatment of Hannah about whom he theorises, but he

never attempts to go to her. Effingham, Marian, and even Hannah herself, view her as sort of fictional heroine of one sort or another throughout the novel. Only Gerald and Peter have travelled abroad, and Pip calls Effingham a "romantic ass" when he suggests Gerald remains at Gaze, stating that Gerald has been "heard of" in "Rome", "Paris", "Tangiers", "Marrakesh".[113] Gerald, then, is also likely to have developed some proficiency in other languages. Interestingly it is also Gerald and Peter, who are depicted as the people who act and see their actions through. Marian and Effingham's attempt to free Hannah, just like Jamesie's earlier effort, ultimately fails. Even Denis who tries to force himself past Gerald to speak to Hannah in the final stages of the novel is pushed roughly down the stairs and does not repeat the attempt. Denis's position is slightly more complicated though, as his second language skill is not associated directly with stories and theories in the same way as the others, and he does manage to act decisively when he kills Peter. Language skills are, however, for the majority of the narrative linked to story-telling and academic pursuits not to the real world, further enforcing the notion that the language available is a poor form of communication and is distinct from the truth. Denis' final act towards Peter destroys him via his own means, and also shatters the romantic story that has enmeshed the characters.

The emphasis on the Greek language, however, also relates to the Bible and to the Gnostic gospels. For the purposes of this argument one of the most important problems in understanding that has resulted from translating the canonical gospels of the Bible, are the words of the resurrected Christ when He reveals himself to Mary Magdalene in the Gospel of John. The difficulty is described by David Tresamer and Laura-Lea Canon:

> Jesus Christ responds in the King James version (John 20:17), "Do not touch me." The Latin translation is, "*Noli me tangere."* These words have been interpreted as confirmation that Mary Magdalene still carries some of the taint from her sins. […] Indeed, many statues with the inscription, *Noli me tangere* depict a woman a transcendent Jesus Christ and a woman below him, grovelling in the ultimate shame of rejection.
>
> […] If we look at the words in the original Greek, the meaning translates a little differently. "*Me mou aptou"* uses the imperative mood of the verb *(h)aptain*, "to fasten." A better translation would then be, "Don't hold onto me" or "Don't cling to me."
>
> Now for the full line: "Do not hold onto me for I am not yet ascended to the Father." Jesus refers to the resurrected body that exists between the earthly body and the ascended body.[114]

This misinterpretation of Christ's words has further reinforced the errors in the understanding of Mary Magdalene's character and shows how one event can be misrepresented as a result of interpretation, even incredibly important events. Such emphasis on language and literature and the difficulties that surround it should also draw the reader's attention to the unreliability of narrative and that one story may be very differently portrayed depending on the teller. This is a central problem to the plot of *The Unicorn* and the portrayal of religion therein. Not only did parts of the Bible, when translated, sometimes lead to the misrepresentation of events, but many of the Gnostic texts found, including the Gospel of Mary, were in Coptic and thought to have been originally written in Greek. In addition to this the Berlin Codex (which could list the Gospel of Mary amongst its works) also included original fragments of Plato's *Republic*, which is a convenient connection between this find and Max Lejour's scholarly pursuits. These texts were translated from Greek to Coptic and then finally to French and English, which are the languages mentioned in the novel, with the addition of Italian which is also obviously connected, as it is the root of Latin, the language of the Vulgate.

iv. Oppression, subjugation and sexuality

It is clear in *The Unicorn* that there is a masculine versus feminine rivalry throughout the text, something that is reflected in the Gospel of Mary and in the Pistis Sophia by the rivalry between Mary Magdalene and Peter. This friction between the two sexes is also one consideration which lends understanding to the otherwise problematic treatment of homosexuals in the novel. Iris Murdoch was very much in support of homosexuals, as Tammy Grimshaw writes in *Sexuality, Gender and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction*:

> As she planned how best to represent a social dialogue illustrating then conflicting societal views on male homosexuality, she wrote, "Permissive society? Not for queers and women!" in the draft of one novel.[115]

In the other works in Murdoch's *oeuvre* she treats homosexuality both sensitively and successfully. Her depiction of Michael in *The Bell* is done with skill to achieve the reader's sympathy considering that he is keen to embark on an affair with a teenager he is teaching, a boy whose later suicide may or may not be connected with this early encounter. Yet in *The Unicorn* the homosexual characters are shown to be unpleasant protagonists who are sexual predators, seeking gratification either simply for their own

pleasure or to gain power over others. This is distinctly out of key with Murdoch's other works and her personal views, so it seems likely she was making a more complex assertion.

In order for the feminist discourse and emphasis on the loss of the independent feminine voice to work effectively there must be a distinct binary opposition put in place in the novel between men and women, and in *The Unicorn* there is not one strong relationship between the two sexes. The same sex relationships as indicated above are no better but they are cemented in a way the male-female connections are not, albeit through master-slave scenarios. Peter's relationship with Gerald, like Gerald's relationship with Jamesie has one person in the partnership in a superior position to the other in a way that could be perceived as abusive. Peter's domination over Gerald was achieved due to the difference in social status between the two, as Pip explains to Effingham:

> Peter's attitude to Gerald was a sort of sexual feudalism. I dare say it has fancier names. Gerald was his man, his servant, his serf. He encouraged Hannah and everyone else, as I remember to treat Gerald as a menial, even to kick him around a bit. And of course that was all part of the game. They both enjoyed themselves enormously.[116]

Despite this, or rather perhaps because of this, when Peter leaves to pursue his affair with Sandy Shapiro in New York he is reported by Denis to have brought Gerald Scottow to Gaze to enforce Hannah's imprisonment. If it is true that Peter put Gerald in this position rather than Gerald simply being an employee who has taken it upon himself, then their relationship continues to be strong, although of a different sort, as this is quite an unusual task and one undertaken at personal risk. The characterization of Gerald leaves it as an open possibility that Peter may not actually have installed him as jailer although that is the common interpretation of events by those that surround Hannah. Pip says that Gerald was jealous enough after being abandoned in favour of Sandy to betray Hannah's affair to Peter. Gerald is shown to be cold, manipulative, and possibly capable of raping Hannah as it isn't clear whether their implied intercourse is mutually agreed to or not. His relationship with Peter could certainly be interpreted as abusive, or sadomasochistic.

Gerald's next relationship (that is made explicit to the reader) is with Jamesie Evercreech, whose age Guy Backus deems to be about nineteen as opposed to Gerald who is thought by Backus to be in his "early forties"[117] and is therefore considerably Jamesie's senior. The relationship between Gerald and Jamesie is again depicted in

terms of a master-slave dialect as Denis reveals to Marian that after Gerald discovered Jamesie trying to help Hannah escape he becomes Gerald's slave:

> '[…] And Scottow found him packing the bag and made him confess.'
>
> 'What happened then?'
>
> 'Scottow gave him a tremendous whipping.'
>
> 'Good heavens, poor Jamesie. But -'
>
> 'And after that he was Scottow's slave.'
>
> 'You mean – he abandoned Hannah – he went over to Gerald?'
>
> 'After Scottow had laid hands on him like that, Jamesie worshipped Scottow and Scottow took Jamesie. That's how it was.' [118]

Jamesie is also likely to have an unusual sexual history quite apart from the sadomasochistic nature of his relationship with Gerald. He arrived at the house five years prior to the start of the novel with his sister Violet, after Hannah's failed escape attempt to her father's house. The Evercreeches were chosen as they are Hannah's "nearest living relatives, after her husband, now her father is dead".[119] Marian considers that Violet "could have been forty or sixty",[120] and Backus writes that, "Hannah's cousin, Violet Evercreech, is introduced as "'Jamesie's big sister, practically his Ma' (20). More primitivism – incest – makes its entrance."[121] If Violet is nearer sixty years old than forty, then such a large age gap between the siblings would mean they could not have had the same mother, so for them to be sister and brother they must have shared a father, but the emphasis in the same family on continuing with marriages despite terrible circumstances, seen in Hannah's father's dismissal of her when she tried to escape from Peter, makes it unlikely their father would have remarried unless he was made a widower. Hannah's relationship with her husband is clearly described as untenable, not only by virtue of her husband's adulteries with both genders, but by his violence which was presumably sexual as well as more generally physical if his interest in sadomasochism with Gerald is taken into account; yet her father sent her back to endure her punishment. This indicates that there is nothing that merits the separating of a married couple in the view of her family. The only other explanation which is implied through the textual reference and by Backus is that Violet was both sister and mother to Jamesie, which if Violet's age is forty or sixty is a possibility. This, when considered in the context of Hannah marrying her first cousin, and of the distinct identification of the local people as either red haired and attractive, or dark haired and unappealing, indicates that they may be related. That the maids at Gaze, are described as sharing physical

abnormalities to their backs and eyes further enforces the likelihood of incest. It is improbable that there would be so many people so closely resembling each other in one small area had there been many other individuals from different locations marrying into the local families. Jamesie's relationship with Violet is certainly peculiar, knowing that Jamesie has become intimately connected with Gerald by virtue of a failed rescue attempt of Hannah, she still encourages Marian to embark on an affair with him, whilst simultaneously making advances towards Marian herself. This shows the kind of sexual fluidity at play in this novel and the hypocritical disregard for conventional morality despite attempting to enforce such morality in others. Violet's violence and aggression, both stereotypically male characteristics, as well as her predatory sexuality seems to place her in the masculine group of the novel and further suggests that she supports the patriarchal domination at Gaze.

However, Violet's sexual interest in women may place her in a third group, away from the binary opposition in the novel between men and women. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* draws attention to Monica Wittig's controversial assertion that a lesbian is not a woman.

> A woman, she argues, only exists as a term that stabilizes and consolidates a binary and oppositional relation to a man; that relation, she argues, is heterosexuality. A lesbian, she claims, in refusing heterosexuality is no longer defined in terms of that oppositional relation. Indeed, a lesbian, she maintains, transcends the binary opposition between a woman and a man; a lesbian is neither a woman or a man.[122]

In this respect Violet could have been a character that would have served to cross the boundaries and act as a peacemaker between the overbearing males and the less powerful females at Gaze; but although she does undertake many stereotypical female duties in her role as housekeeper, it is clear her allegiance is with Gerald and Peter as the oppressors. Her behaviour towards Hannah, Marian, and Jamesie, is overbearing and intimates a desire to dominate and oppress others herself. As many other people at Gaze and at Riders know the nature of the relationship between Gerald and Jamesie it is fair to assume that she does as well, and yet she allows it to continue. She has no sympathy with Hannah's plight even making it clear that she thinks Hannah deserves her punishment; and after her death that she resents not being a beneficiary of the will. Violet is, therefore, not free from the heterosexual binary opposition as she does her best to enforce it in others lives even if she does not wholly embrace it in her own. She certainly serves Gerald in a subservient way like a housewife and expects Hannah to obey her husband via Gerald whatever that may mean. No matter what Violet's sexual

preferences are, she adheres to the expected power structure of the male-female gender distinction in line with traditional heterosexual marital unions, and therefore must be seen to remain in support of the patriarchy in place at Gaze.

Just prior to the second wave of feminism this is certainly an assertion by Murdoch on the unreasonableness of the domination of one group of values or characteristics at the expense of another. However, Murdoch is arguably making a point about all such domination of others, whether that be due to another's youth, their gender, their sexuality or some other feature of the individual which gives another person an opportunity to exploit them. The ease with which men could have multiple sexual partners and commit adultery did not extend to their female counterparts anymore in the early 1960s than it did in Biblical times, or in the period of courtly love, which Murdoch draws upon so expertly in *The Unicorn*, as Marina Warner asserts:

> Bernard de Ventadour tells his lady that if her husband beats her she must not let him beat love from her heart. The lines reverberate unpleasantly: in this world of song and courtesy, tournaments and gallantry, did men beat their wives?
>
> The rules of courtly love describe the alchemy of human emotion; they do not alter the structure of society. A woman might be the lord of her troubadour, but she remained the vassal of her husband.[123]

However, it is not just patriarchal control over women that is examined in the *The Unicorn*; certainly, it would seem that Hannah is at the mercy of male influences, but her relationship with Peter is reflected by Gerald's abusive relationship with Peter, which is in turn mirrored by Gerald's abusive affair with Jamesie. It is reasonable to assume that Gerald and Peter still have a connection of some degree if indeed he is paid "handsomely, handsomely"[124] as Pip Lejour seems to think he is. Pip's conversation with Effingham even suggests the possibility that Gerald may visit Peter in America.

> '[…] I've heard of Gerald in Rome, in Paris, in Tangiers, in Marrakesh - '
>
> 'In New York?'
>
> 'Ah – that's another mystery - '
>
> 'But will Peter come back – for her, for Gerald? Will he set Gerald free, will he set Gerald free after seven years? Is there unfinished business between them?'
>
> 'I don't know,' said Pip. 'I'm damned cold,' he said, and began to get up. He was shivering.
>
> 'After all,' said Effingham. 'Whatever the advantages for Gerald, surely he wouldn't stay here unless there was, between him and Peter, unfinished business?'

'I don't know, I don't know. We shall be late for dinner.'[125]

In a similar fashion Jamesie remains loyal to Gerald. After his initial infatuation with Marian, he soon retreats and whatever his reasons for this are (potentially some kind of threat by Gerald), the many photographs of Gerald displayed in Jamesie's private space show that he is still attached to Gerald in spite of, or perhaps because of Gerald's domination of the relationship. Hannah, too, does not leave Gaze despite the distance of Peter and the presence of at least two men (Pip and Effingham) who would gladly assist her in her departure should it be necessary, men that would be able to defend her against Gerald if that was her choice. It is therefore reasonable to presume that, like Gerald, she still has some degree of feeling for her husband however complicated that might be. Yet, Hannah's relationship with Peter seems to have completely broken down, as despite the ongoing controlling presence of Peter throughout the book, Hannah has not seen her husband for seven years. Gerald's connections with Peter, however, and with Jamesie, are still current and it is possible that Gerald is still sexually involved with Peter. This indicates that the homosexual relationships in this novel are stronger than the heterosexual relations. However, as stated earlier it is also possible that Gerald has taken on a role not designated for him by Peter at all; he may be paid to be at Gaze as just another employee and have undertaken the gaoler position of his own accord. There is no communication from Peter given to the reader to prove this either way.

Whether it be motivated by self-preservation, despair or jealousy, Hannah's hatred of Gerald is sufficient at the end to murder him. The murder of Gerald occurs after two important events, firstly the telegram which appears to come from Peter stating his intention to return and secondly Hannah's implied sexual liaison with Gerald. After these two events she says to Marian, "I think he didn't send the cable at all. That it was a fake. But I shall never know",[126] and she attributes her ensuing actions as a result of "temporary madness".[127] Whether Gerald manipulated events by sending a 'fake' telegram from Peter to Hannah in order to make her act recklessly or to gain more power over her and the others, is impossible to say. What is likely is that Gerald took advantage of the situation, and whether Hannah actually spoke the words agreeing to have sex with him or not, that it was an abusive situation with Gerald in control. Hannah's immediate reaction to the news of Peter's return is hysteria. She then rests for a while before asking Gerald to see her, and then the door to her rooms are locked so nobody can get access to either of them for approximately five hours; it is not clear who locks the door. When Effingham and Marian go to try and gain access they find the outer door has been opened and the following scene takes place:

> There was a golden recess which at the first moment seemed empty. Then within the shining frame a great apparition assembled before his eyes. Gerald was standing in the doorway, his arms spread wide, dressed in a long pale garment. The next moment, as the scene came into focus, it became plain that Gerald was carrying Hannah in his arms with her yellow silken dressing gown hanging down in front of him. He moved slowly forward out of the doorway.
>
> Effingham cowered back against the wall. As Gerald passed him by, moving in the direction of his own room, as the silk sleeve brushed lightly in passing, as the lamplight for a moment illumined her, Effingham saw Hannah's head resting quietly against Gerald's shoulder, her eyes wide open. [128]

Hannah and Gerald proceed to his room and he locks the door for over four hours. After thishe states that he is going to take Hannah away and indicates that she is fully apprised of the decision; when Denis tries to interfere and to see Hannah he is pushed down the stairs by Gerald. There are no further attempts to prevent what is happening and the next time the reader sees Hannah she is no longer leaving, but is visibly changed.

> She looked sallow, older. And as Marian now came near she saw the familiar beautiful features marked all over as if something hard had been pressed down upon them. The face was broken up with little twists and frowns. The rounded radiant look was absent. It seemed another person. [129]

It is quite clear that Hannah has undergone a recent traumatic experience quite in addition to the suffering she has endured over the past seven years and the indication that something had been weighed on her face shows that something physical has occurred. It is reasonable to assume that the something that has happened is the breaking of Hannah's will by Gerald Scottow and that rather than something being 'pressed down upon' her features that it was her features that were 'pressed down upon' a bed or some other surface. The hints that Murdoch has given about Gerald's sadomasochism and his cold lack of humanity to his fellow creatures in the pursuit of his own aims leaves it wide open for the reader to imagine the extent of his cruelty in potentially humiliating Hannah but he has certainly pushed her further into her state of mental illness and despair. The discussion that ensues with Marian on religion, false gods and starting to punish herself perhaps alone all over again maybe for another seven years, shows Hannah's fragile state of mind, and far from her anger or resentment at Marian and the others being ill-founded and selfish as the text mediated through Marian's viewpoint seems to imply, it is perfectly logical. Those surrounding her that were not involved in punishing her, were, as discussed earlier in this chapter doing so in

order to gain something in their own lives, and when Hannah ceased to be the canvas upon which they could project their own fantasies they abandoned her to other similar pursuits. Effingham sought to turn Alice into his longed for perfect love match but this too quickly dissolves before he returns to London at the end of the novel; Marian also made love to Denis thinking he could be the 'event' in her life but yet again was disappointed. Pip alone did not seek alternative solace but nor did he attempt to 'rescue' Hannah just as he had not done previously; he waited until she felt she had no other alternative but to give in to Gerald before he actually came to see her. Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that Hannah chose to send Pip away as the following speech between her and Pip in the presence of what appears to be a rather jealous Marian shows.

> 'I am the only one who has loved you and not used you.'
>
> 'What were you doing all these seven years if you were not "using me"?'
>
> 'Waiting for you to wake up. You *have* woken up. You are awake now. Come, move, act, before you fall asleep again.'
>
> 'You think Gerald woke me up?'
>
> Pip unfolded his arms and opened his drooping hands before her in a gesture of prayer. 'I have a right – '
>
> 'You mean if someone's going to have me it might as well be you. Perhaps it was you that Gerald awakened!'
>
> She said it brutally, and for that second Marian, watching from the window, stilled and almost without breath, saw her not as a queen but as a great courtesan, saw her, she suddenly though, as Violet Evercreech saw her: a woman infinitely capable of crimes. [130]

Marian could be jealous of Hannah and Gerald's liaison, as it has curtailed any hope she may have had of uniting with Gerald; but it is impossible to state unequivocally although it is likely. It is also clear that despite Hannah's obvious distress, Pip and Marian do not see Hannah as an ordinary person anymore, which may be why they did not make more of an attempt to assist her earlier. Marian now sees her as a 'courtesan' and Pip seems to have cast her as the Sleeping Beauty talking about her being 'woken'. However, she is an ordinary person and one who is undergoing a very difficult series of events in which it appears that she is quite clearly the victim.

Hannah was married 'very young' to her first cousin who is, according to Backus' estimates, approximately ten years her senior. She is without any female assistance as there is no mother mentioned or other siblings. Her closest relative, as Denis stated, was her father and then the Evercreeches who are 'distant cousins'. What happened to her

other relatives is unknown. Her father, as has been discussed, does not offer her sanctuary when she leaves Peter, even though it is intimated by Denis that her husband's violence and numerous adulteries were well known. It is therefore unlikely her father was ignorant of the situation Hannah was in. Her marriage being to a close member of her own family further enmeshed her into that situation, as did her religious faith, although the marriage of cousins is neither illegal nor prohibited in the Bible.[131] However, considering the recent alteration of the Sexual Offences Act in 2003 to include in the definition of incest many individuals who are not blood relatives but are acting in the stead of a blood relative,[132] and also taking into account the probability that Hannah and Peter knew each other well whilst growing up it is possible to look at the situation between them as being one not only of abuse, but in the same terms as incest abuse as many of the same factors apply. Hannah could not escape the union, as she had no means to escape or anyone to escape to which is often a factor with incest as the parties involved usually rely on the abuser for emotional and financial support, as well as feeling a degree of responsibility to the abuser.[133] The abuse was also not prevented by her only living parent; in fact as he offered her no assistance whilst being aware of it, he could be deemed as sanctioning Peter's treatment of her. In addition to this Hannah's situation is dominated by men, and when Peter leaves, Gerald takes over.

> 'Gerald is Peter now. He has Peter's place, he is possessed by Peter, he even looks like Peter. He is no longer what keeps Peter away from her. Nothing keeps him off her now.'[134]

When Denis states this it is after Gerald has had sex with Hannah and it is easy to see that nothing does keep her away from the abuse as Gerald is abusing her in Peter's stead; and it would indeed be worse still if Peter were to return, as there would be nothing to stop them both from being aggressors.

Denis' comments on the sanctity of a church union to Hannah as a reason for her staying firstly in her marriage,[135] and then enduring her imprisonment and negative treatment by her 'gaolers', and this coupled with Hannah's own comments on religion prove that her beliefs played a large part in her choice to remain at Gaze.[136] Again, the Christian religion is, especially in the Catholic Church, still very much a patriarchy, and as M. J. Nottet and M. Punter from The Association Against Sexual Abuse Within The Family, state in the Foreword to *Christianity and Incest*, in certain circumstances the Christian religion's emphasis on male authority has been used as a tool by the perpetrators of abuse:

> This study shows that religion can be a factor that is conducive to incest and compounds trauma. […] [C]hurch authorities

> occupy a crucial position with regard to child sexual abuse in two ways: as the protector of male codes and as the perpetuator of the traditional family mentality. […] Everything that falls out of the male code or structure means punishment, damnation, guilt and negation for the girl. Biblical passages offer many boys and men the opportunity to enfeeble the girl, then to rape her, and finally to force her into silence.[137]

Christianity and Incest goes on to look at numerous case studies of women from strongly Christian families who have suffered abuse and where the abuser has manipulated the situation to make the female think that she should 'obey' the male members of the family and that if she complains she will not only be destroying the family but may risk damnation herself for being involved, however unwillingly, in sinful behaviour. The book asserts that in such cases there is an emphasis on all women being naturally seductive and sinful as a result of the story of Eve in Genesis, and the traditional view of Mary Magdalene as a sinner, amongst other examples, so that the men do not blame themselves; but the women or children for tempting them in the same way that Eve is reported to have tempted Adam.[138] The idea that suffering is expected and a sign of God's favour, as well as further abuse being a punishment for the initial 'seduction', is used to pass the guilt onto the abuse victim and to excuse the actions of the perpetrator. In addition to this those interviewed said that they felt that there was an emphasis on women being 'owned' by men and that women were told they ought to be "servile" and "submissive",[139] giving as an example the story of David and Bathsheba. The Book of Samuel explains that King David saw Bathsheba bathing and desired her, he had her sent to him and they slept together, an event which led to pregnancy. It is not clear whether Bathsheba (who is already married to Uriah the Hittite) is a willing participant. However, when David fails to encourage her husband to sleep with her and thereby pass the child off as his, he arranges for Uriah to be killed in battle and marries Bathsheba. The language of the Biblical account suggests that God's wrath and David's subsequent punishment is for taking that which does not belong to him, rather than his actions towards Bathsheba as an individual: "thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* your wife [...]I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto your neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."[140] God's punishment of David involves the death of his child by Bathsheba and there is no mention of how this affects her, or whether she deserves to lose both husband and child because of David's actions.[141] Imbens and Jonke also refer to the Book of Judges where "a father is free to offer his virgin daughter (for whom the father can get the full price when he marries her off) to be raped in order to protect his

houseguest against sexual violence."[142] The impact of these Biblical narratives on actual cases of abuse is further examined in *Christianity and Incest*:

> These women indicate that they have not only undergone an incest trauma, but a religious trauma as well. […] Religion reinforced the fear, the moral dilemma, and the lack of power to resist. The most important message a woman hears in church is: *obedience*. Eve was disobedient and that's why sin came into the world. […] Forgiveness is the single most important aspect, so a girl has no right to be angry. She fears going to hell: you must do endless penance, because sex outside of marriage is a mortal sin. She learned from the Bible that she is the property of men, someone "in relation to others".[143]

Of course this is not the situation in most religious families but it shows that an abuser will use any tools at his or her disposal to justify what they are doing and to increase their power over the victim. It is easy to see, looking at this study, how it might be applied to Hannah's situation. She has, as far as the reader is aware, been left with no close relations save her father and first cousin neither of whom treat her with care, she has sought love elsewhere and as a consequence has been severely punished. She is also left feeling like she is the guilty party and that she must serve a sort of penance for her actions. Trapped in the situation for a prolonged period of time with hardly anyone who can offer her an alternative perspective on her situation and no one to escape to, it is easy to see how she might have become, as Effingham states, "somehow dead".[144] Even with Peter gone she still has God to contend with and the prospect of damnation for her 'crimes' such as they are. Hannah also remains unable to see the trained Church professionals who might have better explained her situation and offered her help. The 'church' Denis mentions her marrying in is never defined and her religious interests are never given structure or denomination, nor during the course of the novel is she ever offered or seen to seek outside perspective or guidance. Hannah's isolation from the Church and organised religion can also perhaps therefore be seen as a contributing factor to her state of mind. As much as religion has been used incorrectly as a manipulative tool by the perpetrators of her abuse this can be viewed as successful only because Hannah is not subjected to organised religious guidance or a thorough educational basis.

Hannah's 'choice', such as it is, to remain at Gaze, bears a remarkable resemblance to the behavioural traits associated with both Battered Person Syndrome and Stockholm Syndrome. As Alyce LaViolette and Ola Barnett explain in their study of domestic abuse:

> […] battered women exhibit hostage-like behaviours such as praising their abuser, denying the battering, and blaming themselves. These behaviours are similar to those of captives and may actually represent a struggle for survival ("Abusive Relationships," 1991).
>
> Many victims of violent crimes or impending violence identify with the person or people who seem to have control over their well-being. As perceived power differences intensify, the person with less authority generally forms a more negative self-appraisal and feels less capable of taking care of him-or her-self. Thus, the person with less power becomes more dependent on the person with greater power (Freud, 1942). This phenomenon is called *identification* with the aggressor and become manifest in brainwashing and in the Stockholm and POW *(prisoner of war)* syndromes. [145]

Stockholm Syndrome is when abducted or imprisoned people establish an emotional attachment to their oppressors sometimes resulting in the victims 'choosing' to remain in situations where they are subjected to adverse conditions and even in some cases, extreme torture. Stockholm Syndrome is a result of using defence mechanisms in order to make a situation bearable enough to survive it emotionally. Identification with the aggressors means that an emotional connection can be made in a situation where an individual could otherwise be totally isolated. La Violette and Barnett state that Stockholm Syndrome has also been "successfully applied" "to the psychological victimization processes undergone by battered women".[146] Several of the characteristics which apply to this particular scenario are easily associated with Hannah's behaviour in *The Unicorn* and her relationships with both Peter and Gerald. These include:

> (a) a bond between the victim and the abuser, (b) intense gratitude for kindnesses shown by abuser, (c) denial or rationalization of violence and anger toward the abuser, (d) hypervigilence to the abuser's needs, (e) adoption of the abuser's perspective of the world, (f) a view of authorities as bad guys and the abuser as a good guy, (g) difficulty in leaving the abuser after release from the hostage situation, (h) fear of the abuser's revenge even if the abuser is dead or in prison, and (i) experiences of post traumatic stress disorder […].
>
> The Stockholm Syndrome explains the paradoxical behaviour of hostages who profess to love their captors. [147]

Perhaps most pertinent out of the above list to Hannah's situation is that she does have what she describes as "a very special bond"[148] with Gerald even after they have been sexually intimate due to Gerald's manipulation. Taken advantage of at her lowest ebb during the course of the novel, Hannah is obviously not mentally stable when Gerald takes her into his room and locks the door, and presumably the locked door means any desire to escape would go unheeded. However, she is still willing to leave Gaze with

Gerald in a way that she was not willing to go with Effingham and Marian. She accepts Gerald's authority over her and is not depicted as fighting against his decisions. However blank and miserable she looks when he carries her out of her own room to his, she does not fight him or even cry, it is as if she abides by his direction blankly regardless of what that means to her. She even accepts his decision not to leave Gaze but to remain perhaps with him alone, merely saying, "[t]here just wasn't sufficient reason for going away".[149] That this is a psychological reaction to a situation that is out of Hannah's control becomes terribly clear when she later kills Gerald, yet that "special bond" continues to effect her with her responding to this act against him by conducting her own suicide. Hannah's feelings of guilt are also indicative of Battered Women's Syndrome in that she accepts both Peter's and Gerald's "perspective of the world" and sees herself as the party to blame. In the study by La Violette and Barnett they assert that "[i]n one comparison of 31 battered women and two groups of 62 non abused women, battered women had significantly higher levels of self-blame […] Especially poignant were the feelings of self-blame regardless of their actions".[150] It is easy to see how Hannah fits this profile and even if Murdoch could not have been aware of Stockholm Syndrome when she wrote *The Unicorn,* as it was not named as such in the 1960s, she would certainly have been aware of Freud's defence mechanisms which form the basis of the theory[151], and of the inferior position of women which exacerbates such situations. Hannah is expected to accept her husband's authority and consequently, Gerald's, her opinions and her thoughts are therefore second place to theirs, and thus her internal voice is as unimportant to those around her, and even to herself, as her external one. As a result Hannah is comprehensively silenced.

Hannah's characterisation is a reflection of other people's thoughts, as she makes clear when she states, "I have lived in your gaze like a false God",[152] and only her reflection remains as a recognisable symbol of the person that she was before her marriage, the violence and the following seven years of penance. As stated earlier she is no longer interested in doing anything she used to do, she creates nothing, she does not do anything for anyone (even herself), she takes no exercise and merely dwells on her situation and her past. She is depicted throughout the text as frequently looking in mirrors and the name of the house, 'Gaze', is apt for such a narcissistic and yet vulnerable personality. She has been reduced to a two dimensional portrait of herself, as Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary have been, and as many other women have also been in between their lifetime and that of Hannah's fictional existence. This is something that the references to visual art emphasise.

Just as the author Murdoch claimed influenced her most, Henry James, attempted to impress upon his readership in *The Portrait of a Lady*, women have been valued and seemingly 'understood' by their appearance almost as if they are a work of art to be looked upon and judged, encased and framed, interpreted by others but not given the freedom to move freely and experience the world on their own terms. However, just as James was careful in his lexis when titling this novel, it is not a 'portrait of a girl' or a 'portrait of a female' or even a 'portrait of Isabel Archer', his heroine. He chose, a 'lady', a specific concept and separate from anything else. Here again Simone de Beauvoir comes into play with *The Second Sex* and her assertion that, "one is not born a woman but rather becomes one".[153] By this Beauvoir is referring to the cultural trappings by which society recognises a 'woman' and this is not something that is necessarily in any way connected to the biological fact of her gender. Henry James was referring to something similar but his point relates more particularly to class divisions within a particular group of 'women'. However, in terms of *The Unicorn* these class divisions are also important even in this rather dated sense, and they may be considered important for Beauvoir's argument too. The 'upper class' woman or the 'lady' in Henry James' lifetime had more leisure, money and tuition to accomplish the level of artifice which was deemed the epitome of womanliness, than a lower class woman who was less affluent and therefore had to work harder and experience a less impressive lifestyle. Thereby such an individual may have had to assume certain stereotypical male characteristics in order to survive. It is certainly a struggle to define what this 'womanliness' might encompass. Beauvoir struggles to extract a formula for becoming a woman and it is therefore perhaps reasonable to revert to the universally understood stereotypes of femininity and masculinity for the purpose of progressing with this argument. Hannah has become a 'lady' and a 'woman' in the culturally accepted sense of these terms. She has long hair, is attractive to look at, is educated to a reasonable standard and has impeccable taste in her dress sense, and she does always wear 'dresses' when she is not in her 'dressing gown'. Marian comments that she must have been "beautifully trained"[154] and learns from Hannah in this respect, discarding her own blue cocktail dress in favour of a gift from Hannah. When Marian tries on Hannah's jewellery she says, "Something, whether it was the necklace or the golden light or the mirror itself, enchanted by so often reflecting the lovely face of its owner, made her for a moment see herself as beautiful."[155] Marian starts to see herself quite literally through Hannah's reflection, to value herself in terms of aesthetics and to consider herself defined by this. Whereas Marian does not originally attach as much importance to her

appearance as she does to her intelligence, Hannah's influence starts to effect her and she starts to care more for the way she looks. As this transformation takes place Marian becomes increasingly enmeshed in the events at Gaze, beginning to value herself also as an object of contemplation. Finally her jealousy of Hannah's success with her male admirers (firstly the seduction by Gerald and then the invitation to escape with Pip), overcomes her ability to think rationally and she fails to fully comprehend the cruelty of Gerald and the weakness of Pip, who claims to love Hannah but has left her imprisoned for seven years only to pursue her once more after Gerald's assault. Marian views her as a "queen", a "courtesan", "as Violet Evercreech saw her"[156] and consequently she does not 'see' Hannah at all anymore but as a reflection, an object defined by others and not realistically as a complex and vulnerable human being.

This way of considering Hannah relates directly to the name of her house, "Gaze" and the theory that is connected to this term. As David Macey explains this can be associated with both Jean Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, except that Sartre's translators substituted "*le regard"* for "the look" and Lacan's used "the gaze". Both Sartre and Lacan have described the 'object' of the gaze as being in the power of the 'subject' or the one doing the 'gazing', and therefore being potentially shamed by this loss of control to the other who has the power of judgement over the object. Lacan initially agreed with Sartre's thesis in general but later revised his theory in 1964 to assert that the gaze can be "the property of the object rather than the subject".[157] As Lacan's revision of Sartre's theory post-dates *The Unicorn*, it is Sartre's theories on *le regard* in *Being and Nothingness* that are evidenced in *The Unicorn*. Hannah's behaviour can be seen in Sartre's description of shame in relation to the omniscient quality of God, which makes Him the ultimate subject, as the individual is constantly in his gaze. As Sartre asserts "shame is a unitary apprehension with three dimensions: 'I am ashamed of myself before the *Other"*". He goes on to state that, "shame before God" is "the recognition of my being-an-object before a subject which can never become an object. [...] I posit my being-an-object-for God as more real than my For-itself; I exist alienated and I cause myself to learn from outside what I must be. This is the origin of fear before God."[158] Even in terms of religion it seems that Hannah has been paralysed by the objectifying gaze of the other, and yet even here there is an element of contradiction in that Hannah's relationship with God is, like her relationships with the members of her human audience, tainted by vanity. Sartre says that "In vanity I attempt in my capacity as Object to act upon the Other. I take this beauty or strength or intelligence which he confers on me – in so far as he constitutes me as an object – and I attempt to make use

of it in a return shock so as to affect him passively with a feeling of admiration or love." However, the situation is problematised as the Object only feeds its vanity when the Other is free. Sartre describes that "vanity impels me to get hold of the Other and constitute him as an object in order to burrow into the heart of this object to discover there my own object state"; but "[i]n that image which I wanted to grasp in order to recover it and merge it with my own being, I no longer recognise myself." The Other remains "beyond reach" and Sartre describes the reaction to this knowledge as "[s]hame, fear and pride".[159] Not only is vanity unfulfilled, but the self has to accept the absence of the understood and desired form of admiration; as well as the object's separateness. Hannah's assertion that God cries out for love is evidence of her vanity, as is her lack of interest in organised religion which would surely assert the otherness of God. Her inability to overcome her 'crime', however, reveals her awareness that she cannot free herself from the judgement of an omniscient divinity. Her human audience conversely feed this vanity but only if they are kept at a distance from her, to really engage with the people that surround her would be to accept that they have an existence beyond her situation, thereby enforcing their otherness. When Hannah says "I have lived in your gaze"[160] this is what she is referring to; what makes her existence something beyond ordinary suffering, what makes it interesting to her, is her vanity; what makes it unbearable is the shame and fear resultant from the understanding that the admiration she would like to perceive in the gaze of those around her is not within her gift. It is only when Hannah understands that even if she was once admired, the character of that admiration did not cohere with its manifestation in her imagination that she commits suicide. One by one the characters prove she is an object to them and that their lives are full and separate from her situation at Gaze; but it is Gerald's action that is most important and provides the hiatus because his destruction of the roles they have been playing is physical and definitive. He is guilty of the ultimate act of objectification and consequently of humiliation – rape. Interestingly it is also Gerald's betrayal that finally destructs the religious purpose to Hannah's vigil. The Christian cycle of sin, suffering, penance and forgiveness is disrupted when a sexual crime becomes public. Although, in line with the real life contemporaneous abuse accounts examined in this chapter, nobody talks about what might have happened as a violent sexual crime, the awareness that it has occurred is enough to both devalue the purity of Hannah's religious purpose and to make it clear that it cannot continue under the auspices of religion. Hannah's passive suffering is seen as romantic, but whoever the other protagonists hold responsible for Gerald and Hannah's sexual activity, as an action it

cannot be denied nor assimilated into the process of the last seven years. When Marian sees Hannah as a "courtesan" or a "queen"[161] she implies that she sees Hannah as the seductress not Gerald as the attacker, but even this interpretation, which coheres with the Old Testament view of women does not allow for the continuation of the previous regime. Either Hannah has been penitent for a past offence (real or imagined) for seven years in order to attain forgiveness, only to be subject to a serious sexual assault, thereby suggesting that God has also betrayed her, or she has destroyed her own efforts by seducing Gerald. Neither interpretation allows for a religious triumph at the conclusion of what is certainly in some sense a religious narrative.

v. The Time of the Angels, the Marquis de Sade and the new liberalism of the 1960s

Religion also plays a key role in Murdoch's 1966 novel, *The Time of the Angels* but whereas its presence seemed to contribute to the lethargy and the sense of claustrophobia in *The Unicorn*, in this later work religion is conspicuous by its absence; or rather it is the lack of religious faith which is conspicuous, the spiritual world and organised religion are shown to be very much still apparent if only the protagonists would turn their attention to such considerations. Once again a vulnerable female character is imprisoned and potentially subjected to abuse and once more the lack of organised religion is shown to leave a void that no alternative system of beliefs can rival. In *The Time of the Angels*, Elizabeth Fisher initially appears to be the disabled, helpless cousin of Muriel who is obliged to rely on the domineering and cruel Carel Fisher (thought to be her uncle, and Muriel's father) as her guardian. Unable to venture outside apparently due to a mysterious back ailment and seemingly disinterested in the world beyond her bedroom, Elizabeth appears to have only Muriel to confide in, and even here she is reticent, retreating apparently into her own thoughts. It is only after Muriel discovers Elizabeth's sexual relationship with Carel and doubts Elizabeth's innocence in the matter that the reader is encouraged to collaborate with Muriel in condemning Elizabeth as the willing instigator of her own immersion. Later when Muriel discovers that Carel is actually Elizabeth's father, she still cannot forgive her; but with no independent narrative of her own either inside the novel or outside of it, Elizabeth's power may be argued to be merely an invention of Muriel's just as Hannah's strength could have been misrepresented by others in *The Unicorn*.

The Time of the Angels in Peter Conradi's words, "refers to the fact that the age is one of 'spirit without god' as the philosopher Rozanov, who refers to 'the time of the

angels' in *The Philosopher's Pupil* (187) says [...] and there is much pondering about what world of beliefs will follow the collapse of Christian values."[162] Iris Murdoch writes in "Against Dryness" that:

> We have never solved the problems of the Enlightenment. Between the various concepts available to us the real question has escaped: and now, in a curious way, our present situation is analogous to an eighteenth-century one. We retain a rationalistic optimism about the beneficent results of education, or rather, technology. We combine this with a romantic conception of 'the human condition', a picture of the individual as stripped and solitary: a conception which has, since Hitler, gained a peculiar intensity. [163]

The Enlightenment and by association, Sade had indeed become pertinent to society in the 1960s, the Counter Culture's belief in freeing the spirit and moving away from dogmatic structures of order,[164] including religious structures, and toward increased sexual freedom, seemed to herald a new era of liberalism. *Justine* was released in its complete form as a paperback by Corgi Publishers in 1965[165] and the feminist works on Sade, by Simone de Beauvoir and Angela Carter, serve as a bridge over the decade, initially appearing in 1951 and 1979 respectively. The horrors of World War II were, however, as Murdoch intimates, still much in people's minds and for that reason it was important to find a balance between liberalism, and the 'anything goes' mentality which could lead to the kind of cruelty that had already been witnessed. Added to this was the concept of gender equality, the issues surrounding which, sat uneasily with Sade's particular brand of sexual liberation despite Beauvoir's and Carter's assertions. Murdoch describes her interest in the area of "women's liberation" as a means to "getting women to join the human race".[166] Rather than to draw attention overtly to such issues and discuss them as many of her predecessors have done Murdoch has her characters are shown to *enact* the personal dramas surrounding the emancipation of women in the second wave of feminism, but this does not mean to say that her message, educating by example rather than analysis is any less forceful and insightful. Much has been made of her preference for male first-person narrators but very little attention has been given to the very real yet absent narratives in her work. The women who do not have a voice, either implied or realised, are surprisingly articulate in her work despite first impressions to the contrary. These women are not merely restricted verbally but physically also and their desire to express themselves is illustrated in their inability to be successful creatively as well as frequently being misunderstood when they actually do speak. This female plight is most apparent in taboos, the secret female apparently being a taboo personified. Nowhere in her work is this more apparent than in *The Time*

of the Angels which looks back to the Marquis de Sade's novella, *Incest* or *Eugénie de Franvel*.

Sade's *Incest* (published in French as *Eugénie de Franvel*) tells the story of Monsieur de Franvel who takes his daughter, Eugénie away from her mother as a child and has her educated free from the regulations and religion of the world. Eugénie recognises her father as the only source of love in her life, and by virtue of her isolation and his manipulation appears to fall in love with him and is seduced by him when she is fourteen. As part of his cunning, before he seduces her he makes her aware, sadly too late, that she can marry another if it makes her happier, which is something she can apparently no longer comprehend. Her mother and maternal grandmother's attempts to reconcile themselves with her and to re-educate her are also too late, and believing all outsiders to be an enemy of her happiness she conspires with her father to escape with him, an attempt which ultimately leads her to murder her mother, and die in the horror of the act.

The similarities between the texts are obvious not to mention that the new porter in the Fisher's rectory, the Russian, Eugene Peshkov, himself a victim of Carel's actions through his loss of Pattie as a future companion, and the owner of the icon from which the title of the novel is taken, shares his name with Sade's anti-heroine. Elizabeth and Carel's affair which Muriel firmly believes to be both mutual and to involve a conspiracy to rid themselves of her intrusion, evokes the similar scenario in Sade and yet as is typical with Murdoch it is not clear who is the victim and who the aggressor. As Byatt commented in her discussion on *The Time of the Angels*, "There are degrees of immorality as there are degrees of freedom".[167] Sade's narrative is not multi-dimensional when compared to Murdoch's and although there is naturally the absence of any kind of psychological awareness of this situation from a contemporary point of view it is still clear that in this seventeenth-century text although her father is the instigator, Eugénie's ready collaboration with him means that she is to some extent also considered blameworthy; however, this would undoubtedly be viewed differently today. Muriel also quickly holds Elizabeth culpable:

> Unless Carel was lying altogether, Elizabeth and Carel must have conferred together about what was to be done. Indeed it was most unlikely that Carel would have told Muriel to go without at least warning Elizabeth; and surely Elizabeth could have stopped him if she had wished to. Elizabeth and Carel had discussed her, conferred about her and coldly decided her fate.[168]

Muriel does not consider that Elizabeth has been virtually isolated from a young age, that the affair has probably been continuing for some time and that as Elizabeth is now only nineteen that she was probably still very much a child when it began. She is herself afraid of her father and it has already been stated that, "[t]he girls never discussed Carel except at the level of speculating whether he might not be carried off to hell one day by the devil in person."[169] This does not suggest any affection on Elizabeth's part. Elizabeth is also probably ill and Muriel wonders if she will ever lead a normal life. With all of this in mind it seems much more likely that Elizabeth is not an equal in whatever situation is evolving around Carel, but that she is a victim and perhaps to a greater extent than Muriel. Byatt states in *Degrees of Freedom* that "Elizabeth and Carel are too thin and fantastic to give theme or people the power they could have had",[170] but if Elizabeth especially was characterised differently it would remove the enigma from the moral dilemma; and Muriel as well as the reader would not have to work to see the right course of action. It would be as straightforward to dislike Elizabeth as it would be to despise Sade's Eugénie, but their inability to speak for themselves renders them more powerful as a moral challenge rather than less so.[171] Silence can be as controversial as speech: Nabokov's Lolita, another infamous victim of a similarly seeming charismatic aggressor has little space in his narrative to defend herself, and Nabokov himself initially refused to lend his voice to assist his publisher in lifting the ban on the book in 1956 stating, "My moral defence of the book is the book itself".[172]

Elizabeth's situation can also be compared to Hannah's in *The Unicorn* and aside from the more obvious similarities there is also the matter of Muriel who "was engaged on a long philosophical poem, in the metre of the *Cimétiere Marin* of which she had already composed forty-seven stanzas",[173] reminding the reader of the sleepy reading of this rather aptly named text in *The Unicorn*. The etymology of Muriel's name much like Hannah's is also illuminating, it derives from Scottish Gaelic "composed of Old Celtic elements meaning 'sea'" and "'bright'".[174] It would be easy to think that in both novels '*Le Jeune Parque'* would be a more suitable Valéry poem to use but Muriel's name suggests otherwise as it relates back to the sea of *Cimétiere Marin*. In a novel that is about religion or rather the lack of it, it is also interesting that Muriel's name has no Christian associations whereas both Carel's and Elizabeth's do. Carel seems to refer to 'carol' usually associated with Christianity although etymologically not necessarily which makes its meaning ambiguous as does its androgynous capacity, 'Carol' being usual for women although historically also a male name.[175] Peter Conradi also refers to the meaning of Carel's name, stating that "[h]is first name means 'cloistered enclosure'.

His second makes him the impotent (fisher) king of a sterile land."[176] Both of his names then have a religious angle to them, 'cloistered' often being used to describe religious orders and his second name being reminiscent of the fisher king of Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*. Elizabeth can be seen to refer to the Madonna's cousin, Elizabeth in the *New Testament*, sometimes spelled 'Elisabeth', meaning "God is my oath"[177] and also famously to two British monarchs.[178] The reputation and elevated position of all of these women suggests the character's strength but also a lack of choice in the life assigned to her. As is typical of Murdoch's external allusions, however, the references are fleeting, enigmatic and shifting. In his 1995 essay, "Death and Love in Iris Murdoch's *Time of the Angels*" Thomas Rice argues that the novel can be read as a comment on families and fatherhood both within the religious structure and external to it. He considers the icon of the trinity that Eugene favours so highly (almost to the point of worshipping it) which is stolen and sold by his son before being eventually restored to him before commenting that:

> Eugene's story also illustrates the pattern of Oedipal significance that underlies Murdoch's treatment of religion in *The Time of the Angels*. By stressing the connection between his love of the icon and of his mother, Murdoch parallels Freud's view that religious belief is rooted in the Oedipus complex, developed in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) [...] Thus, the three remaining perspective figures, allegorically representing the commonplace "reader" (Pattie), the artist (Muriel), and the philosopher (Marcus), are each developed, in terms of the triple dimension of significance illustrated in Eugene's story, as believers whose religion is rooted psychoanalytically in their Oedipal conflicts and whose responses to the collapse of their structures of belief, the death of their "father," constitute the philosophic thesis of the novel.
>
> All three of these characters see Father Carel as the living embodiment of their belief system, their 'totem,' their 'Fisher-King,' their personal 'God.'[179]

Although the Oedipal reading of religion in the novel is interesting, his classifications of Muriel and Marcus are problematic when Murdoch's scholarly knowledge of Plato is brought into play. Muriel can be viewed as the Platonic artist referred to by Murdoch in "The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists", who have limited insight and the ability to manipulate scenarios;[180] but Marcus is not the dedicated truth teller and polymath *The Symposium* and *The Republic* demands for the title of philosopher. Dabbling in philosophy is often an indication of a lack of wisdom in Murdoch's novels: *The Unicorn's* Max Lejour and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Rupert are just two examples of relatively good characters who do not see with enough clarity and objectivity to be accomplished philosophical authors. Rice does, however, refer to

Muriel as “the imperceptive artist of the novel’s allegory” and implies that she views her father as a god:

> Blundering through the novel, the idealistic artist encounters reality. Muriel accidentally discovers Carel's fault, his humanity, when she spies on Elizabeth through the linen-room partition and sees her naked father in bed with her ‘cousin’. Muriel suffers both enlightenment and the collapse of her belief, falling to the floor with ‘an immense crash’.[181]

Muriel’s awareness extends to Carel only, not to Elizabeth; she changes her opinion about her half-sister but does not consider that she might also be a victim of Carel’s behaviour. It is here that the reader must think for themselves. Rice implies as much is true of the reader’s role but does not directly relate this to the moral problem of Elizabeth’s culpability:

> Murdoch challenges her readers, however, to seek the concepts that order their experience, to arrange the "shifting kaleidoscopic pattern" of symbols and themes in her "fragmented" (26) work of art into coherent meaning, much as Carel's daughter, Muriel, and "niece," Elizabeth (actually his illegitimate child), work on their jigsaw puzzle through the novel.[182]

It is important, however, that the reader does not take Muriel’s view as their own without further contemplation. Considering that this novel is as Rice asserts about a world without God and if good can still exist in this case it is curious that Muriel uses Christian vocabulary to describe her father’s death: “She would not wake him like Lazarus to a dream of hell to hell itself, a place where love was powerless to redeem and save”. She goes on to describe her future with Elizabeth:

> There would be no parting from Elizabeth now. As she turned back to the sleeper she saw a bright streak of light between the curtains. Wearily, heavily she pulled the curtains back. There was a little blue sky and the sun was shining. Against a mass of moving clouds she saw the towers of St Botolph and St Edmund and St Dunstan and the great dome of St Paul’s. There would be no parting from Elizabeth now. Carel had riveted them together, each to be damnation of the other until the end of the world.[183]

It is clear that Muriel is still not paying the ‘attention’ referred to in the writings of Simone Weil and that Murdoch has asserted repeatedly in her philosophical work as necessary to achieve the Good and see the truth. Weil described her concept of attention in her philosophical work, *Gravity and Grace* (1949)*:*

> We liberate energy in ourselves, but it constantly reattaches itself. How are we to liberate it entirely? [...] In such a work all that I call ‘I’ has to be passive. Attention alone – that attention which is so full that ‘I’ disappears – is required of me. I have to

> deprive all that I call 'I' of the light of my attention and turn it on to that which cannot be conceived.[184]

Weil is suggesting that in order to fully comprehend another being or even an object, the self must be forgotten. Iris Murdoch refers to this definition of attention on many occasions throughout her philosophy saying in "Against Dryness" that "Simone Weil said that morality was a matter of attention, not of will"[185] and in 'The Idea of Perfection' that attention offers "the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality. I believe this to be the characteristic and proper mark of the moral agent."[186] In this sense then Muriel is incapable of being the 'just' 'moral' agent and cannot focus on the truth of the situation because she is distracted by her own concerns, the 'I' Weil described. She admits to feeling jealousy for Elizabeth which in itself can be seen as adding to the haze but with Carel's death, the sun (an integral image in Murdoch's philosophy and one which was borrowed for Plato) has been revealed but Muriel closes the curtains on it. The sun is the light of the good and of the truth. Muriel has it within her grasp and in its light she sees not secular London but places of Christian worship. Carel's death has not damned her but liberated her and given her a renewed opportunity to find the love in the Good she longs for. It is clear then that Muriel chooses her own damnation and that she elects to interpret Elizabeth as guilty. There is no discussion between them shown in the text, but it is interesting to observe that the description of Muriel and Elizabeth's departure from the rectory; mirrors that of Hannah and Gerald in *The Unicorn* when they emerge from her locked room after some time has passed and she has probably been attacked by Gerald. In this scene the reader is aware that Hannah is vulnerable, as her greatest fear, the return of her husband, appears to be about to manifest itself.

> There was a golden recess which at the first moment seemed empty. Then within the shining frame a great apparition assembled before his eyes. Gerald was standing in the doorway, his arms spread wide, dressed in a long pale garment. The next moment, as the scene came into focus, it became plain that Gerald was carrying Hannah in his arms with her yellow silken dressing gown hanging down in front of him. He moved slowly forward out of the doorway.
>
> Effingham cowered back against the wall. As Gerald passed him by, moving in the direction of his own room, as the silk sleeve brushed lightly in passing, as the lamplight for a moment illumined her, Effingham saw Hannah's head resting quietly against Gerald's shoulder, her eyes wide open.[187]

Elizabeth is described in a similar fashion and she too does not speak.

> Then framed in the doorway he saw the two girls, immobile as if they had been there for some time, their two pale heads close together, their bodies seemingly entwined. With a shock he realized Muriel was carrying Elizabeth in her arms. The taxi man ran forward. Gingerly Elizabeth's feet touched the slippery pavement. Marcus saw her face turned towards him, long and without colour, half hidden in the drooping metallic hair which gleamed in the sunlight a faintly greenish silver. It was and was not the face of the nymph he had known. The large grey-blue eyes blinked painfully in the bright light and met his vacantly and without interest. [188]

The similarity between these two scenes is difficult to ignore and the connection seems to indicate Muriel's strength, even though she has just watched her father die. Elizabeth is, like Hannah, depicted as otherworldly, weak and the vacancy and lack of animation about both characters can easily be viewed in modern day terms as depression and a reaction to trauma. There is, however, one key difference between these two scenes which is reflected in the conclusions to these novels. Hannah is illumined by artificial light, and Elizabeth, although apparently unused to the sunlight has been exposed to it at last. To refer back again to Plato's cave myth and Murdoch's "The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists" this is the difference between hope and salvation for these two characters and perhaps intimates something about the nature of their previous actions or may simply be because Elizabeth's oppressor is no more, and at this point Hannah's still lives. The sun shines on Gaze Castle at the end of *The Unicorn* as well but its meaning is ambiguous, as both Peter and Hannah have died and it is impossible to know which died first or whose death the morning light might be associated with. The ambiguity over whether Hannah was victim or oppressor remains but as in *The Time of the Angels* the light brings clarity and freedom, and the opportunity for the good to be restored. Also in a similar fashion to *The Time of the Angels* it is the more simplistic and less intriguing characters who are left to enforce this new age, Alice Lejour and Anthea Barlow, individuals who are more worldly and practical and therefore more 'real' than their ethereal and badly used counterparts.

Iris Murdoch can then be seen to be writing in response to the sociological and scientific attitudes to incest and patriarchy in the West in the 1960s. *The Unicorn* and *The Time of the Angels* experiment with how an unequal society which tolerates the prevalence of a taboo can be as guilty of perpetuating abuse as the individual attacker. Her novels consider extreme examples of how taboos can create and exacerbate problems, increasing the secrecy surrounding the issues and thereby the ignorance of the populace. The taboo in both cases has led her characters to be unable to narrate their

experiences, possibly because they do not know how to, but also because the other protagonists have already exhibited their disbelief. By utilising the families of white, middle and upper-class women, Murdoch shows how they are just as likely to suffer from abuse as others from less advantageous backgrounds. In both novels she also considers the impact of religion upon the plight of women and how Christianity has played a role in the patriarchal authority which can easily be abused. By drawing on other literary and artistic sources throughout the novels, she asks the reader to consider how much her own cultural moment has developed or progressed, how far we are all affected by stereotypical images and myths, and whether the truth is something that is readily available or something that we have to search to find. To a certain extent, *The Unicorn* and *The Time of the Angels* are texts that are not fully revealed until the layers of narrative are sifted through, mimicking the real-life plight of victims of the incest taboo and domestic abuse, which in the 1960s remained for the majority, something that was difficult to believe, and something that happened to other people. By reminding her readers of texts they are familiar with and may not associate with domestic abuse, such as the writing of the Marquis de Sade, she prompts her readership both to reconsider and redefine the artistry of the past and to re-evaluate their understanding of the artistic and social present.

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[1] The title of this chapter refers to Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own.* (1929*;* London: Penguin Books, 1945) and also holds relevant associations to Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980* (1985; London: Virago Press Ltd., 1987).

[2] Iris Murdoch stated a number of times that she was enthusiastic about equality between the sexes, but made it clear that in her opinion, forcefully asserting the female cause may actually damage the pursuit of equality and lead to a stronger sense of division. See: Murdoch, interview with Jack A. Biles, 1977. Dooley 61-2.
Murdoch, interview with Sheila Hale. Dooley 31-2.

[3] Iris Murdoch, interview with Harold Hobson. 1962. Dooley 5.

[4] Friedan 94-95.

[5] Friedan 393-428.

[6] Woolf *TG* 49.

[7] Vara S. Neverow, "Freudian Seduction and the Fallacies of Dictatorship," *Virginia Woolf and Fascism: Resisting the Dictators' Seduction,* ed. Merry M. Pawlowski (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) 55-72.
Neverow refers to the sexual abuse of Woolf by her half-brothers Gerald and George Duckworth (59) and she asserts that Woolf's theory of "infantile fixation" as well as the "inferiority complex" discussed in *A Room of One's Own,* serve "as an emphatic refutation of his [Freud's] theory of penis envy" (56). Furthermore she states that this "anticipates feminist critiques of Freud arguing that his assertion is a psychological projection that attributes to the little girl the father's pathological desire to dominate the daughter, forcing her into an incestuous dependency on him" (68).
For the circumstances of Woolf's sexual abuse see:
Virginia Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past" and "22 Hyde Park Gate" in *Moments of Being*. Ed. and introd. Jeanne Schulkind. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976) 69-138; 140-156.
Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography.* Frogmore: Triad/Paladin, 1976.
Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996).

[8] Although 'giving away' the bride by her father is frequently the case in Western church marriage ceremonies it is not always the accepted format. Indeed, Dennis Chester Smolarski states that "it is not even a permitted option in the Roman Catholic rite. [...] This style of procession [...] has its origins in the days when women were the property of men". *Sacred Mysteries: Sacramental Principles and Liturgical Practice* (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995) 117.

The Christian wedding ceremony derives in part from the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2: 22-24 "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made the a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." This account has long held theoretical associations with the incest taboo as Ellen Pollak states in *Incest and the English Novel 1684-1814* regarding Henry St. John Bolingbroke. She quotes Bolingbroke's assertion that "Eve was in some sort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh by birth, if I may call it so, whereas other husbands and wives are so in allegorical manner only. But to pass this over, the children of the first couple were certainly brothers and sisters, and by these conjunctions, declared afterwards incestuous, the human species was first propagated." Pollack goes on to draw from this assessment the indication "that conjugal relations in society are, in fact, substitute replications (or 'allegories') of primal father-daughter incest" (42-3). (For further discussion of this point see Chapter Four) This can in turn be compared to the marriage ceremony where the husband traditionally takes on the role of the father by providing authority over the female when she is 'given' to him during the wedding ceremony; but to some extent the father maintains and extends his role, gaining a son whilst amending his relation to his daughter.

It has also been suggested that the physical relationship between Adam and Eve as detailed in Genesis may also indicate that they are brother and sister. Ellen Pollak asserts that this was the case amongst the majority of seventeenth century moral philosophers. This again suggests an incestuous implication in the traditional Christian wedding service (61).
Ellen Pollak, *Incest and the English Novel 1684-1814* (Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins UP, 2003).

[9] Murdoch interview with Harold Hobson, Dooley 5.

[10] Murdoch interview with Michael O. Bellamy, Dooley 48.

[11] Woolf, *ROO* 69-75.

[12] Guy Backus, *Iris Murdoch: The Novelist as Philosopher The Philosopher as Novelist 'The Unicorn' as a Philosophical Novel.* (Berne: Peter Lang Publishers Inc., 1986) 141.

[13] Backus, 141.

[14] See Miriam Allott, ed. and introd., *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage* (1974; London: Routledge, 2003).

[15] Deborah Johnson, *Iris Murdoch* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd, 1987) 55.

[16] Backus, 141.

[17] Byatt, *DF* 166.

[18] Byatt, *DF* 171.

[19] Consider A.S. Byatt, "The Writer and her Work." 1986. *Degrees of Freedom.* (1965; London: Vintage, 1994) 296-334. Of particular interest are her comments on the influences of Shakespeare, Dickens and Eliot on Murdoch (319).
Also see Iris Murdoch's own words on realism in her fiction in her interview with Michael Bellamy. 1977. Dooley 44-55.

[20] Iris Murdoch, *The Unicorn* (1963; London: Vintage, 2000).

[21] For further discussion on the academic enquiry into finding a 'key' to *The Unicorn* see Backus, 24, 117.

[22] Murdoch interview with W.K. Rose, Dooley 26.

[23] Murdoch, *TU* 98.

[24] Murdoch, *TU* 10.

[25] Murdoch, *TU* 97.

[26] Murdoch, *TU* 218-219.

[27] Murdoch, *TU* 218.

[28] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans & ed. H. M. Parshley. (1949; London: Vintage, 1997) 646.

[29] Beauvoir, 175.

[30] Woolf, *ROO* 103.

[31] Murdoch, *TU* 60.

[32] Murdoch, *TU* 28.

[33] Murdoch, *TU* 44.
[34] Woolf, *ROO* 103.
[35] *Virginia Woolf, TG* 155.
[36] Murdoch, *TU* 229.
[37] For information on women as the property of men in the history of the western world see: Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women in the West: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* (1990; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002).
Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (1998; Cambridge: Polity Press; 2003).
[38] William Baker, *Critical Companion to Jane Austen: A literary reference to her life and work* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2008) 528-529. Baker comments that for women "[s]chooling was largely given at home, or, in more well-off families, through a governess or private tutor." He goes on to assert that this education comprised of artistic pursuits and the learning of languages "such as French and Italian". The aim of such learning was "to exhibit a young woman's physical attributes on social occasions so that a suitor could be attracted".
[39] Woolf, *TG* 38.
[40] Murdoch, *TU* 68, 73.
[41] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary (*London: Picador, 1985) 225.
[42] Murdoch, *TU* 53.
[43] All Biblical references are taken from: Holy Bible: King James Version. Introd. and notes Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
[44] Hanks and Hodges, "Miriam," *ODFN* 239.
[45] Hanks and Hodges, "Mariamne," *ODFN* 224.
[46] Hanks and Hodges, "Marian," *ODFN* 224.
[47] Warner, 12. The *Book of James* is part of the apocrypha.
[48] Warner, 19.
[49] Warner, 52.
[50] Murdoch, *TU* 64.
[51] Murdoch, *TU* 218.
[52] Murdoch, *TU* 206.
[53] Murdoch, *TU* 207.
[54] Warner, 50.
[55] Murdoch, *TU* 111.
[56] Murdoch, *TU* 11.
[57] Murdoch, *TU* 16.
[58] Warner, 62.
[59] Warner, 61.
[60] Conradi, *IMAL* 257.
[61] Warner, 228.
[62] Haskins, *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993) 3.
[63] Murdoch, *TU* 23.
[64] Murdoch, *TU* 41.
[65] Haskins, 246-7.
[66] Jusepe de Ribera, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ,* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[67] Annibale Carracci, *The Dead Christ Mourned ('The Three Maries'),* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[68] Backus, 228.
[69] Haskins, 246-248.
[70] Victoria Sherrow, *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 2006) 152.
[71] Murdoch, *TU* 68.
[72] Workshop of the Master of 1518, *The Visitation of the Virgin to Saint Elizabeth.*© National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[73] Marco Basaiti, *The Virgin and Child.*© National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[74] David Gerard, *Lamentation.* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[75] Warner, xx, 266.

[76] Murdoch, *TU* 122.
[77] Haskins, 232.
[78] Haskins, 230.
[79] 'Titian', Vecellio Tiziano, *The Flaying of Marsyas*, Kroměříž Palace, Kroměříž, Czech Republic.
[80] See: Vecellio Tiziano, *Mary Magdalene in Penitence.* Hermitage, St Petersburg, Russia.
Vecellio Tiziano, *The Magdalene*, Galleria Palatina, Florence, Italy. © Photo. SCALA, Florence, Courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali, 2011.
[81] Annibale Carracci, *The Dead Christ Mourned ('The Three Maries'),*© National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[82] Rogier van der Weyden, *The Magdalene Reading*, © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[83] Artemisia Gentelischi, *The Penitent Magdalene*, Galleria Palatina, Florence, Italy. ©Photo. SCALA, Florence, Courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali, 2011.
[84] Haskins, 258.
[85] Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Conversion of the Magdalene*, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, MI.
[86] Bartolmé Esteban Murillo, *Mary Magdalene,* © San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA. Photo © San Diego Museum of Art, CA. 2011.
[87] Jusepe de Ribera, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ,* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[88] Frederick Sandys, *Mary Magdalene Tears, Idle Tears,* © Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Norwich. Photo © Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery. 2011.
[89] Rogier van der Weyden, *The Magdalene Reading,* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[90] Workshop of the Master of 1518, *The Crucifixion,* © National Gallery, London. Photo © National Gallery, London, 2011.
[91] Bernadino Luini, *The Conversion of the Magdalene,* San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego CA.
[92] Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Conversion of the Magdalene*, Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, MI.
[93] Bernadino Luini, *The Conversion of the Magdalene,* San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego CA.
[94] Murdoch, *TU* 50.
[95] Murdoch, *TU* 51.
[96] "Gnostic," *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, ed. Richard L. Gregory. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) *Oxford Reference Online,* 9 Mar. 2011 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t159.e377>.
[97] Haskins, 36.
Jacob Needleman, foreword, *The Gospel of Magdalene*. Jean-Yves Leloup. (Vermont: Inner Traditions Limited, 2002) xi.
[98] Haskins, 33-38.
Needleman, foreword, *The Gospel of Magdalene*. xi.
[99] Haskins, 33. David Tresamer and Laura-Lea Canon, 'Preface'. *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*. Jean Yves-Leloup. (Vermont: Inner Traditions Limited, 2002) xi.
[100] Haskins, 34.
[101] Mary 17:9-20. Leloup, 37.
[102] Leloup, 8-9.
[103] Haskins, 50.
[104] Haskins, 54-55.
[105] Tresamer and Canon, xvi-xxii.
[106] Tresamer and Canon, xiv.
[107] Haskins, 28-9.
[108] Haskins, 27-8.
[109] Murdoch, *TU* 58.
[110] Murdoch, *TU* 60.
[111] Murdoch, *TU* 60.
[112] Murdoch, *TU* 91.
[113] Murdoch, *TU* 112.
[114] Tresamer and Canon, xviii.
[115] Tammy Grimshaw, *Sexuality, Gender and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 2005) 19.

[116] Murdoch, *TU* 110-111.
[117] Backus, 181.
[118] Murdoch, *TU* 133.
[119] Murdoch, *TU* 63.
[120] Murdoch, *TU* 20.
[121] Backus, 193.
[122] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (1990; New York: Routledge, 1999) 143-144.
[123] Warner, 139.
[124] Murdoch, *TU* 112.
[125] Murdoch, *TU* 112.
[126] Murdoch, *TU* 215.
[127] Murdoch, *TU* 215.
[128] Murdoch, *TU* 184.
[129] Murdoch, *TU* 213.
[130] Murdoch, *TU* 222-223.
[131] See Leviticus 18:6-18.
[132] For the Sexual Offences Act 2003, Crown Copyright 2003. 8 March 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>.
[133] Ronald M. Doctor and Frank M. Shiromoto, *The Encyclopedia of Trauma and Traumatic Stress Disorders* (New York: Facts on File, 2010) 142.
[134] Murdoch, *TU* 229.
[135] Murdoch, *TU* 61.
[136] For more on male authority, incest and religion see Thomas Jackson Rice, "Death and Love in Iris Murdoch's *The Time of the Angels*," *Critique* 36.2 (1995): 130-145.
[137] M. J. Nottet and M. Punter. foreword, *Christianity and Incest.* By Annie Imbens and Ineke Jonker, trans. Patricia McVay (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1992) viii.
[138] Imbens and Jonke, 66, 67, 75-76, 113, 164 and 218-219.
[139] Imbens and Jonke, 41, 58-59, 76, 93 and 218.
[140] The story of Bathsheba and David is told in 2 Samuel 11-12. Quoted here from the King James Bible.
[141] For discussion on Bathsheba see Imbens and Jonke, 31, 219. For Mary Magdalene see 221.
[142] Imbens and Jonke, 222. Judges 19:24-30.
[143] Imbens and Jonke, 139-140.
[144] Murdoch, *TU* 112.
In her discussion of *The Unicorn* in *Degrees of Freedom*, Byatt quotes Freud in *Totem and Taboo* saying: "It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion, and that a paranoic delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system". Going on to say that, "Hannah's passive suffering, her religion of guilt and withdrawal, can be seen, not as a 'real' religious act, but as an obsessional neurotic fantasy. Although what Miss Murdoch is studying here is partly the ways in which the one might shade into, or partake of, the other" (173).
[145] Ola Barnett and Alyce D. La Violette, *It Could Happen to Anyone: Why Battered Women Stay.* 2nd ed. (California; London: SAGE, 2000) 85.
[146] Barnett and La Violette, 86.
[147] Barnett and La Violette, 86.
[148] Murdoch, *TU* 216.
[149] Murdoch, *TU* 217.
[150] Barnett and La Violette, 84.
[151] Murdoch referred to Freud on numerous occasions, claiming she was "not a Freudian" in the Rose interview in 1962, but nevertheless she was evidently aware of his theories (Dooley 26).
[152] Murdoch, *TU* 219.
[153] Beauvoir, 259.
[154] Murdoch, *TU* 122.
[155] Murdoch, *TU* 51.
[156] Murdoch, *TU* 222-223.
[157] David Macey, "Gaze," *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin, 2001) 154-155. See also: Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1981; New York: Norton, 1998).

Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2006) 73-74.
[158]Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes (1943; London: Routledge, 2003) 313.
[159] Sartre, 315.
[160] Murdoch, *TU* 219.
[161] Murdoch, *TU* 222-223.
[162] Peter J. Conradi, *The Saint and the Artist* (London: HarperCollins, 2001) 168.
[163] Iris Murdoch, "Against Dryness." Conradi *EM* 290-1.
[164] Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison, Introduction, *The Post-War British Literature Handbook.* Eds. Cockin and Morrison (London: Continuum, 2010) 1-32.
[165] John Sutherland, *Offensive Literature: Decensorship in Britain, 1960-1982* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1983) 74.
[166] Iris Murdoch, interview with Michael Bellamy, Dooley 48.
[167] A.S. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom* (1965; London: Vintage, 1994) 258.
[168] Murdoch, *The Time of the Angels* Afterword Richard Holloway (1966; London: Vintage, 2002) 182.
[169] Murdoch, *TA* 34.
[170] Byatt, DF 259.
[171] Thomas Jackson Rice comments that "Murdoch challenges her readers however, to seek the concepts that order their experience, to arrange the "shifting kaleidoscopic pattern" of symbols and themes in her 'fragmented' (26) work of art into coherent meaning, much as Carel's daughter, Muriel, and "niece," Elizabeth (actually his illegitimate child), work on their jigsaw puzzle through the novel" (4).
[172] Nabokov quoted by Dawn B. Sova, *Literature Suppressed on Sexual Grounds*, 2nd ed. (New York: Facts on File, Inc.:2000) 146.
[173] Murdoch, *TA* 32.
[174] Hanks and Hodges, "Muriel," *ODFN* 243.
[175] Hanks and Hodges, "Carol," *ODFN* 55.
[176] Peter J. Conradi, *The Saint and the Artist.* 2nd ed. (London: HarperCollins, 2001) 171.
[177] Hanks and Hodges, "Elisabeth," *ODFN* 100.
[178] Hanks and Hodges, "Elizabeth," *ODFN* 100-101.
[179] Rice, 5.
[180] Iris Murdoch, "The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists," Conradi *EM* 386-463.
[181] Rice, 7-8.
[182] Rice, 5.
[183] Murdoch, *TU* 222.
[184] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crauford (1949; London: Routledge, 1987) 118.
[185] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi *EM* 293.
[186] Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," Conradi, *EM* 327.
[187] Murdoch, *TU* 184.
[188] Murdoch, *TU* 227.

Chapter Two

'The Mad Man in the Attic':

Playing with Gendered Literary Identity as Object and Muse

Harold Bloom's seminal work, *The Anxiety of Influence* was published in 1973 and later in that same decade Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's feminist response to Bloom, *The Madwoman in the Attic* was issued in 1979. There is a notable shift in Murdoch's representation of women and madness in her fiction after the dissemination of these two theoretical texts. Bloom writes that modern authors (specifically male authors) are concerned about their ability to resist the influences of their literary forefathers in order to achieve an original work of their own, with no mention of how a female author might face the creative challenge in response to such a male dominated literary past. Bloom relates his theory to Freud's Oedipus complex and the male child's desire to overthrow his father in order to establish his own supremacy.[1] *The Madwoman in the Attic* looks at Bloom's argument from a female viewpoint, with readings of a number of female authors in the nineteenth century examining how it was impossible for them to follow Bloom's theory and identify with the authors who superseded them because these authors were predominantly male. As a consequence of this these female novelists create heroines whose rebellious desires against the patriarchal domination of their social milieu and their subsequent oppression, are enacted if not by themselves then by one or more 'others' in the texts, such as Jane Eyre's 'other' Bertha Mason.[2] Prior to 1979 Murdoch presented characters like *The Unicorn's* Hannah Crean-Smith and *The Time of the Angel's* Elizabeth Fisher who are depicted as in some sense collaborating with their own imprisonment and the incorrect assumptions others make of their situations. However, whether these heroines are victims remains unclear and Murdoch's overt utilisation of the Victorian gothic indicates that she is manipulating this tradition to challenge expectations of literary treatment of gender. Within her later works, however, such as *The Good Apprentice* (1985) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989), Iris Murdoch confronts the traditional gendering of madness in literature more openly. She appears to be consciously manipulating both Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence,* and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic,* in order to challenge both her readership's presuppositions on madness in general, and more specifically how the depiction of madness in literature can be seen to relate to sexuality, religion and gender. Within these texts she provides examples of female protagonists

who exist in the twentieth century, are similarly threatened with oppression, yet manipulate the situations to their advantage, seemingly devoid of the emotional generosity stereotypically associated with women.

i. Murdoch's imprisoned women: female infantilisation in the twentieth century

As explained in the previous chapter *Wuthering Heights* (1847) was identified by Murdoch as one of the Victorian Gothic Romantic influences for *The Unicorn*; the other source she drew attention to was Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). *The Unicorn* is not the only 1960s novel by Murdoch that draws overtly on this Victorian Gothic tradition, however; *The Time of the Angels* (1966) also does and the reasoning behind the structuring of these two works in this respect seems to be similar. The parallels between Elizabeth Fisher's situation and Hannah's are unmistakeable: both women are 'imprisoned' in overtly gothic settings, the London vicarage of the Fishers is large and dark, surrounded by a post-war wasteland and an impenetrable fog; both are subject to the controlling manipulation of people in a position of trust; and both are involved in incestuous relationships.

The emphasis on the Victorian Gothic in each of these texts is important for a number of complex and interrelated reasons. Firstly the Victorian attitude to women and its hypocritical emphasis on outward moral and social appearances, which was often at odds with the reality of behaviour behind closed doors, can be compared with the return to traditional gender roles, and recognisable moral and religious structures in the 1950s and early 1960s in Great Britain, which referred back to the country's so-called golden age of the Victorian era. Re-visiting the Victorian period in fiction is a phenomenon utilised by numerous British women writers including Angela Carter and self-confessed Murdoch enthusiasts, Sarah Waters[3] and A.S. Byatt.[4] Jeanette King draws attention to this issue in her 2005 work, *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* where she asserts that "by making female experience central to their narratives, such novels gave women back their place in history not just as victims but as agents."[5] However, King is concerned with writing after the second wave of feminism which seeks to empower female characters but she neglects Iris Murdoch's contribution to this genre which both asserted the vulnerability of women prior to the sexual revolution of the 1970s and also enforced the strength of their position after it. Murdoch's approach is also more subtle than that of authors such as Byatt and Waters, because her novels are not set in the Victorian period but she draws attention to the connections between the

age she lived and wrote in, and the Victorian era, by juxtaposing the modern age with the archaic in a literary context. There was a renewed interest in the infantilisation of women in the 1950s brought attention to by Cliff Richard and the Shadows' number one song, 'Livin' Doll' which was released in 1959,[6] and Sylvia Plath highlighted this consideration in her poem, 'The Applicant' (1962) which portrays a woman being 'interviewed' for marriage and suggests her value as a non-thinking entity, by quoting from Cliff Richard's song:

> But in twenty-five years she'll be silver,
> In fifty, gold.
> A living doll, everywhere you look.
> It can sew, it can cook,
> It can talk, talk, talk. [7]

The woman in Plath's poem appreciates in financial value the longer she stays a wife, a notion Plath illustrates by drawing on the tradition of wedding anniversary gifts being silver after twenty-five years of marriage and gold after fifty years, but here it is the woman herself who takes on the quality of the precious metal. Her aesthetic appeal is depicted as just as important as her ability to complete household tasks, but as in Cliff Richard's song she is depicted as an automaton or toy, not an independent person. Just like an advertisement for a wind-up toy, she is referred to as 'it' before her abilities are listed.[8] This infantilisation of women echoes the celebration of the subordinated female in the Victorian period, in such works as Coventry Patmore's *The Angel in the House.* Elizabeth Fisher, in the appropriately named, *The Time of the Angels,* is initially depicted as just such an angel, remaining in her uncle, Marcus' imagination as a child because he has not seen her since her extreme youth:

> 'And how old is Elizabeth?'
>
> 'Nineteen.' Nineteen! He knew that. [...] He recalled her very clearly as a magical child of twelve or so, with her long, pale, wistful face and blonde hair, almost white, streaming on her shoulders.[9]

Marcus can clearly not quite believe Elizabeth is nineteen. Her mysterious back ailment occurred only four years previously and could therefore be surmised to be an invention of Carel's in order to keep her to himself after the initiation of their sexual relationship, especially as we are told "[h]er ailment had resisted diagnosis."[10] She is still a minor at nineteen, as the age of majority was twenty-one in 1966, but she is treated quite differently to Muriel. Muriel herself notices a "quiet hardening" in Elizabeth's attitude toward her and considers her childish behaviour to be a facade: "Elizabeth still acted the

gay dependent child for Muriel's benefit, and indeed for Carel's, but now with a kind of spontaneous feigning."[11]

Elizabeth is more intelligent than Muriel with knowledge of a number of languages, yet she is expected to play games and complete jigsaws to pass her time. We are told it is Carel who prevented her from going to University, and that he has also been instrumental in keeping her secluded: "Carel had never made any attempt to procure her society, and Elizabeth seemed curiously indifferent to her solitude".[12] The necessity of her imprisonment is accepted, and the consideration of a practical solution to her problem is never put forward as something that might be acted upon, nobody ever seriously suggests she should be carried downstairs, or bought a wheelchair. The idea of bringing the porter's son, Eugene to see her is something Muriel sees in romantic terms and as if it ought to be kept secret, although there is no reason to do so, but in this as in every other prohibition surrounding Elizabeth it is Carel's eccentric authority which is the guiding force. She is another example of the Victorian childish-woman, treated as if she cannot make her own decisions, kept from the world and yet expected to behave sexually like an adult. Elizabeth's apparent dislike of unasked for interruptions and her choice not to be honest with Muriel may be more a case of her complete reliance on Carel and the mental impact of being long excluded from society and subjected to sexual abuse. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Hannah in *The Unicorn*, the necessity of survival in a situation of imprisonment has been proven to create a bond with the captor simply because the basic emotional needs of the captive must be satisfied and the individual with the power provides the only means to do this, and in this case that individual is Carel. It is also true that in such situations even when presented with the opportunity to escape the captive may fear the unknown life and implications of leaving the controlled environment they are familiar with and select captivity over freedom.[13]

Elizabeth is more vulnerable than Muriel due to her supposed disability which she may or may not believe in, and her escape may therefore be harder to secure. Restricted to the company of very few individuals and away from the outside world it will have been made harder for her to envision a world beyond the room she has become accustomed to since childhood and the death of her mother. Like Hannah, the real world has become unreal through years of imprisonment and the freedom once sought has become possibly terrifying simply because it is unfamiliar. Muriel presumes that the sexual relation Elizabeth has with Carel has been chosen by Elizabeth, echoing the view of contemporaneous psychoanalysts who as a result of Freud's influence viewed the

child as potentially seductive, enticing the adult into sexual activity. This was especially the case in houses where there was no suitable adult female who was sexually responsive to the adult male's desires.[14] Carel now has not had a wife for some time and although Pattie is in a sexual relationship with Carel, it is generally acknowledged within the book that this relationship is an unequal one, in quite different terms to that of his relations with Elizabeth, and that it therefore does not fulfil his desires. Norah describes the rumour of this relationship in emphasising Pattie's racial ethnicity and her status in the house as a servant: "I wonder if you heard that odious rumour about Carel," said Norah, "that he was having a love affair with that coloured servant?"[15] Norah sees Pattie as inferior to Carel because of her lineage, and her position in the household; it is implied that this view is shared by Marcus, and it is clear that Carel also sees her in these terms. As it becomes clear that he does not intend to make her his wife, the reality of this view becomes increasingly apparent: "She began to know, first vaguely and then more consciously, what it was like to be a slave. [...] Pattie resented too, what before she had barely noticed, Carel's assumption that Muriel and Elizabeth were socially her superiors."[16] Pattie is made vulnerable to Carel because she has internalised this judgement and yearns for love and acceptance, however meagrely it is administered: "nobody had loved her. Nobody had touched her or looked at her with the close attention which only love bestows."[17] It is likely that when Carel stops visiting Pattie's bed after the death of his wife and begins to become both eccentric and afraid, denouncing the existence of God, that this is when he begins the sexual relationship with Elizabeth. Later in the narrative when he seduces Pattie again he says "I want to make you my black goddess, my counter-virgin, my Anti-maria".[18] She is, once again, a counterpoint to his relationship with another female, who is in his opinion superior because she is white. Pattie is then viewed by Carel as merely an addition to his sexual association with white women, and as she continues in his employ and sees herself as his 'slave', the sexual dimension of their relationship has become just another aspect of her role as a servant in his household.[19]

Elizabeth's infantilisation and her immersion combined have made it difficult for her to know anything of other families or of other people's relationships from a mature perspective. Muriel never asks when the sexual activity between Elizabeth and Carel began, or whether Elizabeth was coerced into the activity by threats or manipulation by Carel or if, indeed, she has simply grown up with his behaviour unaware that it is not normal. The reader is not shown that the girls discuss anything beyond the superficial consideration of literature, games and the goings on within the house. It is, however,

possible to deem something of Elizabeth's experience from Pattie's. In a similar situation to Elizabeth, the isolated and orphaned Pattie is shown affection by Carel and becomes reliant on it.

> Am I still Carel's mistress? Pattie asked herself, and she answered yes. At any moment still, indeed forever, Carel could take her into his bed if he wished. She had no other will but his. Carel was her whole destiny. It was true that she had sometimes imagined leaving him, had pictured a redeemed Pattie leading a humble life of service. But this was an idle dream, as she knew now by the contrast between these imaginings and the sharp unmistakeable pain of a real possibility.[20]

Muriel never comprehends the position Carel has put Pattie in, only her own feelings on what she perceives as an equal affair; it is therefore clear that she may visualise Elizabeth's situation in a similar fashion. Elizabeth, as doll-like, in terms of Marcus' description of her, and her inability to physically assert any sort of rebellion; she must accept the dictations of Carel, like a doll in a dollhouse controlled and manipulated by its human owner.

The nineteenth-century infantilisation of women was brought to the public attention as a damaging practice by Henrik Ibsen's controversial criticism of the treatment of women in *A Doll's House* (1879), which Murdoch refers to in her 1983 novel, *The Philosopher's Pupil.* In *The Philosopher's Pupil*, Hattie Meynell and her companion/nanny, Pearl, move into what is known as 'the Slipper House' at the direction of her grandfather who has chosen the house because it is near to his own childhood home, and who also pays for it. He is described as 'obsessed' with Hattie. When they are settled into the Slipper House, Hattie and Pearl are described as, "as happy as two little mice in a doll's house" which seems to refer both to Ibsen's play and to the Beatrix Potter children's story, *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904). Potter's tale was published only three years after the death of Queen Victoria, and depicts two mice breaking into a dollhouse and damaging the domestic contents. Although the mice atone, it is easy to see a connection between Hattie's fragile security in the Slipper House and that of Potter's two dolls, Lucinda and Jane. Hattie's appearance is also portrayed as almost too perfect for a human. John Robert is depicted as scanning "her milky-blue eyes, her palest-gold interwoven hair, and the unblemished smoothness of her face and neck. She wore no make-up and her nose shone a little pinkly".[21] That these judgements on her appearance are associated with John Robert's thoughts indicates that this may be the way he wants to interpret her. Just as the dollhouse in the tale is within the control of the human inhabitants of the larger house, which holds the

toy house, so the Slipper House is owned by Alex McCaffrey and rests in her garden. The dolls in Potter's tale are incapable of doing anything without the intervention of the human beings who own them; the implication then seems to be that Hattie and Pearl are similarly controlled, especially when the "Slipper House riot"[22] occurs and appears to echo the invasion of the doll's house by the two mice, Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca. However, Murdoch does not compare Hattie and Pearl to the dolls but to the mice, who destroy the artificial contents of the house they had taken to be real and useful luxuries.

> Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca went upstairs and peeped into the dining-room. Then they squeaked with joy!
>
> Such a lovely dinner was laid out upon the table. There were tin spoons, and lead knives and forks, and two dolly-chairs. All *so* convenient! [...]
>
> Hunca Munca tried every tin spoon in turn; the fish was glued to the dish. Then Tom Thumb lost his temper. He put the ham in the middle of the floor, and hit it with the tongs and with the shovel, bang, bang, smash, smash!
>
> The ham flew all into pieces, for underneath the shiny paint it was made of nothing but plaster!
>
> Then there was no end to the rage of Tom Thumb and Hunca Munca. [23]

It is the illusion that really enrages the mice, and the same is true of Hattie and Pearl, who had seen John Robert as a figure of safety and security, the owner of their world and the controller, but one who would keep them from harm. The revelation of his real feelings for his granddaughter and his jealousy of Pearl, destroys this image. This is both a reminder of the long held cultural strength and security of patriarchy and its subsequent futility.[24] John Robert does indeed wish to play puppet master but only to satisfy his own perplexing desires. His attempt to stage-manage Hattie's marriage to Tom McCaffrey and thereby know when and to whom she would lose her virginity is a disturbing example of such an assertion of control. He also feels "pleasure"[25] at the possibility of mixing her, her first alcoholic drink. He therefore wants her to be an adult *and* a child, an infantilised and controlled grown-up, adult only in so far as he can choose how she will act. John Robert would cast Hattie and Pearl as the dolls but they are in actual fact more like the rebellious mice, wanting to live their own lives free of his intervention. Hattie's intelligence surprises John Robert as does her ability to argue with him on his own terms when he fastens her in his house. This dual imagery which sees the women as both submissive and rebellious both fits with Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's thesis on doubling in Victorian literature, which they describe as being utilised by female novelists to express concealed rebellion, but also echoes Beatrix

Potter's biographical inspiration behind the writing of her tale. Daphne Kutzer explains in *Beatrix Potter: Writing in Code,*[26] that the story explores Potter's own frustrations with the domestic role her parents had expected of her as their housekeeper and her actual desire for independence, her own home, and her own choice of a marriage partner. Hattie similarly seeks to make her own choices, and is shown in the text to be eloquent at expressing her own opinions, unlike the earlier depictions of Hannah and Elizabeth. When Tom McCaffrey bangs on the door of John Robert's house to try and discover what has become of Hattie, John Robert immediately presumes it is the police (it is not - no crime has actually been committed and justice of this fashion cannot be sought), but this incident does, however, echo the conclusion of Potter's tale, which sees the child place a doll policeman in front of the doll's house, an equally ineffectual means of deterring the mice. Rebellion it would seem will occur with or without social consent, and John Robert cannot rely on the traditional sources of patriarchal authority to control his thoughts and emotions. Similarly Hattie can no more be restrained from becoming an independent adult by her grandfather than a doll police*man* can deter the mice, who continue to enter the dollhouse as they please, if only to atone for their previously destructive behaviour.

ii. Re-writing the mythic female through Victorian literature: vampire or victim?

Hannah's story in *The Unicorn* does not immediately seem to connect to the Victorian era and appears initially to hearken to a medieval period of knightly chivalric action and female subordination, which it does, but this aspect also relates to the Victorian revival of interest in the age of chivalry exhibited by writers such as Tennyson who famously engaged with the revival in works such as "The Lady of Shalott" (1833-1842) and *Idylls of the King* (1859). The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and those later influenced by them engaged with the revival by producing such paintings as Edward Burne-Jones' *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* (1881-1898)[27] and *Morgan-le-Fay: Queen of Avalon* (1864)[28] by Frederick Sandys. Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* inspired numerous works of visual art such as John William Waterhouse's paintings *The Lady of Shalott* (1888),[29] *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot* (1894)[30] and *"I am half sick of shadows" said the Lady of Shalott* (1916).[31] In *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art, 1840-1920,* Christine Poulson writes that even omitting book illustrations, between 1850 and 1915 there were no less than sixty-eight works of art based on Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*[32] and William Holman Hunt judged his *Lady of Shalott* (1886-1905)[33] "as his last major work and a statement of all that his art stood for".[34]

Poulson asserts that the reason for the fascination with this particular verse narrative of Alfred Tennyson's was down to his "allegorical treatment of the relationship of the artist to society" and that through the verse Tennyson explores Richard Trench's comment that "we cannot live in art".[35] The artist's social role is also a concern of Murdoch's. In conversation with William Rose she stated that the primary responsibility of the artist was his art, but that being "a good artist" "will involve telling the truth" and that "[a] novelist working well and honestly [...] will in fact tell a lot of important truths about his society."[36] The social role of the artist is consequently important to Murdoch although it should not in her view detract from the artistic process. The connection between living out of the world in a controlled environment like the Lady of Shalott, and the impact of this on truth and creativity is explored extensively throughout her own fiction. Both Hannah and Elizabeth physically resemble the Lady of Shalott, yet there appears to be one crucial difference, as Tennyson's heroine spends her time weaving until the real world penetrates her solitude, but Murdoch's heroines are unable to create anything, and consequently become barren in a literal and figurative sense. Both women have engaged in sexual affairs and neither has become pregnant. Hannah and Elizabeth are also shown to be intelligent, both speak a number of languages and continue a general interest in academic pursuits, and yet neither creates anything either intellectual or artistic. However, the Lady of Shalott, does not create 'good' art as Murdoch defines it. Her ability to continue with her tapestry is entirely aesthetic and bares no relation to an existence outside of herself because she knows none. She cannot therefore under Murdoch's terms create anything artistically viable; she is unable to engage effectively with the people and places beyond her own castle and merely copies what she sees and converts it into her web. In a sense then she is capturing the people and events she sees reflected in her mirror and reinventing them from her own imagination, she is not employing Simone Weil's concept of 'attention' that Murdoch prized so highly and seeing them as something distinct from herself. She is also following the definition of the artist that was so worrying to Plato, and which Murdoch wrote on extensively in "The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artist", that of the artist as a mere imitator not someone who conveyed truth. The Lady of Shalott has no relationship with Lancelot, but the very awareness of something beyond herself cracks the mirror, and fragments her vision of herself and of the artificial world she has been used to seeing reflected in the looking glass. This is the point of revelation and once again is an illustration of Murdoch's interpretation of Plato:

> ‘Falling in love’, a violent process which Plato more than once vividly describes [...] is for many people the most extraordinary and most revealing experience of their lives, whereby the centre of significance is suddenly ripped out of the self, and the dreamy ego is shocked into awareness of an entirely separate reality. [...] The desire of the sturdy ego (the bad horse) to dominate and possess the beloved, rather than to serve and adore him, may be overwhelmingly strong. We want to de-realise the other, devour and absorb him, subject him to the mechanism of our own fantasy. But a love which, still loving, comes to respect the beloved and (in Kantian language again) treat him as an end not a means, may be the most enlightening love of all.[37]

The Lady of Shalott falls in love with Lancelot and so must recognise a reality beyond her own, and this strangely destroys her image of herself and the object of her endeavours, her tapestry.

> She left the web, she left the loom,
> She made three paces through the room,
> She saw the water-lily bloom,
> She saw the helmet and the plume,
> She look'd down to Camelot.
> Out flew the web and floated wide;
> The mirror crack'd from side to side;
> "The curse is come upon me," cried
> The Lady of Shalott (l. 109-115). [38]

The world exists beyond her own vision and this awareness negates the purpose and quality of her endeavours. The curse is her preference for solitude, and her solipsistic vision of the world. Plato’s ‘Cave Simile’ here provides an interesting point of comparison to Tennyson’s poem. Iris Murdoch uses Plato’s allegory on numerous occasions throughout her philosophical work. The cave simile is described in Book VII of *The Republic*, ‘The Philosopher Ruler’, and helps to consider the nature of humanity and the relationship between humanity and the concept of truth. It is perhaps most relevantly and succinctly described by Murdoch in “The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists” where she utilises the allegory to consider why Plato did not deem artists beneficial to his utopia. Murdoch asserts that Plato saw artists as copyists, imitating reality, and thereby distorting the truth, which could in turn negatively influence the general populace, “Art or imitation may be dismissed as ‘play’, but when artists imitate what is bad they are adding to the sum of badness in the world [...] Thus images of wickedness and excess may lead even good people to indulge secretly through art feelings which they would be ashamed to entertain in real life”.[39] To apply

Plato's Cave Myth to "The Lady of Shalott" is truly to devalue her creative purpose, as Harold Bloom asserts: "[h]er art is indeed not a reflection of nature but is relegated to being a shadow of a shadow".[40] She is as the prisoners in the cave watching the shadows on the wall, and concerned with what Murdoch describes as "[t]he lowest part of the soul" "egoistic, irrational and deluded".[41] Eventually with her recognition of the exterior world she comes to see the reality of that world but she can never reach the pinnacle of true knowledge which Plato refers to as gazing into the sun, as she refuses to engage with the world and encloses herself whilst living in her own coffin, the boat, where she eventually dies. She is described as "like some bold seer in a trance"[42] and dies of cold under the stormy skies of Camelot. Even if Tennyson did not intend a Platonic reading of his poem, there is a Christian parallel in Christ as the light of the Good and the source of truth which is equally kept from his heroine.

If Murdoch's novels can be seen to reflect on the role of the artist in the same way as Tennyson's work then it must be concluded that 'shadows' do not lead to the expression of genius but rather its suppression. Both Hannah and Elizabeth physically resemble the Lady of Shalott: Elizabeth with her pale hair and skin is reminiscent of John William Waterhouse's 1888 depiction of Tennyson's character,[43] Arthur Hughes' *Lady of Shalott,*[44] Willam Maw Egley's *The Lady of Shalott* (1858)[45] as well as William Holman Hunt's version of her in his last work.[46] Hannah's flowing gowns and hair resemble the style of all of Waterhouse's paintings on this subject, as well as those by Hughes, Egley and Hunt Both of Murdoch's characters also exhibit the Lady's characteristic inertia. Indeed Hannah's preoccupation with mirrors can be seen as a deliberate allusion to Tennyson's heroine who must see the world through the reflection of her looking-glass.

The Lady of Shalott's curse is brought upon her by her fascination with Lancelot; the knight therefore can be seen as infiltrating her solitude and awakening her, which in turn can also be seen as a metaphorical sexual penetration. In this way she also resembles Rapunzel in the French version of the story, "Persinette", who Maria Tatar asserts, "invites the prince up to the tower so that she can make love to him" and she also states that in the first version of the Grimm's tale it is implied that "the daily meeting with the prince in the tower" "led to pregnancy".[47] The destruction of the tower in Tennyson's plot and that of Rapunzel's narrative, would therefore suggest innocence newly violated, but with Hannah and Elizabeth this is questionable. Unlike the situation for the Lady of Shalott and Rapunzel, the change from innocence to experience does not initially seem to lead to an expulsion from their prisons but to further immersion.

However, if the end of innocence comes with knowledge of sin rather than simply the activity, perhaps the awakening of Murdoch's characters does lead to their ejection. Elizabeth must exit the rectory after the true nature of her relationship with Carel is discovered, and Hannah finally leaves Gaze after having sexual relations with Gerald. In this way all of these characters reflect the Biblical account of Adam and Eve, expelled from their first home by the awareness of human frailty and corruption. In "Rapunzel" after the relationship between the prince and Rapunzel is discovered, he falls out of the tower into a bramble patch. As a consequence of this the prince is blinded, an indirect result of his interaction with Rapunzel, and one which suggests a sexual crime in the tradition of *Oedipus the King* and the blinding of Gloucester in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. This metaphor is exhibited in Murdoch's novels, too; both the imprisoned Hannah and Elizabeth are sexually awakened, but when the men involved are obliged to see the result of their destruction, Peter by returning and Carel through the discovery of his secret, they are also physically punished but by death not just blinding. Seeing the truth like looking directly into the light of the sun, is consequently not always achievable or desirable.

The interest in Arthurian myth and legend is therefore extended to the gothic and to fairy-tales. William Morris' "Rapunzel" appeared in a collection of his poems entitled, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* and it is easy to see how Rapunzel's story parallels that of "The Lady of Shalott"; and the contemporaneous responses in the visual arts echo a similar aesthetic approach with Frank Cadogan Cowper's 1908 *Rapunzel*[48] depicting a subject who closely resembles many of the paintings of the Lady of Shalott. She also resembles the beautiful and romantic Murdochian heroines Hannah and Elizabeth with their ethereal pale complexions and their long golden hair. Again, however, there is an ambiguity presented over the innocence of Murdoch's heroines as Byatt writes that "[i]n fairy-tales, golden hair is a marker of ethical goodness as well as aesthetic appeal".[49] Elizabeth's hair is clearly blonde, without the red hue Hannah's has, and it also has a hint of green to the gold, further suggesting innocence or *naiveté*. Murdoch it would seem is subtly drawing a distinction between these two women, Hannah with her greater sexual experience and social education is no longer entirely innocent even if she is still victimised. Elizabeth, however, may remain associated with innocence as her sexual history could be interpreted as brought upon her against her will whilst still in state of childish innocence and ignorant of its implications.

It is worth here considering the original madwoman in the attic who inspired Gilbert and Gubar's work in the first instance, Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason. As Joan Gould has argued in her book on femininity and fairytales, *Jane Eyre* draws heavily upon the fairy-tale of "Rapunzel," indeed the stories appear to end in the same way with Rochester's blindness rectified by Jane's tears; but if Jane is as Gould suggests the princess-heroine and the witch is first Mrs Reed, and later Bertha Mason, why does Rochester never meet Mrs Reed, and why is Bertha the one imprisoned, and not just by anyone but by the hero of the tale?[50] And if Rochester's blinding is a result of sexual sin, why in Brontë's narrative is his sexual sin in relation to his "witch-wife"[51] and not the princess character? If as Virginia Woolf suggested in *A Room of One's Own* Brontë's artistry was interrupted by her feeling of indignation about the suppression of her own sex, it is reasonable that she would have reorganised the character placing and given the role of oppressor to the male character; so instead of the witch imprisoning the princess, it is her discovery of the witch, rather than his, that sets the princess free. This rearrangement of established roles is reflected in Murdoch's novels where both Hannah and Elizabeth are trapped by men. However, in Brontë's novel and in Murdoch's just as in the Grimm's tale it is the witch character that still liberates the women. In *Jane Eyre* it is Jane who is brought to see the imprisoned Bertha and seek her own freedom as a result, and Mrs Reed also inadvertently sets her free by telling Jane about her uncle in Madeira on her death bed – the uncle that ultimately prevents the wedding going ahead. As in the Grimm's fairytale the heroine exposes her own passionate character to the witch character(s) and afterwards she is obliged to enter the wilderness (in Jane's case, her wilderness is firstly, Lowood after her fury with Mrs Reed, and eventually the moors, when she leaves Rochester). Jane does not just find hardship though in her wilderness, she also finds the means to make her own independence and is rewarded by an inheritance that means this new found autonomy cannot be taken from her. In the case of Hannah, it is Marian to whom her sexual sin is revealed when she sees Hannah emerge from her room in Gerald's arms, and it is Marian who acts the role of the witch and ultimately turns the key in the lock and liberates Hannah into the marshes to choose her own fate. For Elizabeth it is Muriel who spies on her sister and discovers her sexual relations with Carel, and eventually carries her over the threshold of the rectory and into the light of the sun. The witch, is no longer simply the oppressive presence who wishes to stunt the sexual maturity of her charge but firstly her protector and secondly the catalyst for her autonomy. For Jane, however, like Rapunzel the lost suitor is restored to

his betrothed and the restoration of his sight indicates he will be a better man than he was before, but is this really 'happy ever after'?

Gilbert and Gubar remark that Jane and Rochester's marital home, Ferndean, is not deemed healthy enough by Rochester for even his unfortunate first wife, so if it is not as they suggest "a school of life where Rochester must learn those lessons Jane herself absorbed so easily"[52] then perhaps Jane's journey in the wilderness is not yet over. Gilbert and Gubar indicate this is the case but that this "wilderness" may be desirable to "circumvent the strictures of a hierarchical society";[53] but Jane and Rochester have not returned to the prince's kingdom as Rapunzel and her beloved do, nor indeed, even anywhere nearly as desirable, because here the prince's kingdom has been burnt to the ground and the only alternative she is offered is a house he feared would be the death of his despised first wife – the dark, damp and hidden house deep in the forest. Perhaps, as in her later novel, *Villette* (1853) Brontë was merely bowing to public demand in offering a superficially happy ending, and attempting to indicate through the final location of Mr and Mrs Rochester that all is not as pleasant as it appears.[54] After all Brontë was well aware of the dangers of such unhealthy homes, something she emphasises to the reader when she details the fatalities at Lowood;[55] the last words of the novel are also given to St John Rivers and his infallible devotion to Christ, which perhaps suggests the inferiority of the human relationships which Jane and Rochester crave satisfaction from throughout the narrative. The conclusion of Jane and Rochester's story is not quite as tidy as it might have been, and even if their joy in each other and their life at Ferndean is accepted, Brontë makes it obvious that it could not have happened had Rochester's circumstances not deteriorated significantly: the family seat has gone and he is humbled through disability. Jane has family and prospects. Is she really his equal now and is this really Brontë's view of a good relationship between the sexes? A close examination of *Jane Eyre* reveals that it is not an optimistic text for sexual relationships between men and women, however the ending is interpreted. Iris Murdoch's twentieth-century novels were not obliged to offer marriage and a happy resolution to their narratives and the princesses in Murdoch's novels of the 1960s do not unite with the sexual male at the conclusion of their tales. Such a resolution considering the nature of the sexual activity would offer a disturbing and pessimistic view of the world. The death of the oppressive sexual presence of the male character rather than his maiming is a sign of the times. Although in her later work, such as *The Philosopher's Pupil,* which was published in 1983 - the same year that saw the advent of the second term of office for the first female Prime Minister in

Great Britain - she offers a more optimistic conclusion. Her heroine is rescued from the sexually predatory Rozanov and eventually marries her chosen partner but Rozanov is still punished for his inappropriate desires by death, just as Peter Crean-Smith and Carel Fisher were before him. However, in the 1960s when the goals of sexual choice and independence were the goals of battles not yet fought and won, such a return to a traditional novelistic conclusion would perhaps have been avoiding the precarious and serious nature of the gender politics of the decade and neglecting the reality Murdoch saw as integral to the true vision of good art.

In the 1960s the interest in fairy-tales, Arthurian legends, and Gothic themes, extended into other areas of the arts with the work of Surrealist painter, Remedios Varo. *Bordando el Manto Terrestre*[56] (Embroidering Earth's Mantle) (1961) is a group of three paintings and the central one depicts a group of girls presumably held captive in a tower by a witch in a setting reminiscent of both "The Lady of Shalott" and *Rapunzel*. Like Tennyson's heroine they are embroidering, but for them it is the world they are creating through their sewing unlike their Victorian counterpart whose embroidery is an alternative to the world, as Tennyson's poem makes clear:

> She knows not what the curse may be,
> And so she weaveth steadily,
> And little other care hath she,
> The Lady of Shalott. (l. 42-45)[57]

Murdoch's interest in Surrealism is clear from her references to it in her own writing, perhaps most notably in *The Good Apprentice* with her portrayal of the Surrealist artist, Jesse Baltram; and Peter J. Conradi includes her comments on the movement (first featured in a 1956 *British Vogue* article on the cinema) in *Iris Murdoch: A Life:* "In our moments of most acute observation", she wrote praising Surrealism, "we see a world that is strange and startling".[58] Varo's painting is drawn attention to in Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novella, *The Crying of Lot 49* which similarly makes connections between the past and the present day. His heroine, Oedipa remembers seeing the painting and her reaction to it: "She had looked down at her feet and known, then, because of a painting, that what she stood on had only been woven together a couple thousand miles away in her own tower, was only by accident known as Mexico, and so Pierce had taken her away from nothing, there'd been no escape."[59] This idea of female captivity was entirely pertinent to the impending second wave of feminism in this period as was the connection of the themes of fantasy and creation with the definition of what it meant to be female. In William Morris' "Rapunzel" the Prince makes his fantasy

a reality, and the same can be seen in Murdoch's novels where both Hannah and Elizabeth are to some extent created by their oppressors and are fantasies made reality by the men surrounding them. This shows Murdoch re-considering fairy-tales, myths and legends in a way that later writers such as, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson would do in works such as *The Edible Woman* (1969), *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), and *The Passion* (1987).

Carter, Winterson and Atwood also engaged with the gothic through their re-writing of myths and fairy-tales from a feminist or proto-feminist point of view. Atwood's *The Edible Woman* (1969) is just one of her works which can be seen as a modern interpretation of the vampire myth and Angela Carter later utilises the notion of a beautiful female vampire in her 1979 story, "The Lady of the House of Love". Remedios Varo re-considered vampires, in her *Vampiro* (1961)[60] and *Vampiro Vegetarianas* (1962)[61] with an ironic twist. Murdoch similarly draws on the vampiric in her depictions of Hannah and Elizabeth and she cited Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* as an influence for *The Unicorn*. A.S. Byatt sees the connection between the two texts as indicating that Hannah is vampire-like in the sense that *she* is predatory. She goes on to compare Hannah and Carmilla:

> Carmilla has Hannah's physical weakness, and makes appeals to the frightened narrator of the story, who both loves and hates her, which are echoed by Hannah's approaches to Marian and Effingham; her vampirism, Pritchett says, 'discloses the languid and yet insatiate sterility of Lesbian love', and Hannah can be seen as preying in a 'languid and insatiate' way on the other characters.[62]

The connection between Hannah and 'Lesbian love' is unclear; certainly; Carmilla seems to desire the narrator of the novella and Hannah and Marian have a close friendship but Hannah does not behave as if she has any kind of sexual interest in Marian. As Byatt states, Hannah calls out to Marian for 'love' and she does seem to make a 'claim' on both Effingham and Marian, possibly to entice them further into the world in which she exists but it is in no way indicated that this might lead to a consummation of this passion. Indeed the quote that Byatt details in her discussion of Effingham suggests his fear at becoming "dead"[63] like Hannah, and so if anything she is trying to encourage them to give up worldly pleasures rather than engage with them. There *is* a 'sterility' to this and the enticement to a sort of death as Byatt comments is vampire-like but it is not sexual. It is worth also looking at the association Byatt makes between Carmilla holding out her hand to Laura (the narrator), and Hannah holding out her hand to Marian;[64] but there is also another similar incident in *The Unicorn* that Byatt

does not list and that is when Violet holds Marian's hand. When Violet approaches Marian in this way she is made to feel as Laura is, very uncomfortable and there is a sexual dimension to the scenario which is absent with Hannah approaches Marian. Violet's gaze is "fixed upon her with hungry intensity", and she says to Marian "I didn't ask you to come here to talk about myself, but one has needs, old needs". When she 'releases' her hand Marian takes "it to safety", before Violet threatens to repeat the encounter on another occasion. Violet clearly desires her and although Marian may move towards Violet at their parting and allow her to kiss "her hair and her brow", it is also evident that she finds Violet's behaviour, and even her presence distasteful with her "pale powdery skin, the dry colourless hair, and the long moist eyes". When Violet takes her hand she is "[e]mbarrassed and alarmed".[65] Conversely Marian does not find Hannah unappealing in this way, her face is described as "anxious, tired, beautiful" and whereas Violet traps Marian's hand, she gives Hannah her hand and it is only "kept for a moment", before being "released". When Violet mentions love, Marian does not respond but when Hannah does she says "you know that I love you". However, the appeal from Hannah for love is uttered amidst a discussion on loving the divine and her face is described in religious language as "literally illuminated".[66] It is not a human sexual love that is requested by Hannah therefore, but a spiritual devotion. There is certainly an argument that Hannah is associated with Carmilla but Murdoch has been careful to keep any possible predatory facet to Hannah's character ambiguous and to give the obviously sexual aggression to Violet instead; that the two incidents appear in these works and can be contrasted in this way proves this point.

Hannah is, however, almost certainly a sufferer of sexual abuse and Carmilla can be interpreted in the same light. Elizabeth too has been a victim of abuse. The utilisation of vampire motifs to symbolise nineteenth-century sexual taboos has been well documented. As Angela Kingston comments on Dracula: "many critics have noted, the masking symbolism of vampirism also allowed Stoker and his Victorian readers to enjoy the sexuality of the novel surreptitiously, perhaps unconsciously".[67] Writers such as Christopher Craft in '"Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender, and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula"*[68] and Talia Schaffer in "A Wilde Desire Took Me: The Homoerotic History of *Dracula"* discuss the furore surrounding the issue of homosexuality in the period Stoker wrote his masterpiece, and how it was a topic which is likely to have been of particular interest to Stoker who was friendly with the Wilde family and actually married a woman previously courted by Oscar Wilde.[69] The conviction of Wilde in 1895 for homosexual behaviour led to a sentence of two years hard labour and his

almost total social exclusion. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was first published in 1897, and according to Talia Schafer was commenced just one month after Wilde's conviction, so it is easy to see how Wilde's situation may have influenced Stoker.[70] Speculation has been rife about just what "the abnormality of the vampire's eroticism"[71] refers to. Stoker's own confused attitude towards homosexuals and Wilde in particular has been speculated upon; his reported acts of kindness after the trial towards Wilde and public condemnation of homosexuality in general[72] has led critics to question his own sexual preferences.[73] However, theories on the meaning of the sensual behaviour in this novel have ranged from Stoker making a statement on the New Woman[74] to voicing concerns over sexually infectious diseases after he apparently contracted syphilis from a prostitute.[75] The sexual nature of vampire tales is easy to identify considering the nature of the attack and the after affects. Female vampires are usually depicted as if they are in the flush of something akin to an orgasm and the difficult to control enthusiasm to be satiated can only be compared to the fervour of sexual desire. Bram Stoker's female vampires are depicted in a manner that from a twenty-first-century perspective is obviously sexual but from a nineteenth-century viewpoint may have been more ambiguous:

> The girl went on her knees, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as she went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat.[76]

For the Victorian reader then the equivocal nature of what the vampire represents can be seen as a means to utilise the supernatural to present the unspeakable. Meg Barker goes as far to suggest incest between Dracula and the women in his castle[77] who may be his sisters or daughters. Jan B. Gordon supports this contention in *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897- 1997.* Regarding the women in Dracula's castle, she argues: "[s]ince they bear a physical resemblance and have, at least from Dracula's corrective comment, experience his love in the past, Stoker would seem to be raising the possibility of incest among the Count's sexual proclivities."[78] In the same volume, Carol Margaret Davison considers the political situation which provided a setting for such a fictional investigation of human behaviour:

> What I call the cabalistic backdrop of early Gothic fiction - a backdrop that featured the Spanish Inquisition, anti-Christian secret societies (or cabals), secret sciences, the violation of

> familial bonds (e.g. patricide and incest), and popular millenarian ideas- was grounded in the fear of a Social Apocalypse like the French Revolution occurring in Britain.[79]

It is easy to see post-war Great Britain as a similarly unsettled environment with the harsh reality of two world wars still vivid in the memories of the population in the 1960s, and the sexual revolution threatening the still fragile home front and the familial structures which during the 1950s seemed to present a recognisable and comforting setting to move forward. Censorship laws were also a pertinent consideration, and they did not begin to relax in England until after the trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960. However, whereas the Victorian fear was of the disintegration of Christianity, the writing of this later period appears to be divided between the fear of a return to the restrictive moral boundaries of Christianity, and the idea of a future unimaginable without it. Slightly earlier texts such as Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945) and C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* (1949-54) explore the place of religion in the modern world and its waning appeal as a focus for the moral structure of society. *The Unicorn's* Hannah Crean-Smith perfectly embodies this confusion, coming from a strictly religious family and unable, like Julia and Sebastian Flyte, to disregard the guilt associated with sin but equally incapable of wholly embracing the structure of religious life. Her moral lethargy like Sebastian's is partly therefore the result of indecision.

However, although the vampire is seen as a perpetrator of physical aggression possibly of a sexual nature, the vampire can also be seen as a victim, forced to experience the 'kiss' before becoming 'kin'. Anna Krugovoy Silver comments that the scene when Dracula forces Mina to drink from an open wound in his chest is a "metaphor" of "violation and rape". "As C. F. Bentley and Christopher Craft have argued, the scene symbolizes both fellatio and breastfeeding, as Dracula simultaneously orally impregnates Mina with his 'seed' and gruesomely feeds his newest infant".[80] The vampire is both abuser and creator, a merging of identities which strongly implies incest. In Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, his vampire heroine does not recall the original attack but feels the listlessness and the depression that goes with it. She suffers a loss of religious faith and seeks both love and comfort, but she also seeks to similarly abuse others, all considerations that connect her to the victim of child abuse. Carmilla resembles Hannah and Elizabeth, being pale, beautiful, golden haired and youthful. Her lethargy and nervous illness are equally mirrored by these two Murdochian heroines. Juliann Whetssell-Mitchell writes in *Rape of the Innocent: Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse* that some "professionals believe that paedophilia is caused by sexual abuse in childhood. In other words, the paedophile was abused as a child and learns to

model this behaviour."[81] This can be extended to the vampire motif; the vampire's victim forced to endure the 'kiss' then becomes desirous to act in the same way, violently and often without control over satiating their thirst. As Byatt remarks, Carmilla's lethargy is easily associated with Hannah[82] and perhaps there is an element of Hannah wanting to hurt others so that they experience her pain, or just to share her loneliness, but she does not act exactly like Carmilla does. To drink the blood of others, in other words to live off others, is how Carmilla survives but although Hannah does to a certain extent survive through others, the others are also feeding off her. Hannah herself mistakenly thinks she has lived through their 'gaze' but without it she may have seen the futility in her situation and sought her own freedom; the gaze she has basked in has only served to make her a fiction that belongs to others and to see herself as necessarily playing a part as a result of that. It is impossible to classify Elizabeth's behaviour in terms of overtly abusing others; there is no evidence that she has attempted anything in either direction but her resemblance to Carmilla and the vampiric nature of Carel's charactersation make it obvious that Murdoch was utilising the vampiric tradition. Carel always wears black, he is ritualistic but rejects religion and morality, and he is predatory and cruel preying on the most vulnerable members of the household, the isolated Pattie and the disabled Elizabeth. Muriel does see Elizabeth as being active in expelling her from her father but it is difficult to see how this could be termed as abusive as it is liberating Muriel rather than further enmeshing her in the situation inside the rectory. The main difference, however, between Murdoch's heroines and the vampires of Victorian gothic is that Carmilla *is* imprisoned in her vampire state, whereas Elizabeth and Hannah have the potential to be freed from their situations.

The issue of sterility that Byatt raises in relation to vampiric passion is, however, certainly relevant and interesting, since neither Hannah nor Elizabeth become pregnant even though they are both sexually active. Although this would not be desirable or wise for either character within the context of the plot and it would create further moral and structural problems for the novel, it is perhaps less than realistic and therefore worth exploring, especially from an author who stated when discussing *The Unicorn* that, "as a would be realist" "I would not like to be labelled as a Gothic novelist. I would regard this as limiting in a slightly derogatory sense."[83] Although both novels were written in an age where contraception was available, neither are set in an environment where it is likely any of the characters would be concerned about it. Of course as a sort of 'Fisher King' the sterility of Carel's lovers, Pattie, as well as Elizabeth, fits neatly with Murdoch's symbolic purpose; and a similar motif can easily be extended to *The*

Unicorn, where Hannah herself, or perhaps Max Lejour, can be seen as a Fisher King waiting for a miracle to redeem the lands that have turned to wilderness in line with the ailing situation of one of the central protagonists. However, there is still no satisfactory explanation in the plot of either novel as to why this would be the case. Elizabeth's androgyny and her, and Hannah's almost childish helplessness give a sense that they would be incapable of sustaining a pregnancy, but it is not intimated that they are sterile.

The vampire motif is consequently utilised by Murdoch as a means to explore taboos and remind the informed reader of the Victorian literary impetus behind using such symbolism in their own fiction. Once again Murdoch manipulates a previous literary tradition to enforce pertinent issues in the social climate contemporaneous with her writing. As much as examining such ideas enlightens the critic and her general readership alike they by no means provide a full and comprehensive way of interpreting her novels in isolation. Her work utilises a plethora of imagery and intertextual references which work with and against each other to present the overall mood and thematic concerns of her novels, and sometimes it is precisely that these ideas jar in their juxtaposition. In other words it is the enigmatic quality of her work and its elusive quality in interpretation that make it both relevant and apt.

iii. Parent and child narratives and the 'family romance'[84]

Murdoch's early fiction considers the oppressed female and the misconceptions regarding women in her contemporary milieu. However, in her later work such as *The Good Apprentice* (1985) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989) it is not just the women that are imprisoned or restrained, but men as well. *The Good Apprentice* tells of Edward Baltram, the illegitimate son of the womaniser and surrealist painter, Jesse Baltram and his model, Chloe. Edward's mother died sometime prior to the start of the novel and he cannot remember knowing either of his biological parents. He has been brought up by his stepfather Harry Cuno and with his step-brother, Stuart. Edward is introduced by Murdoch as 'the prodigal son' an analogy which is enforced throughout the text by biblical quotation from the parable itself. Stuart is set up as the 'good son' in opposition to Edward as the rebel. Edward's 'crime' is, however, not a deliberate squandering of his fortunes but an accidental one, when with misguided but good humoured intentions he gives his unsuspecting friend, Mark, a drug which leads to Mark throwing himself out of a window and being killed. Edward's journey through the novel is an attempt to

atone for this 'crime' by seeking out his father to proffer absolution. However, Edward's journey to liberation proves more of a challenge than originally anticipated when Jesse is eventually found in his remote house, Seegard, apparently mentally unstable and locked in a tower much of the time by Edward's stepmother and two half sisters, Bettina and Ilona.

This emphasis on the relationship between father and son immediately highlights the importance of origins and parental influence in the novel which creates interplay with Bloom's argument in the *Anxiety of Influence.* Edward's flight from his step-father to his biological father is essentially a search for his own independent identity, trying to both understand his personal history and also find a niche for himself unpolluted by the influence of his ancestry. This is easily associated with Bloom's views regarding the male poet:

> [W]e never read a poet as poet, but only one poet in another poet, or even into another poet. Our answer is manifold: we deny that there is, was or ever can be a poet as poet – to a reader. Just as we can never embrace (sexually or otherwise) a single person, but embrace the whole of his or her family romance, so we can never read a poet without reading the whole of his or her family romance as poet.[85]

The Good Apprentice opens by clearly steering the reader to consider the importance of the relationship between father and son, not just in an earthly way but also perhaps referring to the relationship between man and god. Part one of the novel is called, "The Prodigal Son" and Murdoch goes on to quote the parable in the opening lines:

> I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
>
> These were not perhaps the actual words which Edward Baltram uttered to himself on the occasion of the momentous and mysterious summons, yet their echo was not absent even then, and later he repeated them often.[86]

The parable is thus set up as integral to the plot of *The Good Apprentice* and to the 'mysterious summons' Murdoch refers to in the second paragraph. She subsequently abandons this line of thought and narrates the events leading up to Mark's fatal accident. The summons is almost certainly referring to the *séance* Edward attends in his despair after Mark's death, desiring to hand over his destiny to some other worldly power and relinquish the awful responsibility of living with his actions. He is pleased that the card advertising the *séance* appears seemingly miraculously in his room, and

although he considers how it may have appeared there in a quite normal fashion he still prefers to associate it with a guiding principle over which he exercises no control:

> Nevertheless he felt he could recognise the hand of fate, and fate was just what at that moment, he needed in his life more than anything, some significant compulsion, even if the significance were dark. To be under orders, to have something he must do. He felt weak and fatalistic. But suppose the dead did speak, and in terrible tones, the message of Mark's mother, spoken by Mark, denouncing him as a murderer? Might not that drive him into madness? Even then it would be fate, it would be part of a fated punishment, it would be a *step* upon a *road*, which might lead somewhere. The sense of nowhere-to-go, no space, no time, no movement, was a part of his utter and deep misery. [87]

Edward's sense of being lost then leads him to rely on fate to seek direction, firstly from another world, then even to suggest that the descent into madness would be a welcome relief as an escape from his current awareness of his problems, and how they affect other people (such as Mark's mother who constantly sends him letters blaming him for her son's death). Mrs Quaid, the psychic holding the *séance*, says in the voice of one of the spirits that she calls forth, "There is one among us who has two fathers" which Edward presumes refers to him. He then sees a bronze head which instructs him to "Come to your father. Come home my son",[88] and even uses Edward's name; he assumes this is Jesse summoning him to see him. The bronze head is the first element of the text that is best identified as the fantastic or an example of potential magic realism. However, Murdoch is careful to ensure that there is an element of mystery surrounding such occasions so that they could also be understood in a logical worldly way. For Murdoch, the novel provided a unique opportunity to do this where philosophy did not, as she commented herself, "there is a kind of self-expression which remains in literature, together with all the playfulness and mystification of art. The literary writer deliberately leaves a space for his reader to play in. The philosopher does not leave any space".[89] As Edward is, generally speaking the only character to witness such manifestations (with the exception of Mrs Quaid who remembers nothing of the séances once the spirits have left her and some minor periphery characters) it is important that he remains someone that the reader sees as vulnerable, possibly mentally unstable, open to believing in the spirit world but also potentially believable. It is necessary that he comes across as neither certainly delusional nor too dogmatically conventional. He is the questing hero and the bridge between two worlds. His ability to see beyond the conventional and his desire to be saved, or indeed, damned by an external source lends a

religious element to a novel written in a world Murdoch believed to be without religion, yet still in search of something to fill the space religion had left.[90]

The constant emphasis on the return to the 'father' and the parable of the Prodigal Son provides a Christian backdrop to the novel whilst the title is a reference to another kind of spiritual world, as explored in Goethe's *Der Zauberlehrling* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice). Edward might well be termed 'The Philosopher's Apprentice' as he provides Murdoch with the ability to investigate the possibilities of the real and the fabled in a way that philosophy simply does not allow. A.S. Byatt asserts that Stuart, who has decided to pursue the lifestyle religious aesthete without the religious aspect, giving up sex and all luxuries in the pursuit of purity and goodness, is a hero of equal proportions in this novel. However, by the very nature of his stoical pursuit, without colour in its purity he fades into the background. He is only brought into the foreground of the action on two notable occasions. The first is when Jesse sees him in his house and shouts at him to be removed:

> 'There's a dead man, you've got a corpse there, it's sitting at the table, I can see it.' He pointed his stick at Stuart. Stuart got up.
>
> Jesse went on raising his voice further, not hysterically but in a tone of urgent command. 'That man's dead, take him away. I curse him. Take that white thing away, its dead. The white thing, take it away from here.'[91]

To Jesse it is Stuart's purity, his 'whiteness' that makes him noticeable. He is not involved in life and therefore, to the perhaps over-experienced Jesse he is an object of horror, of death, and of boredom. The colour white is also interesting here as it connects to both purity and death. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother wore a white mourning wardrobe on a state visit in 1938.[92] European queens have a history of wearing white for mourning and Mary, Queen of Scots wore *"deuil blanc"* probably after the death of her father-in-law, Henry II of France or her mother, Mary of Guise.[93] In India, white is also a "commonly worn" mourning colour.[94] According to George Fergusson white is also the colour of purity and death in Christian art as it is "worn by Christ after the Resurrection", and by "the Virgin Mary in paintings of the Immaculate Conception." He goes on to state that: "In the Early Christian period the clergy wore white and this colour has remained in liturgical use for Christmas, Easter, and Ascension".[95] Perhaps most noteworthy for Murdoch is Plato's assertion in Book XII of the Laws, that white "is a colour suitable to the gods"[96], lending a sense of divine power to its associative definition. The second time Stuart is brought into the main action is shortly after this incident when his father's lover, Midge - who has just kissed Jesse in front of Harry -

decides that she is in love with Stuart. Her desire to enter into a more intimate relationship with Stuart seems to be primarily motivated by Stuart's discovery of her adulterous affair and her conclusion that he has judged her for her behaviour in this respect. As the judge, she believes he can absolve her for her crime, and she consequently pursues him, much to Stuart's displeasure. It is again though, his lack of life and experience that interests her. His awareness of her affair and her supposed 'love' for Stuart is the advent of the third section of the novel, titled, "Life After Death" and to a large extent the section deals with the implications of life after Stuart has discovered various secrets of the other characters. Yet, Stuart is no more a part of Midge's drama than an inanimate object; he has merely reminded her of the rather inflexible code of moral conduct that is recognisable generally as the Good, he does not judge her outwardly, he even remains silent immediately after the event, not even speaking to Midge or Harry about what has occurred. When asked he passes an opinion that might be attributed to anyone asked in a hypothetical situation what would be the right thing to do: he responds devoid of emotion, seeing everything clearly as right or wrong with no mess or confusion. He can do this because he is in some sense dead, or at least not part of the life game that the other protagonists are engaged in; he has kept himself removed.

The main action of the plot is certainly Edward's; he is the one who experiences both extremes, the magic and the horror, the gentleness of his own feelings of love and overwhelming character of his desire. Stuart is important because of what he lacks; his decisions keep him safe but do not provide him with any sort of "direction in a godless world". As Byatt phrases the goal of his endeavours he "wants to be apprenticed to Good, to strip himself of desire and illusion, to find an *ascesis*."[97] As Murdoch is so preoccupied with the 'Good' it would seem that the character who seems determined to achieve it would be her hero but her sympathies seem to be with the flawed Edward rather than the apparently pure Stuart. This is easily explained by an examination of "Against Dryness", where Stuart is the "dry" modern hero of Stuart Hampshire and Jean-Paul Sartre:

> He is rational and totally free except in so far as, in the most ordinary law-court and commensensical sense, his degree of self-awareness may vary. He is, morally speaking, monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for his actions. Nothing transcends him. His moral language is a practical pointer, the instrument of his choices, the indication of his preferences. […] The only moral word he requires is 'good' (or 'right'), the word which expresses decision. His rationality expresses itself in his

> awareness of facts, whether about the world or about himself. The virtue which is fundamental to him is sincerity.[98]

The man that Edward seems to strive to be is in stark contrast to the image of the 'modern man' Murdoch describes as "a free rational will". His role in the novel is rather to provide her preferred scenario, "man as free and separate and related to a rich complicated world from which, as a moral being, he has much to learn".[99] Thisis where the importance of the title comes in: Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice learns by daring and by mistakes, as does Edward, these then are 'apprentices'. Stuart cannot strictly be deemed an apprentice as he thinks he already knows how to approach the world but does not actively engage with it.

The story of the prodigal son and Edward and Stuart's own situation lends itself to an association with the Gloucester subplot to *King Lear*. Edward being the illegitimate step-son of Stuart's legitimate father and the actual illegitimate son of Jesse Baltram, he is thus easily associated with Edmund, Gloucester's bastard son, especially considering the similarity not just in the sound of their names but also in the meaning of them, Edward derived from the Old English, "ēad 'prosperity, riches' and weard 'guard'".[100] The name Edmund is similarly Old English in origin from "ēad 'prosperity, riches' and mund 'protector'".[101] In terms of placing within the family and also his pretensions to an elevated morality, Stuart can be compared to Gloucester's elder son, Edgar. To further cement the connection the 'mad' Jesse like Lear has been deemed unfit to rule (in this case his home) anymore and is thus succeeded, partly by devious means, by three women. In *The Good Apprentice* it is his wife and oldest daughter who are presented as the aggressors, or Goneril and Regan characters, and as in Lear, it is his youngest daughter, Ilona, who is his favourite and loves him best. However, in a way typical of Murdoch's use of intertextuality these connections do not lend themselves to straightforward comparison, but are by their nature open to a fluidity of interpretation. Considering the parallels to *King Lear* it is easy to try and compare Edward's speech about the influence of fate in the early part of the plot with similar speeches in Act 1 Scene 2 of *King Lear* which refer to similar considerations. Gloucester blames Edgar's apparent betrayal and the disruptions in the royal family upon, "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend/ no good to us." (1.2.96-7).[102] His words are followed by a soliloquy voiced by Edmund who has manipulated events to make it seem as if Edgar is scheming against his father and who prefers to see himself as forging his own destiny rather than attributing his fortune to the whims of the natural or indeed the spiritual world.

> This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when
> we are sick in fortune, often the surfeit of our own behaviour,
> we make guilty of our disasters the sun and moon, and the
> stars; as if we were villains of necessity; fools by heavenly com-
> pulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predomi-
> nance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced
> obedience of planetary influence; and all that were evil in, by
> a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whore-master
> man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!
> (1.2. 104-112)[103]

Edward is therefore not wholly comparable with Edmund. Where Edward repents of his actions and cannot see any other way out of his misery with the exception of looking to the fates, or indeed, madness, as a means to escape at this point in the narrative, Edmund is scornful of the power of anything other than human conduct, and even seems to consider that such interests in the spiritual world are merely useful excuses to 'evade' one's own responsibility. Whilst Edmund has perfectly good reason to doubt his father's motivations, considering it was his father's own "goatish" or lustful "disposition" that led to his being conceived out of wedlock and therefore being pushed out of the line of inheritance, Edward seems to welcome the potential of a return to his father even though he knows he has been similarly brought into the world. Edward is also not seeking to evade the responsibility of his own actions, but there seems to be no way of accepting blame in order to free himself from what appears to be a potentially never ending penance. His difference from Gloucester therefore is clear and also his difference from Edmund. Edmund believes in and accepts the baser qualities of humankind and considers them the only means available to him to secure his own fortune, as he has been the victim of such motivations himself from his early life; Edward has not suffered in the same way as a result of his illegitimacy and still fears the evil in humankind, thereby remaining hopeful that there is some other means to escape his own imperfect nature or at least be reconciled to it. Apart from certain differences in their relative individual circumstances which have led to this difference in point of view, it is apparent that dissimilar social values in Renaissance England and the England of the 1980s play a large part. Despite this huge historical gulf both of these characters have a certain sense of dependence on their origins and a desire to be reconciled with the incidence of their birth before they can make progress to a better or, at least a kinder state of being. Despite Edmund's villainy throughout the play he

repents at the point of being dealt a fatal blow by his brother's hand, and after this exchange:

> **Edgar:** […] My name is Edgar and thy father's son.
> The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
> Make instruments to plague us.
> The dark and vicious place where thee he got
> Cost him his eyes
> **Edmund:** Thou hast spoken right 'tis true;
> The wheel is come full circle! I am here. (5.3.168-173)[104]

The "dark and vicious place where thee he got" is a reference to the conception of Edmund and it is Edmund's desire for revenge for the repercussions of this which lead him to take a part in the mutilation of his father. Edmund's comment that the "wheel has come full circle" shows that he may have avenged the injustice done to him but that he has in doing so brought himself low once again and is in just a "dark and vicious place" although of a different sort. Like Edmund, in order to move towards goodness Murdoch's Edward needs to understand his history and his father's role in his own actions.

Edward's reliance on other worldly guidance and fears about madness is reminiscent of another Shakespearian father and son narrative, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Like Edward, Hamlet is the only person who sees the supernatural manifestation that leads him to discover the 'truth' about his father, in this case a ghost. The ghost of Hamlet's father can be likened to the bronze head that summons Edward to Seeguard. Such visions may also be a sign of madness in both young men, and both incidents put the rest of the narrative under considerable doubt. The discovery of the 'truth' in each case also leads to the possibility of father-daughter and sibling incest. As Jane M. Ford asserts in *Patriarchy and Incest from Shakespeare to Joyce* with reference to Otto Rank's *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend:*

> Although *Hamlet* has been scrutinized much more extensively regarding the mother/father/son triad, in the Polonius/Ophelia/Hamlet triangle the suitor inadvertently destroys the father as a prelude to the ultimate destruction of the other two members of the triangle. But Polonius had already deterred his daughter from responding to Hamlet on the grounds of protecting her and it is her father's murder that precipitates her madness. "In Polonius is embodied the disdained and derided elderly father who wants to keep his daughters for himself" (Rank, 181).[105]

May Baltram suggests that her and Jesse Baltram's youngest daughter, Ilona, is no longer allowed to see him as he "lusts after her."[106] Whether this is true or not is not shown clearly in the text, but there are subtle indications that their relationship is perhaps not as it should be. Jesse does suggest that Edward marry Ilona until he is reminded they are siblings by Edward himself, perhaps showing that he does not respect the taboo of incest. As Jesse's mental health is in question here, it is not clear whether Jesse fully comprehends what he has said, or that he remembers who everybody is in relation to each other. In *Hamlet*, it has similarly been suggested that there may be an incestuous connection between Laertes and Ophelia.[107] Laertes like Polonius is preoccupied throughout the play with Ophelia's sexual reputation and her behaviour in this respect. His concern about his sister's sexual future far exceeds his interest in his own sexual concerns - unless of course the two considerations are interrelated. Certainly his actions at the point of her death suggest something beyond the usual sibling bond. He aggressively defends her virginity when it is questioned by the priest at her funeral although he cannot know it as a certainty, and the bawdy nature of her final words suggest she is no longer innocent. He consequently delays her burial "Till I have caught her once more in my arms" (5.1.234) and the stage direction states that he "leaps into the grave".[108] Hamlet goes on to assert that his love for Ophelia is greater than that of her brother, "I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers/ Could not, with all their quality of love, /Make up my sum."(5.1.254-256).[109] His assertion further suggests Laertes' expression of feeling has exceeded that which is appropriate, Hamlet being Ophelia's intended before his demise. Indeed, Ophelia suggests in her mad songs and rhymes, just prior to her drowning, that she has been corrupted. The nature of her language at this point makes it clear that she has been exposed to an aggressive sexual influence, if only a linguistic one:

> Young men will do't if they come to't,
> By Cock, they are to blame.
> Quoth she 'Before you tumbled me,
> You promised me to wed.' (4.5.59-62)[110]

When she re-enters in the same scene, she issues "columbines" which suggest "infidelity"; and gives out "a daisy" which, as daisies point to "faithfulness", "could symbolise dissembling seduction".[111] Although Hamlet suspects his mother of infidelity there is no pressing reason Ophelia would have to remind Gertrude of this; it does not particularly affect her, nor does Claudius' supposed seduction of Hamlet's mother. Hamlet has certainly done little enough to endear himself to Ophelia at this point, so it

is unlikely she would be motivated by loyalty to Hamlet. To collect particular plants in the hope that their symbolic purpose would be understood to insult the King and Queen seems a strange action for Ophelia, even if she is suffering from mental illness. She is not aggressive or accusatory up to this point in the play and even in the throes of insanity she may be crude, but she is not angry. Surely it is therefore possible that rather than these gifts and her accompanying speech being about accusing others over Hamlet's concerns, they are actually a cry for help over crimes she has been the victim of, and that she is unable to express more clearly or directly; possibly they are offences she does not fully understand in order to arrive at judgement. The only offering of her herbs and flowers that receives a direct response from one of the characters present at the scene and therefore identifies the receiver with greater certainty than those of her other gifts, is her offering of rosemary and pansies:

> **Ophelia**: You must sing 'Down, a-down', and you, Call him a down-a.' O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward that stole his master's daughter.
>
> **Laertes**: This nothing more than matter.
>
> **Ophelia**: There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray, love,
>
> Remember. And there is pansies that's for thoughts.
>
> **Laertes**: A document in madness – thoughts and remembrance
>
> fitted. (4.5.169-176)[112]

Although "false steward" may refer to Hamlet, Ophelia's comment seems to allude to someone who is present and Hamlet is not. She is also not "his master's daughter" but he is her master's son. Laertes, however, is present and to a certain extent, her father, in his role as head of the household. That Laertes is the one who responds to this comment suggests his disturbance at her speech and also that he is trying to dismiss her claims. His comment implies there is more to Ophelia's nonsense than might appear, and as he is the more obviously implicated individual in her accusation this can be seen as both an indirect admission of guilt and an effort to re-direct attention elsewhere. As Laertes also responds to her next lines it seems likely that she is giving him the rosemary and the pansies. They may be referring to her father's death but this is unlikely because Laertes has only just found out and would not forget so soon; she is also not talking about her father's death in her last speech. It is possible Ophelia is referring to an incident that has occurred between the two of them. Her following words can be interpreted in two ways:

either as a lover, albeit a confused one, urging her beloved to recall that which he appears to be denying in public; or she may actually be telling him to remember to "pray" to God for forgiveness after committing a mortal sin.

Madness alone could not make her speak in such a vulgar way unless it had been learnt already. That much of her speech is quotation and is so unlike her usual utterances, which are considerably less prolific and decidedly more restrained, suggests she is uttering the speech of another, probably directly, perhaps as a plea for assistance, or possibly because she has no other language at her disposal to explain something so foreign to her previous experience. In *Titus Andronicus*, Lavinia has her tongue cut out by her rapists and her hands cut off. She is thus forced to write in the sand with a stick to tell her father the names of her attackers. In *King Lear*, Cordelia, who is ultimately punished for not 'loving her father all' (1.1.97-98) is also rendered dumb when questioned about the relationship with him, answering, "Nothing" (1.1.79).[113] Such implied sexual crimes which are left unexplained by the muted female victims leave their characterisation confusing. Is Ophelia the innocent girl she is initially portrayed as, the depraved woman asserted by Rebecca West,[114] or simply a victim of the patriarchal structure? If her rambling references to sexual betrayal do mean something, and it is unlikely they do not as Shakespeare was an exacting and precise writer, she is left unable to reveal the reasons behind her outburst and it is possible that it is Hamlet who has caused her current state, just as it is possible that it is her brother or her father.

Incest was a topical concern for Elizabethan audiences well aware of both the controversy surrounding the demise of Henry VIII's first marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and that of his second marriage to Anne Boleyn. These unions were both ultimately condemned on the same grounds: the lines in Leviticus which forbid the union of individuals who have previously had sexual relations with the sibling of their future partner. Henry VIII's brother had previously been betrothed to his first wife; and Anne Boleyn's sister had also been Henry VIII's mistress. Both of these occurrences occasioned Henry to suggest the marriages were incestuous, meaning they were living in "mortal sin", punished by God by providing no satisfactory (male) heir, and furthermore, illegal.[115] This definition of incest was the same one which led Hamlet to be so repulsed by Gertrude and Claudius' relations. The scandal of the Princess Elizabeth's youthful frolics with her step-father and uncle, Thomas Seymour, would also be fresh in the audience's minds, as would the behaviour of Thomas Boleyn who had encouraged the sexual relationships between his daughters and the king, before renouncing Anne in her trial where she was accused of incest with her own brother. This

latter incident can also be compared with *Hamlet,* and Polonius' engineering of a scenario where Ophelia can be alone with the Prince. Polonius states "I'll loose my daughter to him", a comment with sexual overtones of prostitution.[116] This in turn suggests he is indeed sexually exploiting his daughter even if this may arguably be a loosely socially acceptable practice for the period. Hamlet's later command to Ophelia, "get thee to a nunnery" (3.1.122)[117] could refer both to the safety of the convent away from her manipulative family, and also to the implied 'brothel', showing his awareness of her as a pawn in her father's sexual power games. After all, Ophelia and her family would gain much through her marriage to Hamlet, as she, like Anne Boleyn, would be elevated to royalty.

Ilona is characterised in a similar way to Ophelia: she appears the most innocent of the household and the most vulnerable. Yet despite knowing they are related, Ilona herself seems to be determined to seduce Edward or at least to make him fall in love with her. She tries to secretly administer a love potion to him, which leads to a hallucination (or vision) of Jesse's death by drowning. As the hallucination is the result of the potion administered by Ilona, this death scene could be deemed an indication of Ilona's sexual association with her father or at least of Edward's fear of such an activity. The vision of Jesse's death when associated with the potion may be a sign that Edward sees his father as a sexual rival who must be destroyed to allow him to succeed, or indeed, that Ilona views him in this light. The mode of Jesse's death is also significant in this respect. Jesse dies by drowning both in the vision and in actuality, and Murdoch has other similarly placed protagonists commit suicide by drowning, such as John Robert Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil,* published just two years prior to *The Good Apprentice.* Rozanov is motivated to do so because he is tormented by his incestuous desire for his granddaughter, Hattie. Hannah Crean-Smith also dies by drowning and Catherine Fawley in *The Bell* attempts suicide by the same means. Vladimir Nabokov's infamous incestuous 'romance' *Ada or Ardor* (1969) also depicts one of the trio of siblings involved dying by drowning at the climax of the novel and it seems possible but admittedly not conclusive, that Jesse may have been motivated to commit suicide for this reason. Jesse is discovered by Edward seemingly drowned in what Anne Rowe describes as an attitude reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelite painting of Ophelia by John Everett Millais.[118] Such a death further enforces the connection to *Hamlet* and to Ophelia's demise specifically, but Murdoch does not in this text punish the victim as Shakespeare and Nabokov do, but rather the potential aggressor.

As Edward is considered to be so remarkably like her father, something Ilona remarks upon herself, it seems even stranger that she should develop an amorous interest in him. As Edward had not grown up with Ilona, if he had not resembled her immediate known family, such a confusion of new emotions would be less strange although equally undesirable. One particular incident where Edward goes to see Ilona in her room seems particularly of note at this point. After seeing Jesse passionately kissing Chloe's sister, Midge, he seems apparently uninterested in the taboo he has broken by performing such an act in front of an audience composed of his wife, his three children (one of whom was mothered by Chloe), Midge's lover and Edward's step-father, Harry, and Stuart, all of whom know Midge's husband, Thomas. This act by his actual father of breaking this taboo, and kissing an aunt Edward has been attracted to himself, is certainly what gives him the confidence to finally visit the sleeping Ilona in her room.

> And Jesse thinking Midge was Chloe, and Midge kissing Jesse. It was all a nightmare. That image of her holding Jesse in her arms upset Edward very much indeed. [...]
>
> Edward thought, I must see Ilona, and now's the perfect chance. He carried the lamp into the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. He needed a shave and a little impulse of vanity made him, before he checked himself, reach for his razor. He combed his hair, patted down the long dark front lock, and after reflection took off his jacket. He adjusted his shirt, opening another button. He thought he looked older, more gaunt and hawkish. He narrowed his eyes. Then he sprang long-legged out of the room and down the stairs. [119]

Edward may already look like his father and be wearing his borrowed clothes as he did not bring anything suitable with him to wear in the country but he seems to purposefully not just prepare himself to see Ilona with a care over his appearance as if he is her lover not her brother, but he also appears to be self consciously trying to look more like Jesse, only leaving the room for Ilona's when he is satisfied he looks 'older'. Their respective ages being the main difference between the appearances of the two men this seems an odd choice for Edward. When he arrives in Ilona's bedroom he experiences, "a new different chaste fear. His presence seemed dangerous to her".[120] Edward has already stated that he is attracted to Ilona but has so far managed to channel his interest into sisterly affection: "Was he glad or sad that she was his sister and not just a girl? He very much wanted to kiss her. Still staring at the house he fumbled for her cold hand and pressed it."[121] Although Edward is acutely aware of how his actions can and have hurt other people it is uncharacteristic that he does not further consider the nature of the 'danger' of his night time visit to Ilona's room. He approaches her as if hoping to seduce her, "he wanted to come closer, if possible to feel the waftage of her breath. His

open anxious lips approached her lips. […] He felt an excitement composed of power and gentleness, conscious of their solitude together".[122] However despite Ilona's initial interest in Edward her reaction is one of terror when she awakes, "with a movement as swift as a leaping cat she sat up, recoiling against the wall […] Ilona's face, glaring at him, expressed intense fear."[123] She then attempts to cover herself more completely and whispers to Edward that he must go but when he convinces her that he just means to talk she calms down and her distress is directed at the thought of Edward's leaving Seegard not staying in her room. Her reaction to his night time visitation, especially her immediate impulse of horror on opening her eyes and seeing someone standing over her who looks so much like her father suggests that she may have been abused by Jesse and either thinks that he has returned to do that to her again or that Edward will act in the same way he did. Her immaturity is repeatedly asserted and it is therefore possible that despite her infatuation with Edward she may not have anticipated a sexual element to their relationship and certainly not one that is pursued uninvited when she is isolated and vulnerable.

There are several paintings of young girls and children around Seegard that are worth considering in more detail, especially in view of the sexual and even erotic nature of much of Jesse's work, the more extreme of which make Edward feel "weak at the knees".[124] The first Edward sees is of, "a young girl standing with feet apart in a stream, looking at the spectator with a secretive self-satisfied expression, while on the bank a realistically rendered bicycle was lying flat on the grass, and through the spokes of one wheel a large snake was emerging and gazing at the girl."[125] The general meaning of such a painting is relatively obvious, the snake representing temptation either in a Biblical sense or more explicitly as a phallic symbol, and the girl's expression shows her awakening and her awareness of the sexual presence. The stream, however, is an interesting addition especially when the particulars of the representation are made personal to Jesse, as once again a young girl is associated with the stream and as a consequence his death there. If this young girl is Ilona or Bettina it is certainly not obvious enough for Edward to remark upon, but Bettina's potential exploitation by her father is not to be overlooked. She shows no sympathy for him almost as if she knows something more about him than she is willing to make explicit. Ilona also comments that Bettina was stopped by Jesse from going to the University, indicating he was still capable of exercising control over her life when she was eighteen and also that he refused her a "young man".[126] His motivation for this is unknown but there seems little other reason than to keep his three women cloistered with him in isolation, much like

his precursor, Carel Fisher. The second picture features "two adolescent girls with staring pleased eyes and bare small breasts kneeling in a stone recess grown over with damp green plants discovered by a terrified boy."[127] This one seems to be a rather unusual take on the story of 'Susannah and the Elders' or perhaps Diana and Actaeon, although Edward later remarks that in Jesse's work, "[n]o Christian themes were visible, nor any recognisable portraits of the inhabitants of Seegard"[128] although as a Surrealist painter it isn't likely that Jesse would be producing realistically rendered depictions of scenes. The "staring pleased eyes" are very unsettling, as is the nudity, although the painting seems to suggest that they enjoy being watched and it is the boy that is frightened by their sexuality rather than their being threatened by him. In terms of the plot, however, the girls could have been based on Bettina and Ilona and the stone recess could be the woodland area with a semi-circle of stones that Edward and Ilona later visit. Such a depiction of his own children is curious and suggests an unhealthy interest in the development of their sexuality. Murdoch also draws the reader's attention to a picture that depicts "a child as a drowned mouse",[129] which once again draws a connection to another of Murdoch's incest narratives - this time it is *The Philosopher's Pupil* and the allusion to Hattie as a mouse in a dollhouse. That the child is drowned, again draws on the implications of such a death in Murdoch's *oeuvre* and enforces the helpless nature of the child/animal. There is also potentially an allusion to *Alice in Wonderland* and the pool of tears, where Alice's misery is such that her tears almost drown a mouse. The rumours surrounding the relationship between Charles Dodgson and Alice Liddell have continued for centuries and the possibility of an inappropriate sexual interest in the child by Dodgson remains today.[130] There is, however, only one picture Edward recognises as possibly being Ilona which is done by Jesse, but this is not in any sense improper. It is discovered by Edward immediately after he has decided that Jesse "was not the longed-for father, the healer, the hero-priest, the benevolent all-powerful king – he was indeed the devil" and that all three of the women are "mad". The picture, however, serves to make him rethink this dismal view:

> Looking down at it he saw a drawing, a beautiful calm not at all sinister drawing of a girl, fully clothed, standing beside an open window. She looked a bit like Ilona. It was then that it occurred to Edward that it was he who was mad. The deserted studio didn't mean no Jesse. Jesse had simply gone to paint elsewhere…[131]

However, there is no safe place for the reader to hide from the potentially sinister aspect of Seegard any more than for Edward, for almost as soon as both reader and protagonist have reached the conclusion that everything is better than it seems, then Edward

discovers that Jesse has not 'gone to paint elsewhere' but to be laid out in his illness in a prison of sorts, and the division between good and evil is once more thrown into confusion.

iv. Re-Reading Murdoch's *The Good Apprentice* through A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book.*

In A.S. Byatt's *The Children's Book* (2009), she reinterprets and reinvents existingliterary themes. In this sense fiction can become literary commentary, providing a means to absorb and negotiate the literary past as Harold Bloom indicated in *The Anxiety of Influence* when he stated that "the meaning of a poem can only be a poem, but *another poem - a poem not itself".*[132] Byatt then arguably proffers an interpretation of Murdoch's *The Good Apprentice* within *The Children's Book* and consequently makes a statement on Murdoch's original treatment of similar themes. *The Children's Book* includes a family whose similarity to *The Good Apprentice's* Baltram family is difficult to ignore despite the Victorian setting of Byatt's novel. Benedict Fludd like Jesse Baltram is also an irascible and eccentric artist and his wife Seraphita who is as lethargic as *The Unicorn's* Hannah is also likely to be oppressed by her brilliant husband. They have two female children who are fast approaching adulthood and one boy. The girls are both listless and dreamy but the youngest, Pomona, who, like Ilona appears to be the most innocent is considerably more otherworldly than her elder sister, Imogen. Pomona also frequently seeks affection from the other members of the house, particularly from Elsie and Philip in a manner that makes them as uncomfortable as Edward is with Ilona's attentions. Pomona sleep walks naked into Philip's room on several occasions which further increases his concern for her welfare and makes him speculate upon the kind of past or present that might have encouraged such strange behaviour. This assertion of the oddly naive sexuality in Pomona's characterisation is similar to that of Ilona's personality. Imogen does leave home but much like Bettina is almost thwarted by the possessive and violent nature of her father who commits suicide by drowning after her marriage has been announced. The family live much like the Baltrams in a chimera of William Morris style arts and crafts inspired industry which is for these characters as counter-productive to their personal furtherance as it is to their financial progress. The girls are embarrassed by their unusual and inexpertly woven homemade clothes and they are without the skills to improve the practical day-to-day problems associated with their inadequate home life. The number of parallels to Murdoch's Baltram family is obvious, indeed the main difference seems to be that

instead of the apparently mentally unstable patriarchal genius of the family being kept away from the other inhabitants and the world at large, Fludd is the ruler of the house. Fludd's characterisation is similar to that of Jesse and his sanity is frequently doubted. His wife has long since retreated into a drug induced world of her own and the only protagonists who succeed in over ruling him (and only through manipulation) are his friend Prosper Cain and his apprentice, Philip (placed in his house by Prosper). As this novel deliberately draws upon and cross references numerous fictional and real life scenarios it is perfectly feasible that Murdoch's novel is one of them, especially considering Byatt's well known admiration for Murdoch's work.

Sam Leith comments on how Benedict Fludd, "in certain aspects resembles Eric Gill".[133] Conradi has commented on how *The Good Apprentice's* Jesse, "owes something to Iris's readings of Eric Gill's life" he also follows May Baltram's lead by stating that Jesse "lusts after"[134] Ilona which is by no means certain in the novel. Eric Gill was discovered to have abused his own daughters, and to have committed incest with his sister, although this was not publically acknowledged until Fiona MacCarthy's 1989 biography.[135] *The Good Apprentice* was published before this in 1985, and Conradi refers in the footnotes to his biography of Murdoch, that she read Donald Attwater's *Eric Gill: Workman* for her novel *The Italian Girl* which was published in 1964.[136] It is possible, therefore, that Murdoch knew nothing of Gill's illegal sexual activities, but as *The Italian Girl* also features a series of potentially incestuous secret relationships it suggests that Murdoch perhaps had heard of Gill's behaviour even if she did not certainly know of it. That two novels whose characters are based on this artist should suggest such a topic seems beyond mere coincidence. Byatt's novel leaves little room for doubt about the behaviour of Fludd who resembles both Jesse, and as Conradi has remarked, *The Italian Girl's* Otto. Imogen's desire to leave home, her concern about her younger sister, and her warnings to the adolescent Elsie not to pose nude for Fludd, tacitly acknowledges the potential threat from living in close proximity to her father. It is, however, Elsie's later discovery of a voluminous number of erotic statues of young children in Fludd's locked cupboard that confirms the reader's suspicions. As a potter, the statues have undoubtedly been made by Fludd; and Paloma's later determination to bury them herself without Philip's assistance further compounds the idea that they are particularly associated with her own history but it is never overtly stated. These statues are a more explicit indication of Fludd's tastes than the paintings and drawings in Jesse Baltram's studio but when considered together Byatt's interpretation of Murdoch's novel is clear.

v. The 'Mad' Other and the Late Twentieth-Century Literary Imagination

The Message to the Planet deals with a similar problem to *The Good Apprentice:* again at the centre of the plot is an extraordinary man, Marcus Vallar, in his youth a mathematical genius, then a critically acclaimed painter, and later a recluse in a woodland cottage with his daughter Irina. Marcus is discovered and brought back into society by his one time friend and admirer, Alfred Ludens who arrives as an advocate for their mutual acquaintance Pat, a poet who was cursed by Marcus in an argument and then became seriously ill. His complaint is unidentifiable but the doctors believe it may be psychosomatic. Marcus comes to Patrick's bed side and revives him just when he has received the last rites. There ensues a divide in opinion over Marcus, whether he is a genius, a god, or a mad man. Nobody can determine whether Patrick was revived through Marcus' agency or not. Irina is convinced her father was once a genius but is now mentally unstable, and she consequently tricks Marcus into moving into a luxury accommodation complex for the mentally ill. Marcus is not distressed by this turn of events but Ludens who believes Marcus can still impart an important message to humankind is horrified. Marcus does not appear to be insane but much depressed and obsessed with the Holocaust, even though he has only read about it and experienced no loss as a result of it. Marcus can also be interpreted as serving as Ludens' 'other'. It is Ludens who is determined that Marcus has an important 'message for the planet' long after Marcus has ceased to provide any indication this is a possibility; and Marcus even tries to convince Ludens of this himself: "You want me to do something "for the human race". This is a large saying. What can it mean? As for thinking, I have tried, but I cannot go all the way."[137] In addition to this Marcus has an appeal that attracts large numbers of people to him, possibly to heal them, something that Ludens shows he is uncomfortable with, possibly jealous of, as he cannot bear to be a part of it. Ludens also claims to love Irina but when the likelihood of consummating their relationship is continually prevented by Irina herself he imagines that Marcus has corrupted her first, perhaps also a sign that he feels Marcus has taken his share of good fortune. Unlike Edward, Ludens does not fear the evil in his nature but the lack of daring, of brilliance, and of all of the characteristics which accompany success, such as charm. Ludens is told by one of his teachers, "not being a genius, Ludens, you should attempt to do something, not everything",[138] and yet, "Ludens was still dissatisfied with his position and with himself…Perhaps it was just that he had always thought himself as capable of 'some great achievement'".[139] He also feels as if he has disappointed his own father.

Ludens seeks out Marcus in an attempt to discover not only 'greatness' but also someone who has the daring to reach out to achievement. Where Ludens virtually abandons his academic work to encourage Marcus' and never acts definitively to secure Irina, he sees Marcus as capable of success where he, Ludens, has failed, even to the extent of suspecting Marcus has seduced his own daughter. Ludens places himself in the position of not just pupil and friend, but also son to Marcus, something that is almost certainly behind his interest in marrying Irina and a means to secure the fatherly approval he so keenly seeks.

Marcus, however, is not simply a man of action where Ludens is sedentary; he is someone without limitations on what he feels he can achieve because he is very likely suffering from mental illness. During Marcus' sojourn at Bellmain a number of people on route to Stonehenge for the summer solstice come to pay homage to him after hearing of his supposed ability to raise people from the dead. Marcus is thus set up as a potential Christ figure, something that is further complicated by both his Jewish ancestry and that of Ludens and Irina. C.S Lewis' words in *Mere Christianity* seem especially pertinent here when he says:

> A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.[140]

Marcus never states that he believes himself to be Christ but he does enter into a role, albeit an ambiguous one, where it is evident some people believe him to be acting in a similarly elevated way, something that he eventually denounces much to the anger of some of his followers. Shortly after this Marcus dies at Midsummer; possibly he commits suicide, although by what means remains unclear. What *is* clear, however, is that he chooses to extend his preoccupation with the Holocaust even into his death, as he is found with his head in the gas oven, and even if there was outside interference in his demise, it is evident that he did initially intend to kill himself. The doctors at Bellmain assert that it is impossible that he died of gas poisoning, writing a heart complaint on the death certificate, and yet confiding later in Ludens that Marcus may have even willed his own death with no extraneous methods. His suicide note seems to support this stating, "I die by my own will. No one is to blame in any way."[141] The literary significance of this ambiguous death will be discussed in greater detail in due course, but here it is important to note that Marcus may have deliberately intended a connection between the primary method of mass genocide in World War II and his own

death, without explanation or seemingly any consideration for his Jewish daughter, his Jewish friend, Ludens or indeed the Rabbi who has taken to visiting him. If there was no foul play with the body then surely this shows quite clearly that Marcus' 'message to the planet' had almost certainly been lost in the descent of his mental health.

The image of the mad man kept locked away in Iris Murdoch's fiction still seems to be in stark contrast to the image of the madwoman described by Gilbert and Gubar. If the depiction of the madwoman character was to illustrate the oppression of a patriarchal regime and its effects on women's liberation then there remains a query over Murdoch's choice to depict not just one but two mad men as protagonists within the space of only a few years. Yet perhaps Jesse and Marcus are not really so very different from the women characters regarding whom Gilbert and Gubar said, "if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters."[142] Gilbert and Gubar describe Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights* as driven to madness by Edgar Linton's efforts to 'tame' her behaviour[143] and make her the genteel mother and wife he deems the highest attainment of any woman by Victorian standards. They also consider Charlotte Perkins Gilman's heroine in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, imprisoned for wanting to write and eventually driven to madness by the lack of it.[144] Bertha Mason has been kept in the attic of Thornfield Hall with only the hostile Grace Poole for companionship for many years prior to Jane's discovery of her. Even without the benefit of Jean Rhys' sympathetic version of her past history in the later written *Wide Sargasso Sea,* it is easy to see that perhaps Bertha has not been treated as compassionately as she might have been, and that immuring her in this fashion may have exasperated rather than appeased her complaint. All of these women have been enclosed in one sense or another because they did not behave in a way their husbands considered seemly. Certainly Bertha is aggressive and animal-like in the course of Charlotte Brontë's narrative, but this may be more as a result of her being *treated* like an animal than her being mentally predisposed to act like one.

May Baltram's and Irina Vallar's actions are also arguably not unlike Edgar Linton's or indeed Edward Rochester's in this respect. It is impossible to know how much liberty either Marcus or Jesse has and how genuine their 'illnesses' can be deemed. Certainly after Jesse's death, May exhibits her bitterness about his treatment of her when in better health, publishing her journals describing his misogyny, his sexual appetite, and his cruelty to the women he slept with. She also tells Edward of Jesse's desire to have him aborted when he discovered Chloe's pregnancy and his subsequent dismissal of Chloe; but this is unsubstantiated by Jesse himself. Her once brilliant

husband, whose eccentric behaviour previously added to his artistic mystique is described as no longer in fashion; he has bouts of mental illness and has aged. It is hardly surprising that she wants him out of sight so that the legend of him can continue, a legend which not only preserves his past glory but hers by association. Despite May being an advocate for a simple life, she is surprisingly mercenary, saving Jesse's paintings to sell for a greater profit posthumously, even though there is no evidence that his demise is imminent and the family's poverty is obvious. Also she does not hesitate to publish stories of his personal life almost immediately after his death. She tries to promote the image of him being unable to control his sexual interest in women, and although he does say to Edward that he craves, "a bit of skirt"[145] even in his last weakness, his wife suggests that their youngest daughter is no longer allowed to see him as he "lusts after her"[146] which paints a considerably more demonic picture. Whether this is true or not is not explicit in the text. As stated earlier Jesse does suggest that Edward marry Ilona until he is reminded this would be illegal but it is also true that he suffers from a serious inability to recognise people, the most striking evidence of this being his passionate kissing of Midge when she arrives unexpectedly at his house, mistakenly believing that she is her dead sister and his former mistress, Chloe. There is also only one picture of Ilona done by Jesse and it is not in any sense improper, something that Murdoch must have intended the reader to comprehend as important for the purposes of clearing his name or at least putting May's accusations into doubt, as the other paintings and sketches are considerably more ambiguous and often erotic. Ilona herself also always speaks affectionately of him. Whether Jesse is mad or not, he certainly suffers from May's feelings of injustice towards him and there remains throughout the text some confusion amongst the other characters over whether it is Jesse that is mad or May.

Arguably Irina acts in a similar fashion; although she is perhaps not as resentful as May, she is similarly calculating, letting Marcus think that she has arranged a new house in the country for him but secretly organising a place for him at Bellmain. It is also not clear whether Marcus' mental health would have deteriorated anyway or whether his demise was a result of being in this institution, because he did not need to be there even if it was preferable to his daughter in her pursuit of freedom. The textual evidence therefore points to Murdoch suggesting through her fiction that when *The Good Apprentice* was published in 1985 and *The Message to the Planet* in 1989, and prior to this point in time, men could be oppressed as much as women And that even though society had continued to evolve there was still a dearth of equality between the

sexes and that the supposed injustices of the past were still seriously affecting the present.

In discovering his biological father Edward is ultimately trying to understand himself through Jesse and to gain supremacy over the 'wild' elements of his own nature. After the fatal accident with his friend Mark, Edward feels as if he cannot recover from his grief and fears that he has been 'damned'. He explains this as, "I'm marked, I'm branded, people can see it, everyone stares at me in the street. I haven't any real being left, its all scratched and scraped away, people shudder from me, I stink of misery and evil…I'm ruined and blackened forever."[147] Edward knows that Jesse lived an unconventional, even Dionysian life, as "[a] painter, an architect, a sculptor, a socialist *and* a Don Juan",[148] that he "dropped" his "mother before" he "was born";[149] but that he is also a part of himself. As Edward states that he hopes Jesse can absolve him from his 'sins' it seems likely that he sees Jesse as the personification of the 'wild' side of his own personality and can therefore help him to overcome this. In this sense his father's 'insanity' is less of a hindrance to Edward's development than it might originally appear. Edward even seems to see Jesse and himself as one and the same entity and not merely because they are related: "[h]e wandered over to the fireplace and looked at the photograph of himself as Jesse".[150] This shows how Edward identifies himself with his father in an unusual way as the photograph is one of Jesse in his youth not of Edward, although the resemblance is remarked upon. Edward seems to be craving a scenario in his own life similar to that which Bloom related for the poet, a line of ancestry that he fits into and can be identified with. However, due to the unusual nature of his family situation he is in a sense no different to an orphan as he knew neither of his parents. In this sense he seems to fit Gilbert and Gubar's argument regarding the female writer more accurately, being neither part of a recognisable lineage, nor recognised by the lineage that is apparent, as described below:

> Certainly if we acquiesce in the patriarchal Bloomian model, we can be sure that the female poet does not experience the "anxiety of influence" in the same way that her male counterpart would, for the simple reason that she must confront precursors who are almost exclusively male, and therefore significantly different from her. […] Thus the 'anxiety of influence' that a male poet experiences is felt by a female poet as an even more primary "anxiety of authorship" – a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a "precursor" the act of writing will isolate or destroy her.[151]

Although Edward has discovered his biological father and his half sisters, Bettina and Ilona, he still has difficulties in identifying himself with them as his blood relations,

describing himself as "in love" with Jesse[152] and desiring Ilona. However, when he describes his step-father, Harry and step-brother Stuart in conversation with Sarah Plowmain at the start of the novel he is much more assured:

> 'Then my mother married Harry Cuno and then she went and died. I've always regarded Harry as my father.'
>
> 'And Stuart is your brother? He's not Chloe's child, is he?'
>
> 'No, he's not my mother's child. He's the son of Harry's first wife, she died before Chloe took over […].'
>
> 'So Stuart and you aren't really brothers.'
>
> 'Not blood relations – but, well, we *are* brothers.'[153]

Gilbert and Gubar go on to describe how female authors create protagonists that can, by virtue of their being unconventional or 'mad', enact the author's or indeed the 'virtuous' main character's subliminal desires to overturn the established social order. They use Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as an example of this[154] and it is easy to see how Jane's characterisation can be compared with Edward's: both grow up without their blood relations, both fear they are inherently 'bad' and that they cannot control their 'wilder' behaviour and both are placed in an isolated gothic location with a potentially insane 'other' who simultaneously threatens to ruin them, but perhaps also save them from their own temptations. If Jane's 'other' is Bertha, freed by her madness to enact some of Jane's less acceptable inclinations then Edward's is Jesse. Edward desired his aunt, Midge but it is Jesse who kisses her passionately; he wishes he could pursue his half sister Ilona but it is Jesse who conveniently 'forgets' they are related and suggests they could marry; Edward is uncomfortable with his step-brother's piety yet it is Jesse who shouts at Stuart to be removed from the dining table, calling him a "dead man".[155] In addition to this Jesse is unashamed by his promiscuity despite the unhappiness it has caused, and for Edward this must be an appealing state of mind indeed, as his last casual sexual liaison inadvertently contributed to his friend's drug induced death, and all of Edward's subsequent misery.

The cause of death for both Jesse Baltram and Marcus Vallar is left ambiguous, but there are similarities in the events surrounding their deaths. Edward first predicts Jesse's death by a vision of the actual event: something that gives the occurrence the same fantasy quality that is evident in both the pre-Raphaelite painting of Ophelia and the romanticised language of Gertrude when she reports the mode of Ophelia's drowning.

There is a willow grows aslant a brook
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples,
[…]
When down the weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. (5.1.137-151)[156]

Jesse is also described as lying facing upwards in a stream besides willow trees where wild flowers are plentiful, including 'water crowfoot'[157] which are the same as Ophelia's 'crow-flowers'; there are also 'nettles'[158] mentioned by Gertrude above, and numerous other flowers not detailed in Ophelia's demise but giving the impression that Jesse, like Ophelia, is immersed by nature at the point of death. Just as Gertrude sees Ophelia as "a creature native and endued/Unto that element", so Edward considers that the Jesse of his vision has eyes like "those of a sea creature".[159] Marcus' death is discovered by Ludens who has taken up the role of his surrogate or adopted son and again, as discussed earlier, the events leading to the death are not made transparent: it could be murder, suicide or indeed a self-induced death, willed by the power of the mind. Marcus' death is on Midsummer Day and although he dies in the cottage at Bellmain his death is certainly linked to the simultaneous celebrations of the summer solstice at an ancient stone elsewhere in the grounds and Ludens' subsequent brief escape into the countryside. There is here once again an emphasis on nature at the height of its fertility. The doctor, Marzillian, also repeatedly emphasises "there are more things in heaven and earth"[160] which is a line from *Hamlet* (1.5.168)[161] spoken by Hamlet to Horatio when discussing the ghost of the King. Both novels therefore draw on this particular tragedy at this key moment in the plot. As described earlier, Jesse's death resembles that of Ophelia. Ludens and Edward can be seen as pursuing a similar quest to that of Prince Hamlet, attempting to attain the truth of their 'father's' histories when they are no longer able to seek these answers for themselves. In addition to this in

both texts there is a deliberate mystique surrounding the definition of madness and who is really mad, just as the potential for incest in the texts remains enigmatic, and this echoes the vagaries surrounding Hamlet's supposed pretence of madness and Ophelia's actual insanity.

However, Jesse's story can be seen to follow that of King Lear's more closely than Hamlet's in some ways so it may seem strange that at the point of death he is linked to Ophelia and not with Lear, especially considering he is the father figure of the piece. Marcus too, can be read as a Lear character, his power is also usurped by his daughter who similarly believes him incompetent and perhaps better dead. However, Marcus too dies, like Ophelia and Jesse at the height of the summer, in a somewhat romanticised and highly ambiguous fashion, which is more fitting with the female literary history of madness rather than the male. As Carol Thomas Nealy explains in her article on this subject:

> In these Shakespeare tragedies, as in the treatises and the medical practises, the representation of madness permits a restoration of normality, a restoration in which madmen and madwomen participate differently. The disguise of Poor Tom is abandoned, Gloucester eschews suicide, and Lear is returned to sanity. The madwomen characters in tragedy, however, are not cured but eliminated. Ophelia is reabsorbed into cultural norms by her narrated drowning and her Christian burial. The report of Lady Macbeth's suicide, abruptly announced in the play's final lines, reduces the supernatural to a simile to vilify and dismiss her.[162]

Conversely it is the madmen in Iris Murdoch's fiction who are the ones who are 'eliminated', but unlike Lady Macbeth there is no certainty of their suicide, rather their deaths can be read in a number of ways from accident to murder, which is true of both Ophelia, and of Hamlet's father. When Hamlet says: 'There are more things in heaven and earth'[163] he is referring to his father's ghost, whose appearance is connected to the revelation of his murder by Claudius. This may indicate that Marcus' death can be deemed murder but it is unclear whether the offender might be the doctors at Bellmain or indeed his daughter Irina who is keen to rid herself of the burden of her one remaining parent in order to obtain her own freedom. Jesse's death could also potentially be interpreted as murder, possibly indirectly by being driven to despair as a result of his family's treatment of him, which links with Ophelia's madness as a result of Hamlet's behaviour. In one poignant scene Jesse raves, "[w]ill no one love me, will no one help me, will no one *help* me, will no one come to me?"[164] - a sentiment which seems empathetic with Ophelia's plight. Death by drowning, however, was well

renowned as a device to portray an enigmatic cause of death, as Carol Thomas Nealy asserts regarding Hamlet:

> Ophelia's suicide is described by Gertrude as accidental ("an envious sliver broke" 4.7.173), passive involuntary, mad. In England in this period, drowning was the most common means of suicide for women and the cause of death that made distinctions between accident and volition most difficult. The play keeps various possibilities in suspension. Gertrude's representation of Ophelia's death neither condemns it on religious grounds nor explicitly condones it on medical/legal grounds. Instead she narrates it as without interpretation as a beautiful "natural" ritual of passage and purification, the mad body's inevitable return to nature.[165]

Gertrude has her reasons for describing Ophelia's descent in such a romantic fashion even if only to remove the emphasis from a potential suicide. Jesse's actual death (rather than Edward's earlier premonition of it), however, is described as Marcus' is, as a source of horror and misery and yet they do serve to provide a passage to a greater degree of calm and normalcy in the lives of those left behind. If these two father figures can also be deemed as alter egos of the younger men in the same way that Gilbert and Gubar describe, then their deaths can be seen as signalling in a potential new era for those left behind, without the torments of the 'restless' other Marcus and Jesse represent. It also shows a final move into adulthood for both Ludens and Edward and in a final nod to the *Anxiety of Influence* an overcoming of the past to create their own future.

vi. Overcoming the 'Other'

Unlike Gilbert and Gubar's examples of fatal feminine oppression such as that of George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, or Emily Brontë's Catherine Linton, Murdoch's later heroines enjoy better conclusions to their stories, than her male protagonists. They do this by their own wit and guile, often devoid of sentimentality or emotion. The two most striking examples of this in the two books in question are Irina Valler and Ilona Baltram. Both are immured in an isolated country location as a result of the mental instability of their fathers, both are shown to be slightly 'wild' as a result of their lack of socialization, and although they show affection for their fathers they are also resentful that their liberty has been compromised. However, neither of these characters follows the examples laid out in *The Madwoman in the Attic* to escape through mental illness or suicide, even though their options appear to be just as restricted as those of their Victorian counterparts. Even though they have both supposedly been born into an age

that might support them in their flight, they both suffer from a lack of education that might secure them decent employment and therefore they have no financial independence; and they are equally held fast by feelings of loyalty and guilt over their families. Ilona and Irina could be argued to have caused or assisted in the deaths of their fathers at some level but equally they could be deemed innocent victims of unfortunate circumstances and parents who have not prioritised their daughter's welfare. However, unlike the maudlin lives of the Brontë sisters' heroines or those of George Eliot, they not only strive for freedom but accomplish it through their own efforts. Irina manipulates her father into a sojourn at a care home for the mentally unstable, thereby removing the responsibility for his well being from her. Although she does not attempt to leave him through her own independent agency until after his death, she has secured the means to do so, and once bereaved she immediately abandons Ludens, her father's preferred suitor, who served as a connection to her past life, and pursues her own desire to marry the non-Jewish Lord Claverden who did not have her father's approval.[166] Irina thereby proves she does not need the blessing or the influence of her male line of ancestry in order to secure her own 'happy ever after', albeit at the expense of the kind though perhaps misguided Ludens. Similarly, Ilona leaves Seegard before her father's death, and chooses to work as a stripper in London, not even returning for her father's funeral. She also therefore breaks her ties with her parents and consequently, her origins. Ilona even goes so far as to explain to Edward that they may not be brother and sister after all due to her mother's promiscuity, a fact that leaves open the possibility for her too to secure a future with her preferred mate although they choose not to seek proof of this at present. She leaves for Paris with another man explaining that he suits her purposes at the moment and thereby declaring the importance of her independence free from *any* familial connection.

These two works therefore provide a distinctly original take on narratives that have become part of the Western literary and cultural consciousness, defying their readers' presuppositions and challenging convention. Coming of age and the descent into old age are reconsidered and the struggle for supremacy from one generation to the next. These prototypical plot structures are cast in a contemporary light, taking into account the implicit gender bias in the historical representation of this latter narrative. Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and Gilbert and Gubar's arguments in *The Madwoman in the Attic* are confronted by Murdoch's late twentieth-century interpretation of madness and freedom played out within the 'houses' of her fiction. She paints a world that still suffers from many of the same complications as her Renaissance and nineteenth-century

literary counterparts but she shows these difficulties in a modern light frequently by using postmodern literary techniques. *The Philosopher's Pupil, The Good Apprentice* and *The Message to the Planet* all depict men who are punished for desiring to take advantage of their positions as minor celebrities with vulnerable and attractive women dependent on them. Her earlier fictions such as *The Unicorn* and the *Time of the Angels* depict similar scenarios but in these works it is made obvious that the male authority figures do not just desire to take advantage of their elevated positions but that they actually go ahead and abuse the women they are to a certain extent responsible for. These women are never given an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction, and rely on others for their escape. In line with the contemporaneous opinion on incest abuse they are generally perceived as at least partially to blame for the abuse they experience. In Murdoch's later fiction it is the probable aggressors who suffer, both throughout the novel and at the *dénouement*. The women in these later works, such as Hattie Meynell, Ilona Baltram and Irina Vallar, all find a means to live independently after the demise of the father-figures in their lives, unlike Hannah who rushes into the flood in despair only to drown, and Elizabeth Fisher who remains at the mercy of her sister, Muriel. These later works therefore show the shift in attitudes to sexual equality and domestic abuse but it is still apparent that gender remains an issue, and that tradition is difficult to discard.

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[1] Bloom, *AOI* 95.
[2] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic.* 2nd ed. (New Haven; London: Yale University Press. 2000) 339.
[3] *Sarahwaters.com,* 8 March 2011 <http://www.sarahwaters.com/about/faq/>.
[4] A.S. Byatt's enthusiasm for Iris Murdoch has been extensively documented, but for her original interest in Murdoch: Byatt, Forword. *Degrees of Freedom,* viii-x.
[5] Jeannette King, *The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2005) 3.
[6] Cristina Britzolakis, *Sylvia Plath and the Theatre of Mourning* (1991; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 151.
[7] Sylvia Plath, "The Applicant" (1962) *Collected Poems,* ed. and introd. Ted Hughes (London: Faber, 1981) 221-222.
[8] Britzolakis, 151. Britzolakis highlights the connection between Cliff Richard's song and refers to the "corporate voice" used in the poem, and the style of "advertising slogan". She says the subject of the poem is "a mechanical appliance which accrues exchange value like a market investment".
[9] Murdoch, *TA* 10.
[10] Murdoch, *TA* 11.
[11] Murdoch, *TA* 35.
For the lowering of the age of majority see: Family Law Reform Act, 1969, Crown Copyright 1969. 8 March 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1969/46>.
[12] Murdoch, *TA* 36.
[13] Doctor and Shiramato, 141-142, 249.
[14] Miriam M. Johnson, *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives: The Search for Gender Equality* (Berkeley, CA: California UP, 1988) 172.
[15] Murdoch, *TA*15.
[16] Murdoch, *TA* 25.

[17] Murdoch, *TA* 20.
[18] Murdoch, *TA*156.
[19] John Stuart Mill was both a campaigner for the end of slavery and for the emancipation of women. Many of the arguments used to argue for the liberation of slaves were also employed in the first wave of feminism to defend the position of women; and although they were largely unacknowledged a number of the campaigners for the end of slavery were women.
See: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and The Subjection of Women,* ed. Alan Ryan. (1859; London: Penguin, 2006).
Several of the first published accounts of incest abuse were by writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker who also focussed on the internalisation of inferiority impressed upon black families in America due to their racial origins and the history of segregation in that country (see Chapter one). The two causes are consequently linked to a certain extent.
Also see: Valerie Sanders, "First-Wave Feminism," *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post-Feminism,* ed., Sarah Gamble (1998; London: Routledge, 2006) 21.
[20] Murdoch, *TA* 152
[21] Murdoch, *PP* 315.
[22] Murdoch, *PP* 374.
[23] Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904; London: Penguin, 2002) 19-28.
[24] In 1983 the year The Philosopher's Pupil was published, the British public re-elected the country's first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. The country's confidence in a woman in this position signalled the end of the country's dominant patriarchal government.
[25] Murdoch, *PP* 317.
[26] Daphne M. Kutzer, *Beatrix Potter: Writing in Code* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 70-72.
[27] Edward Burne Jones, *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon.* Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico.
[28] Frederick Sandys, *Morgan-le-Fay.* © Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. Photo © Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery.
[29] John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott.* Tate Gallery, London. *The Lady of Shalott.* by Tate,/Digital Image © Tate, London 2009.
[30] John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot.* Leeds City Art Gallery, Leeds.
[31]John William Waterhouse, *'I am half sick of shadows'.* Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario Can. ©Photo. Ann Ronan/Heritage Images/ Scala, Florence. 2011.
[32] Christine Poulson, *The Quest for the Grail: Arthurian Legend in British Art, 1840-1920* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999) 179.
[33] William Holman Hunt, *Lady of Shalott.* ©Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art/Art Resource, Hartford, CT. © Photo. NY/SCALA, Florence.
[34] Poulson, 182.
[35] Richard Chevenix Trench was an author and a friend of Tennyson's from Cambridge. He eventually became archbishop. His comment, "Arthur we cannot live in art" is generally credited with inspiring Tennyson's "The Palace of Art" which as Poulson asserts explores similar themes to "The Lady of Shalott".
See: Poulson, 182.
Graham Chainey, *A Literary History of Cambridge* (1985; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 153.
[36] Murdoch, interview with W.K. Rose, Dooley 18
[37] Murdoch, "The Fire and the Sun," *EM,* Conradi 417.
[38] Lord Alfred Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott" (1832) *Alfred Tennyson The Major Works*. ed. and introd. Adam Roberts (2000; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 21- 25.
[39] Murdoch, 'The Fire and Sun,' *EM,* Conradi 390-391.
Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Desmond Lee (1955), introd. Melissa Lane. (London: Penguin, 2007).
[40] Harold Bloom, ed., and introd. *Alfred, Lord Tennyson* (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 1999) 17.
[41] Murdoch, 'The Fire and Sun,' *EM,* Conradi 389.
[42] Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," *Alfred Tennyson The Major Works* 21-25.
[43] John William Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott.* Tate Gallery, London. *The Lady of Shalott.* by Tate,/Digital Image © Tate, London 2009.
[44] Arthur Hughes, *The Lady of Shalott.* Private Collection, The Leicester Galleries, London.
Hughes painting more than one depiction of the Lady of Shalott. The one referred to is painted on board, and depicts her kneeling in her rowing boat.
[45] William Maw Egley, *The Lady of Shalott.* Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust, Sheffield.

[46] Hunt, William Holman. *Lady of Shalott.* ©Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art/Art Resource, Hartford, CT. © Photo. NY/SCALA, Florence.
[47] Maria Tatar, notes, "Rapunzel," *The Annotated Brother's Grimm,* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (New York: Norton, 2004) 60.
[48] Frank Cadogan Cowper, *Rapunzel Sings From the Tower.* The De Morgan Centre, London.
[49] Tatar, 58.
[50] Joan Gould, *Spinning Straw into Gold.* (2005; New York: Random House, 2006) 215-231.
[51] Gould, 227.
[52] Gilbert and Gubar, 369.
[53] Gilbert and Gubar, 369.
[54] In her introduction to *Villette*, Helen M. Cooper writes that "Brontë was certain that, aesthetically and rationally, *Villette* required M. Paul's death at sea. However, her father insisted she conform to accepted notions of happy endings. She obliged, but only to the extent of making the ending slightly ambiguous, and some present-day readers still debate what happens." Helen M. Cooper, Introduction. *Villette* by Charlotte Brontë, (1853) London: Penguin, 2003. xxii.
[55] For biographical connection between Jane Eyre and the author's life see: Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (1994; London; Phoenix, 2001).
[56] Remedios Varo, *Bordando El Manto Terrestr,*. Instituto Nacionel de Bellas Artes, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico.
[57] Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," *Alfred Tennyson The Major Works* 21-25.
[58] Conradi, *IMAL*, 396.
[59] Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966; London: Vintage, 2000) 13.
[60] Remedios Varo, *Vampirio*, Instituto Nacionel de Bellas Artes, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico.
[61] Remedios Varo, *Vampiros Vegetarianas*, Instituto Nacionel de Bellas Artes, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico.
[62] Byatt, *DF* 192-193.
[63] Murdoch, *TU* 93.
[64] Byatt, *DF* 193.
[65] Murdoch, *TU* 127-128.
[66] Murdoch, *TU* 52-53.
[67] Angela Kingston, *Oscar Wilde as a Character in Victorian Fiction* (Palgrave: New York, 2007) 178.
[68] Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's Dracula," *Representations* 8 (1984): 107-133.
[69] Kingston, 174-177.
[70] Talia Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of Dracula," *E.L.H.* 61.2 (1994): 381-425.
[71] Kingston, 178.
[72] Kingston, 180.
[73] Schaffer, 381.
[74] Kingston,178. Kingston directs the reader to Ann Heilmann, "Wilde's New Women: The New Woman on Wilde," *The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde During the Last 100 Years,* eds. Uwe Boker, Richard Corballis and Julie Hibbard. (Amsterdam: Rodopic, 2002) 135-145.
[75] Schaffer, 407-408. Kingston, 178. Kingston refers to Daniel Forston and Philip B. Dematteis, 'Bram Stoker', in British Novelists, 1890-1929: *Modernists,* vol. 36, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Thomas F. Stanley (Detroit: Gale Research, 1985) 259.
[76] Bram Stoker, *Dracula,* pref. Christopher Frayling, ed. Maurice Hindle (1897; Middlesex: Penguin, 2003) 45.
[77]Meg Barker, 'Vampire Sub-Cultures,' *Vampires: Myths and Metaphor of Enduring* Evil, ed. Peter Day (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006) 215.
[78] Jan B. Gordon, "The 'Transparency' of Dracula," *Bram Stoker's Dracula: Sucking Through the Century, 1897- 1997,* eds. Carol Margaret Davison and Paul Simpson Housley (Ontario, Can.: Dundurn, 1997) 102.
[79] Carol Margaret Davison, "Blood Brothers: Dracula and Jack the Ripper," Davison and Simpson Housley 154.
[80] Anna Krigovoy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2002) 120.
[81] Juliann Whetssell-Mitchell, *Rape of the Innocent: Understanding and Preventing Child Sexual Abuse* (Washington, DC: Accelerated Development, 1995) 48.

[82] Byatt, 192-193.
[83]Murdoch, *Proceedings of Recontres Avec Iris Murdoch Symposium: Closing Debate,* ed. Jean Louis Chevalier, Dooley 86.
[84] For Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the phrase, "family romance" see: Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances," (1909) *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock. Introd. Hugh Haughton (London: Penguin, 2003). This section, however, is not strictly limited to Freud's views on this subject.
[85] Bloom, *AOI* 95.
[86] Iris Murdoch, *The Good Apprentice.* 1985. (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986) 1.
[87] Murdoch, *GA* 56.
[88] Murdoch, *GA* 62.
[89] Murdoch, interview with Bryan Magee, Conradi, *EM* 5.
[90] Murdoch, interview with Jack I. Biles, Dooley 62-63.
[91] Murdoch, *GA* 292.
[92] William Shawcross, *Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother* (London: Macmillan, 2009) 433-434.
[93] Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress* (1983; New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009) 52.
[94] Glennis Howarth and Oliver Leaming, *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying* (2001; London: Taylor and Francis, 2005) 265.
[95] George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (Washington, DC.: Accelerated Development, 1995) 152.
[96] Plato, *Laws*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (1892; New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2008) 292.
[97] Byatt, *DF* 291.
[98] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 288-289.
[99] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 289.
[100] Patricia Hanks and Flavia Hodges, "Edward," *Oxford Dictionary of First Names.* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 96.
[101] Hanks and Hodges, "Edmund," *ODFN* 95.
[102] Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear, The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997) 2337.
[103] Shakespeare, Greenblatt *NS* 2337.
[104] Shakespeare, Greenblatt *NS* 2549.
[105] Ford, 41.
[106] Murdoch, *GA* 276.
[107] Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2003) 121. For details of incestuous interpretations of Ophelia on stage see: Elaine Showalter, "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia A. Parker and Geoffrey H. Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985) 90.
[108] Murdoch's readers would also be aware of Heathcliff's similar behaviour in *Wuthering Heights* when he exhumes his dead beloved's body and suggests that they be buried together so that their remains mingle together so they cannot be told apart. As stated previously Murdoch asserted unequivocally that she thought Heathcliff and Cathy were siblings.
[109] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Greenblatt *NS* 1745-1746.
[110] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Greenblatt *NS* 1731.
[111] Greenblatt *NS* 1734. Greenblatt's notes provide a commentary to the play.
[112] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Greenblatt *NS* 1734.
[113] Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Greenblatt *NS* 2322-2323.
[114] Showalter, "Representing Ophelia," Parker and Hartman 90.
[115] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1976) 14, 233-235, 260.
Susan Frye, "Incest and Authority in *Pericles Prince of Tyre*," *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Gainesville, FL: UP Florida, 2002) 42.
[116] Jan H. Blits, *Deadly Thought: Hamlet and the Human Soul* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2001) 142.
[117] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Greenblatt *NS* 1707.
[118] Anne Rowe, *The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) 53.
[119] Murdoch, *GA* 298.
[120] Murdoch, *GA* 299.
[121] Murdoch, *GA* 134.

[122] Murdoch, *GA* 299.
[123] Murdoch, *GA* 299.
[124] Murdoch, *GA* 181.
[125] Murdoch, *GA* 102-103.
[126] Murdoch, *GA* 200.
[127] Murdoch, *GA* 112.
[128] Murdoch, *GA* 181.
[129] Murdoch, *GA* 110.
[130] Martin Gardner, ed., notes and introd., *The Annotated Alice: Definitive Edition: Alice in Wonderland and Alice Through the Looking-Glass by Lewis Carroll* (1960; London: Penguin, 2001) xx.
[131] Murdoch, *GA* 183
[132] Harold Bloom, *AOI* 70.
[133] Sam Leith, "Writing in Terms of Pleasure," *Guardian* 25 Apr. 2009 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/apr/25/as-byatt-interview>.
[134] Murdoch, *GA* 276.
[135]Elizabeth Grice, "Uproar as nice lady tells all; Fiona MacCarthy on Eric Gill," *Sunday Times* 5 Mar. 1989, *Full-Text Custom Newspaper Database*, 20 Feb. 2011 <http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/infomark.do?&contentSet=IAC-Documents&type=retrieve&tabID=T004&prodId=SPN.SP00&docId=CJ117541908&source=gale&srcprod=SP00&userGroupName=duruni&version=1.0>.
Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber, 1989) 17, 104-105, 155-157, 204, 239 and 282.
[136] Conradi, *IMAL* 559
[137] Iris Murdoch, *The Message to the Planet* (1989; London: Vintage, 2000) 442.
[138] Murdoch, *MP* 7.
[139] Murdoch, *MP* 7.
[140] C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana, 1955) 52.
[141] Murdoch, *MP* 471.
[142] Gilbert and Gubar, 53.
[143] Gilbert and Gubar, Chapter 8.
[144] Gilbert and Gubar, 89-92.
[145] Murdoch, *GA* 193.
[146] Murdoch, *GA* 197.
[147] Murdoch, *GA* 68.
[148] Murdoch. *GA* 4.
[149] Murdoch. *GA* 5.
[150] Murdoch. *GA* 278.
[151] Gilbert and Gubar, 48-9.
[152] Murdoch, *GA* 202.
[153] Murdoch, *GA* 4-5.
[154] Gilbert and Gubar, 77-8.
[155] Murdoch, *GA* 292.
[156] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Greenblatt, *NS* 1743-1744.
[157] Murdoch, *GA* 434.
[158] Murdoch, *GA* 306.
[159] Murdoch, *GA* 307.
[160] Murdoch, *MTTP* 496.
[161] Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Greenblatt, *NS* 1687.
[162] Nealy, 336.
[163] See note 24.
[164] Murdoch, *GA* 292.
[165] Nealy, 326-7.
[166] Interestingly Johan Huizinga's "*Homo Ludens—A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1938, English translation 1949) is a study of the seriousness of play." Ludens' name therefore perhaps pre-empts his role as the fool character in this scenario, the fool often being both the source of wisdom and apparent nonsense in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.
Alan Tomlinson, "Huizinga, Johan," *A Dictionary of Sports Studies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010) *Oxford Reference Online*, 7 Mar. 2011 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t293.e588>.

Chapter Three

The Philosopher's Pupil: "The Romantic Side of Familiar Things"?[1]

i. The Philosopher's Pupil, Jane Eyre and *Bleak House*

Iris Murdoch's twenty-first novel, *The Philosopher's Pupil* was very much a coming of age for her *oeuvre*, being by far her most complex work. It has, however, been treated with trepidation by literary critics, and perhaps rightly so, as it is, even on a superficial evaluation of its merits, a novel that is difficult to encapsulate in a neat critical form. It seems to evade the critics' touch, and perhaps this was consciously intended by an author who, despite her tolerance for the nature of the literary critics' profession, has been open about the dangers, as she perceives them, of such a prescriptive approach to her own art.[2] As Bran Nicol comments in *Iris Murdoch: The Retrospective Fiction*:

> Murdoch's critics have seldom been quite sure how to deal with the novel, a position summed up by Peter Conradi's ambivalent comment that '[p]erhaps there is just too much in this book; or perhaps – as with late work by, say, Titian or Verdi – this is simply a new kind of art' (Conradi 1989: 269).
>
> So is *The Philosopher's Pupil* the 'standard' Murdoch novel done to excess, or a completely new departure? My view is that it is both. [3]

Nicol re-examines his argument in his most recent article on Murdoch's work, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel" (2009) where he defines Murdoch's style in *The Philosopher's Pupil* as an exaggerated realism, which he terms 'mannered'. He describes her writing in this respect as a response to the post-war British writer's conflict over experimentation versus traditionalism, concluding that Murdoch, like many writers of her generation, tried to incorporate the realist aim toward verisimilitude within an experimental framework. In the latter half of the twentieth century both writer and reader he asserts, had become too aware simply to revert to and accept nineteenth-century modes of realism. [4]

Nicol's criticism is both astute and illuminating, but in this latter work he only briefly considers *The Philosopher's Pupil,* and I want to build upon and expand his discussion by exploring this novel in more detail. I agree with Nicol that Murdoch uses this 'mannered realism' alongside a discreet "postmodern sense of belatedness"[5] to interact with the nineteenth-century literary tradition in a knowing way; but I would also like to contemplate the romanticised and melodramatic elements of the plot, and the juxtaposition of these very different styles of expression. I do not think that it is

necessary to see this novel as either a 'realist' work or a 'non-realist' work, but that it can be viewed as both simultaneously. I consider that Murdoch deliberately mixed her styles of writing to engage with the style of many of her nineteenth-century predecessors that she admired, and that this was done with a gendered goal in mind; to interrogate the stereotyped classifications of certain writing as typically masculine or feminine, and to question what such gendering may mean. In doing this I believe that Murdoch is responding to the feminist literary criticism of the 1970s and 1980s, and to the feminist re-writing of traditional texts by authors such as Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood. Furthermore Murdoch's utilisation of a realist mode of address coupled with a more imaginative and emotional style may indicate that in many ways Murdoch was closer to nineteenth-century writers than has previously been supposed. Murdoch described her admiration for Charles Dickens on a number of occasions and his influence can be seen throughout her work, but it is particularly apparent in *The Philosopher's Pupil* where she appears to draw heavily upon *Bleak House*.[6] Dickens famously moved between bare realism and a more romantic means of address, but he did not consider himself an unrealistic author. The same can be said of Charlotte Brontë, who viewed herself as a realist, yet was criticised for being too melodramatic, and whose novel *Jane Eyre* has also clearly influenced Murdoch's work. Although Murdoch stated on numerous occasions that she admired realism and wished to be a realist (in a twentieth-century sense) she does not list many authors who are usually thought by literary critics to be realists amongst her main influences.[7] This suggests that Murdoch did not define realism in the same way that contemporary literary theorists did, but that her definition was more in line with writers such as Brontë and Dickens whose idea of realism did not omit the more extreme and unusual aspects of life. Such an approach allows for the rich and diverse spiritual life that was very much a part of the everyday in the Victorian age and was also a constant source of fascination for Murdoch. This approach in a contemporary age of 'awareness' indicates that Murdoch was reacting against the rise of theoretical particularity which she considered threatened to inhibit the artist, and perhaps to move the literary definition of 'realism' toward a more accurate representation of life as a complex mesh of personal fantasy and tangible facts, a relevant concern for the socially responsible author.

Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* was criticised by George Henry Lewes for the sensational death of a character by spontaneous human combustion which he deemed showed "a vulgar error" in Dickens' thinking, being in his view not scientifically verifiable.[8] In an age where detailed realism was a gage of literary merit and was

associated with male authorship, this was criticism indeed. In response to Lewes' damning review, Dickens defended the scientific accuracy of this incident, but he also commented in his Preface to the novel, that he had "purposefully dwelt on the romantic side of familiar things".[9] This assertion, which mirrored his opening comments in *Household Words*, which he "proclaims, will seek to nourish his reader's imaginations by showing them 'that in all familiar things ...there is Romance enough, if we will find it out'"[10] suggests that Dickens did not consider realism to be incompatible with a degree of romance. This consideration has been asserted by Caryl Emerson and Donald Fanger who suggest that Dickens was a "romantic realist".[11] As Elaine Showalter states, the connection of realism with literary ability was claimed by a male-dominated literary profession in a period where the up-and-coming female writers who threatened the establishment generally had a very different (and ultimately inferior) education to their male rivals, and they were prohibited from the type of life experience that would offer them the experience necessary to fully rise to the challenge.

> [T]he doctrine of realism made accuracy of detail essential for any novelist; Kenneth Graham, in *English Criticism of the Novel (1865-1900)*, says that during this period "critics are always at their most scathing when they discover a factual error. Detailed verisimilitude is demanded, and any offenses against it are considered fatal to the work: reviews abound with triumphant discoveries of minute inaccuracies." [...] Thus aspiring women writers struggled to educate themselves against tremendous financial odds.[12]

It was therefore important to Dickens to defend any aspect of his writing that was considered 'unrealistic', although such criticism did not necessarily bear any relation to the degree of public interest in a novel. *Jane Eyre* certainly captured the public's attention, yet both G. H. Lewes and Lord David Cecil condemned the melodramatic nature of Brontë's novel.[13] However, in addition to the censure of women authors for not being realistic enough, they were also critiqued for not being appropriately feminine. An unsigned review in the *Christian Remembrancer* stated that "a book more unfeminine, both in its excellences and its defects, it would be hard to find in the annals of female authorship. Throughout there is a masculine power, breadth and shrewdness, combined with a masculine hardness, coarseness, and freedom of expression."[14] Jane's characterisation received particular censure, with James Lorimar stating that although "there is nothing that is coarse" about her "as a human being" in her behaviour and feelings, "there is much about her that is hard, and angular, and indelicate as a woman".[15] A preoccupation with patriarchal injustice in *Jane Eyre* did not even guarantee support from other women writers and *Jane Eyre* was famously remarked

upon by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as an example of how the subjugation of women in the nineteenth century impacted upon the success of their writing. It has, however, been a source of fascination for feminist critics, becoming the partial focus of Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1975) and it is also one of the key texts in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's feminist polemic, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) which examines the female author's response to the male-dominated canon. Similarly, Dickens' *Bleak House* has attracted feminist attention for the presentation of Dickens' female first-person narrator, Esther Summerson. Charlotte Brontë was unequivocal in her criticism of *Bleak House,* writing in a letter to George Smith dated 1852, "I liked the Chancery part - but when it passes into the autobiographic form and the young woman who announces she is not "bright" begins her history - it seems to me too often weak and twaddling - an amiable nature is caricatured - not faithfully rendered in Esther Summerson."[16] Brontë's opinion has since been supported by numerous female critiques of Dickens' attempt to assume a female narrative voice, perhaps most aggressively by Dona Budd who claimed in 1994 that it was "an act of violence against women".[17] It is therefore pertinent that both of these works are evoked within Murdoch's 1983 novel, *The Philosopher's Pupil,* in order to address changing female societal myths. Although Murdoch is conducting this effort in quite a different way to other authors of this decade such as the self-proclaimed de-mythologisers Angela Carter[18] and Margaret Atwood,[19] the impetus can be seen as similar. Both source texts are pertinent from the perspective of examining the gender inequality in Victorian society, but when viewed together can be seen to set up a dialogue between the patriarchal tradition and that of the suppressed female attempting to operate within that tradition.

Murdoch's interests in gender equality have been much discussed by Tammy Grimshaw in *Sexuality, Gender and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction* (2005); and Deborah Johnson has discussed Murdoch's use of male first-person narrators in detail in her critical study, *Iris Murdoch* (1987). However, throughout her career Murdoch held back from being defined by the term 'feminist', commenting in her 1975 interview with Michael Bellamy:

> I'm not interested in women's problems as such, though I'm a great supporter of the women's liberation – particularly education for women – but in aid of getting women to join the human race, not in aid of making any kind of feminist

> contribution to the world. I think there's a kind of human contribution, but I don't think there's a feminine contribution.[20]

This statement epitomises her views and suggests that even though she did not identify with the second wave of feminism, that some of her views anticipate aspects of third wave of feminism (not defined as such until the 1990s), rejecting the separation of particular attributes relating to the sexes implied by some second wave feminism, in favour of an all encompassing equality which did not implicitly privilege one group over the other. She commented in 1976 on the subject of feminism that "[w]omen who think of themselves as something separate are joining a kind of inferiority movement"[21] an assertion which anticipates the words of Rebecca Walker in *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (1995):

> Whether the young women who refuse the feminist label realize it or not, on some level they recognize that an ideal woman born of prevalent notions of how empowered women look, act, or think is simply another impossible contrivance of perfect womanhood, another scripted role to perform in the name of biology and virtue.[22]

Murdoch recognised 'feminism' as a limiting term and she consequently did not want to be associated with it; but she was aware of the need for equality between the sexes. It may therefore seem contradictory to align Murdoch with another potentially limiting term, especially as in the quote above Walker shows awareness of just such a linguistic problem. The third wave, however, covers a multitude of constantly evolving and developing ideas which change in relation to the way that people are constantly changing. Third-wave feminism rejects particular definitions of gender and behaviour, but determines that all individuals be treated equally regardless of race, gender, sexual persuasion, disability etcetera. Its association with 'feminism' is merely to assert that this equality has not yet been achieved, not that there is a preferable way to be female or that either gender is superior to the other.[23] In this respect then, Murdoch's assertion of the importance of equality which disregards the import of a definition of particularized ideals can be seen as empathetic to aspects of the third wave.

Although Dickens claimed not to have read *Jane Eyre*, connections between the two Victorian texts have been asserted by Anny Sadrin,[24] Ellen Moers,[25] Peter Ackroyd,[26] Lynn Cain,[27] and Lisa Jadwin.[28] This view is supported by Michael Slater in his recent biography of Dickens where he comments that it is "unlikely" Dickens had not read *Jane Eyre*, and that he may have been affected by the sensation surrounding Brontë's novel.[29] Critical opinion suggests that Dickens was concerned that the success of female authors might impact upon his own sales, but pecuniary advantage may not

have been his sole concern, as Lynn Cain comments that "professional jealousy surely played no little part in Dickens's declaration that he had never read *Jane Eyre"*.[30] Lisa Jadwin's '"Caricatured, not faithfully rendered': *Bleak House* as a Revision of *Jane Eyre*" (1996) even goes so far as to argue that: "Embedded in *Bleak House* [...] is a metanarrative, a subtle nineteenth-century *Shamela* possibly designed to refute the radical form and ideology of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* – a book that may have hit Dickens so hard he claimed never to have read it."[31]

That Dickens harboured distinctly conservative views regarding the intellectualisation and independence of women further encourages the possibility that he was threatened by the ambition of female novelists. *Bleak House* contains what Slater describes as a "mockery" of the women's rights movement,[32] referring to the characterisation of Mrs Jellyby,[33] who is a without doubt a deplorable mother and wife and neglects her own family to spend her days campaigning for wider social change, including that of women's rights. Jadwin writes that "Dickens avoided both his major female contemporaries and their works", and that "[f]ictional portraits like Rosa Dartle and Miss Wade reveal Dickens' conviction that an acute intellect leads a woman either to destroy men or to "agitate" to "step out of her domestic path ...to seek influence in the civilised world," as he suggests in his anti-feminist diatribe 'Sucking Pigs' (306, 304)".[34] However, Slater asserts in his 1983 work, *Dickens and Women*, that although he never openly judged women novelists as inferior to male authors and he did recruit several leading female writers to *Household Words,* there is evidence of his reservations about female authors, suggesting on one occasion that he could not believe a ghost story to be the work of a woman because it was "so very clever".[35] He was also purportedly unimpressed with women artists when their writing strayed into the area of "the passions", unless of course, the heroine was punished in the text for expressing interests beyond that of her 'proper' sphere.[36]

In response to this and to Bran Nicol's most recent paper on Murdoch's realism, I would like to argue that the Hattie/John Robert Rozanov plot in *The Philosopher's Pupil* can be viewed as a late feminist reconsideration of both Brontë's novel and Dickens'. This is not just negotiated through the plot similarities (of which there are on close inspection a surprisingly large number) but also through Murdoch's deployment of realism and romanticism in close proximity, as the juxtaposition of these two styles is also exhibited by Dickens and Brontë. For Murdoch, and potentially for Dickens and Brontë, although for different reasons, this technique both utilises and deconstructs the patriarchal realist linear narrative style primarily identified with the nineteenth century.

By revisiting these two works in an age of apparent female liberation, Murdoch creates a triangular tension between the male tradition, female suppression, and the contemporary desire for equality where gender is no longer an issue.

ii. Gender and Narrative Style

The Philosopher's Pupil is narrated by what Nicol terms a "dramatized narrator", who is nevertheless fashioned like a nineteenth-century omniscient narrator; yet as Nicol asserts, "The fact that we know who he is, and a few things about him has the effect of exposing the sheer partiality of the third-person narrator".[37] He goes on to state that this contributes to making us "suspicious readers".[38] I would argue that it contributes to make us not only suspicious of the artifice of fiction and the limitations of the realist mode of address, an argument which Nicol colludes with, but also suspicious of the effect of gender on narrative. The impact of this in *The Philosopher's Pupil* is two-fold; firstly the reader is made aware of the importance of gendering the narrator in order to identify prejudices by the refusal of the narrator, 'N', to assign himself a gender; and by his choice to conceal his name, replacing it with a letter and therefore a recognisable identity. This provides an initial source of confusion, and afterwards there is the difficulty over the discovery of N's gender and the fact that his gender is different to that of the author of the novel.[39] The first occasion N asserts his determination to be enigmatic about his identity is actually the first occasion where Murdoch draws upon *Bleak House*:

> I am the narrator: a discreet and self-effacing narrator. [...] For purposes of convenience, for instance so that my 'characters' may be able (very occasionally) to refer to me or address me, I shall call myself 'N'. But as far as this drama is concerned I am a shadow, Nemo, not the masked presence or secret voice of one of the main characters.[40]

The reference to 'Nemo' here in the context of the other connections to *Bleak House* (which I shall elaborate upon later in this chapter) can be seen as a direct reference to the character of Captain Hawdon, Esther's father, who chooses to be known as Nemo so that his true name remains undetected. The plot rests upon Hawdon's disappearance and that his lover Honaria, believing him to be dead, is left without a father for her child. The baby is consequently taken away secretly to be raised by her sister. It is a direct result of Hawdon's choice to be known as Nemo or 'no one' that he also dooms Esther to a life as a 'nobody'; unable to claim her patriarchal heritage due to ignorance of her origins, she goes by an assumed name, 'Summerson', and thereby forfeits the family

identification that she desires and which is deemed as crucial to social standing and acceptance.[41] It is this lack of a name that ultimately leads Esther to seriously consider her guardian, John Jarndyce, as a potential husband when he proposes to her. Fearing that her lack of a known lineage will damage her marital prospects she seeks to identify herself in marriage with another patriarchal figure:

> I thought, all at once, if my guardian had married someone else, how I should have felt and what I should have done! That would have been a change indeed. It presented my life in such a new and blank form, that I rang my housekeeping keys and gave them a kiss before I laid them down in their basket again.[42]

She considers that if Jarndyce had married someone else she would be left as a 'blank', as her status is assured only by her association with him in lieu of a male parent, and not in her own right. If he were to marry elsewhere, therefore, after she comes of age, she would be merely a servant and the housekeeping keys which can now provide her with a source of pleasure, might otherwise become an emblem of her inferiority. Similarly Jane Eyre negotiates her passage through a world that does not recognise her as having an identity independent of a family, inherited money, and inherited social standing. As Jadwin asserts though, her journey is very different from Esther's, and where Esther is "submissive", Jane is "rebellious". [43] Unlike Esther who is supported by the generous and respectable Jarndyce, Jane has no friendly benefactor in her youth and therefore must assert her own identity, although unlike Esther she recognises the fact of her whole existence even without the associations of kin. Esther is badly treated by her aunt but ultimately does not reject her.[44] She docilely, even gratefully accepts that she will be sent to Jarndyce, a move organised and directed by others, as if she has no ability to make her own decisions. Jane, conversely, rejects Mrs Reed and her children and negotiates her escape by confiding in someone outside of the family. At school she works her way to her independence, eventually securing the ability to earn her own money. Esther works equally hard as Jarndyce's housekeeper and Ada's companion, but she does not seek an autonomous existence elsewhere. It could be argued that Esther wishes to stay with Jarndyce because she is happy at Bleak House, whereas Jane is unhappy at Lowood. However, by the time that Jane decides to leave, it is the desire for change and adventure that motivates her exit from Lowood, not mistreatment; she says she has "tired of the routine of eight years" and "desired liberty", "change, stimulus" or "at least a new servitude".[45] Her motivation for marrying Rochester is love, not obligation, as Esther's acceptance of Jarndyce is, and at the suggestion that Rochester may compromise her independence she rebels against him: "I am no bird, and no net

ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you."[46] This is a threat she follows through when his wife, Bertha Rochester is discovered. Esther, however, does not even voice her concerns about the prospect of marriage to Jarndyce but is meekly manoeuvred from her initial betrothal to her guardian, to the marital bed of Mr Woodcourt, who is, fortunately, her preferred mate. Jane finds an alternative home for herself with the Rivers' siblings and secures another marriage proposal on her own merits alone, with no intervention by her other suitor or arrangement by a family member.[47] She returns to Rochester when her journey to independence is complete, and she is financially as well as spiritually his equal.

By his very 'nothingness', Nemo appears to have shaped Esther's story, but Jane has refused to let her story be dictated by others. Her name, like Esther's, is to the best of her knowledge at the start of her narrative, hers alone, and her only living relatives of whom she is aware are the Reeds. She tells Rochester she has no family who will own her, thereby positioning her in a similar situation to Esther as he may interpret this to mean that she is also illegitimate. Although both heroines are subjected to social snobbery, Esther with Miss Barbary and Mrs Woodcourt, and Jane with the Reeds and the Ingrams, only Esther allows her lack of patriarchal lineage to affect her, and this may well be because her character was written by a man and not a woman. Jane's first-person narration is also not nestled within the framework of an apparently omniscient third-person narration as Esther's is - a circumstance that could be a viewed as safety net or a controlling frame - but Jane requires neither. In Murdoch's novel, a mysterious male source of power will once again attempt to drive the course of the narrative. Nemo is not given a voice in Dickens' tale but, whereas the male author attempts to judge the female gender with a woman narrator, Murdoch voices a commentary on the masculine tradition through a male narrator. By choosing a male narrator she draws attention to the common practice of using the male pronoun to refer to humankind, something she commented upon in 1978: "I want to write about things on the whole where it doesn't matter whether you're male or female, in which case you'd better be male, because a male represents ordinary human beings, unfortunately as things stand at the moment, whereas a woman is always a woman!" [48] Gregory J. Rubinson supports this view when he comments upon the male domination of the canon in post-war British writing in his 2005 work, *The Fiction of Rushdie, Barnes, Winterson, and Carter*:

> Because written literary traditions historically have been shaped and institutionalized by men, women writers had to respond to literary forms that carry an androcentric bias – forms that have traditionally, often subtly, helped subordinate women to men.

> Anne-Cranny Francis argues for example, that the convention that resolves nineteenth- century tales with marriage "tells the reader that individual success and happiness means heterosexual romance and marriage [...] [and therefore] is involved in the construction of the compulsory heterosexuality which typifies patriarchal discourse" (93). Through constant repetition, such conventions came to be seen as "natural" and so the androcentric values they conveyed were reinforced as "natural" also: "The realists simply naturalized the conventions so that they seemed obvious or inevitable to readers, and so became effectively invisible. When the conventions became invisible, so did their social and ideological function".[49]

Although Murdoch states that for her it is "instinctive"[50] to narrate through a male character, in *The Philosopher's Pupil* her use of a 'gendered' omniscient narrator suggests that she is attempting to challenge the tradition of the male representing humankind, by presenting a number of competing narrative voices, both male and female but all filtered through N. The reader is thus made aware simultaneously both of the gender bias of the narrator and of the traditional style of address, and must assess the presentation of characters and events accordingly.

Her style of renegotiating the gender bias implicit to her national literary identity is a more subtle reaction than that of many other British female authors like Angela Carter or even Jeanette Winterson whose fiction clearly associates them with 'gender issues', as they subvert the content as well as the style of the traditional sexual narrative. Carter's re-writings of tales such as "Bluebeard" in her short story, "The Bloody Chamber" (1979), maintain the heterosexual focus of the majority of British novel writing prior to the 1960s, whilst re-casting the female protagonists as capable and strong heroines instead of passive victims. Winterson seeks to make gender distinctions ambiguous, in such works as *Written on the Body* (1992) where the gender of the first-person narrator is never disclosed, whilst also offering a homosexual interpretation of well-known tales such as her lesbian version of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989).[51] Murdoch's differences to these authors may be partly attributed to her identification with the realist tradition as well as her respect for its capabilities. She stated in discussion with Michael O. Bellamy in 1977 that she was "attempting to be a realist" but that she considered "real people are far more eccentric than anybody portrayed in novels. Human beings are very odd and very different from each other. The novel is a marvellous form in that it attempts to show this."[52] She states that people create myths about their lives and in an attempt to realise the myth they cast themselves and those that surround them in roles. This shows that for Murdoch, myth and fantasy are a genuine part of everyone's lives, and as such it was

necessary for the novelist trying to represent such a life realistically and to be aware of the human propensity to be imaginative about the everyday. Nicol quotes Murdoch saying that nineteenth-century novels are better than twentieth- century ones, [53] but it does not necessarily follow that she believed that nineteenth-century novels could not be improved upon; and this seems particularly true of the period around the publication of *The Philosopher's Pupil.* She stated in discussion at a symposium at Free University in Amsterdam in 1986 that: "Of course there are many more kinds of experimental novel, and I think some of the young people feel that they've got to write in a completely new way, which I think is wrong. There are many ways of writing, and the traditional way is still alive."[54] This assertion suggests that she recognized a means to contemporise the traditional forms without destroying them. In an earlier interview with W. K. Rose, she stated, in response to a question about whether she would write something like *Pale Fire* or *Naked Lunch*:

> I feel that I want to drive my writing in the other direction, that I would like to drive it back towards a much simpler kind of realism. I would like to be thought of as a realistic writer, in the sense in which good English novelists have been realists in the past. [...] Whether one could use experiment in the interests of this is something I have wondered about. [55]

This does not, however, wholly account for her interest in women's concerns or how there might be a link between her narrative style and the depiction of women. She did, however, comment during an interview with Sheila Hale in 1976 that:

> There was simply more drama in being a woman in the nineteenth century. George Eliot is not somebody who touches my heart terribly although one must admire her. She was *driven* to develop an intellectual vision through her reaction to her situation as a woman. Now women are supposed to be liberated but of course they are not, and that does have a deadening effect.[56]

This quote does show recognition of a deficiency in the contemporary writing of which Murdoch is aware, and perhaps a desire to re-visit that missing dramatic impetus which is certainly apparent in the *The Philosopher's Pupil*. It is surely significant that this novel was written in the midst of the media 'backlash' in the 1980s, to the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. This media reaction suggested that the gains of the second wave of feminism were not actually improving women's lot, a view famously expounded and criticised some time later in Susan Faludi's *Backlash* (1991). This media assault on women's rights was something which Murdoch would certainly have been aware of and would most likely have resisted. By revisiting novels from an age before women's

emancipation, through a contemporary context, Murdoch is able to compare and contrast these depictions of femininity and thereby to evaluate society's progress.

It is easy to see how much of the characterisation of Jane Eyre, and *Bleak House's* Esther Summerson can also be identified in the depiction of Hattie in *The Philosopher's Pupil,* yet there are important differences to make allowances for the contemporary late feminist angle. Jadwin's comparisons are as follows:

> Esther Summerson like Jane Eyre conflates her "autobiographical" romance with a gothic mystery- plot centring on her secret relation to a fallen woman. Both novels open with an orphan's account of ill-treatment by a punitive aunt and her subsequent deliverance to a girl's school [...] both heroines, engaged as governesses, receive marriage proposals from attractive although inappropriate patriarchal benefactors. After survival traumas that evoke delirious revelations of their existential isolation, Jane and Esther each becomes attracted to a younger suitor (a peripatetic "healer"), chooses between him and the benefactor, and closes her "autobiographies" with scenes of connubial bliss. [57]

It is clear through the similarities between Hattie's fate and that of Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson that the late twentieth century was not so very different from the nineteenth century in some respects, particularly in its treatment of and expectations for women. Yet Murdoch has included crucial differences between Hattie's situation and that of her nineteenth-century counterparts. In *The Philosopher's Pupil* the plot that surrounds Hattie is also "a gothic mystery-plot centring on her secret relation to a fallen" individual but it is a man who is depicted as 'fallen' in this novel rather than a woman. Hattie is connected to a number of arguably 'fallen women', her aunt, Margot, and her 'companion' Pearl being the two most prominent examples; but the novel's key example of a 'fallen woman' is Diane Sedleigh, the former prostitute who has become George's mistress and seeks comfort from the church.[58] However, she is not connected with Hattie during the narrative, although her blood relationship to Pearl, is, in the wake of the "Slipper House riot",[59] deemed noteworthy by John Robert in his tempestuous removal of Hattie from Pearl's care. (The Slipper House is the property rented for Hattie and her Pearl when Hattie completes school and, therefore, is left once more without a focus or an address, awaiting John Robert's instruction.) However, neither Pearl nor Margot are depicted as behaving in a particularly unusual manner for the 1980s despite John Robert's concern. (Pearl's archaic function as a companion can be seen as a deliberate nineteenth-century reference and a link to Esther and Ada's relationship in *Bleak House* as well as more generally to Jane's rather informal capacity as governess to Adéle). The so-called 'riot' occurs when Tom, the youth John Robert had hoped

would be a suitable future husband for Hattie, gives the impression that there is a party at the house and the rumour that ensues actually causes the event to occur. Pearl is seen, and later reported in the local news, to be kissing a man dressed in drag. This is one of the few intimate sexualised moments for Pearl during the novel and it illuminates the sexual confusion she experiences throughout the plot. Margot's life is alluded to as being rather indeterminately colourful, with N stating that in Hattie's school holidays she initially resided for part of the time "in rooms near Margot's flat, since Margot's way of life could not just then be shared with an innocent young girl".[60] Though this indicates some sexual adventures and dissolute living, Margot is not characterised as 'fallen' in the way that Honaria Dedlock and Bertha Mason are, as their actions constitute a fall both from Christian ideals of morality and consequently those of the English society they are expected to exist within. Honaria Dedlock and Bertha Mason are also to some extent punished for deceit. Lady Dedlock has had an illegitimate child which she conceals from her husband. Her husband offers his "full forgiveness"[61] after her secret is revealed, suggesting that it was the secret and not the cause of it that occasioned Dickens' punishment of her. Bertha Mason is described by Rochester as "coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile", "at once intemperate and unchaste", but this he says would not have reproached her with if not for "the treachery of her concealment".[62] Pearl's family connection to Diane, as well as her confused sexuality, is hidden from John Robert but she does not actually commit any transgression. Margot is, however, quite open about her behaviour and choices, and although they are not appropriate for a house with a child as an inhabitant, they are not condemned, nor crucially, explored. They also do not result in the kind of distress that the discovery of the secrets of the former two women do. In the nineteenth-century texts, the secret is part of the gothic tradition associated with two upper-class inherited houses and the families that are identified with them; but for Murdoch's novel the secret is not buried in a house but in the mind of John Robert and his long held secret passion for his granddaughter: "[t]o say that John Robert was 'in love' with his granddaughter is to employ too vague and dubious a concept. What was certain was that he was obsessed by her."[63] John Robert has as much to lose from the revelation of his interest in Hattie, as his nineteenth-century counterparts do, but his reputation is based on his intellectual ability rather than his family lineage; and so although his problem relates to his family it is his mind that is poisoned by his socially unacceptable desires, not bricks and mortar. In an inversion of the approach by her Victorian predecessors, Murdoch presents the famous *male* professor as harbouring desires and an interest in behaviours that are not

socially acceptable, rather than the women. Admittedly, in *Jane Eyre* Rochester is still partially to blame for the situation which Jane finds herself in, but he is partly excused by his wife's behaviour, and the fact that divorce was not easy to secure in the Victorian period. Before the Divorce Act of 1857 divorce was difficult to obtain as it required an Act of Parliament, and it was also costly. If a wife wanted to divorce her husband she would have to prove he had committed incest and bigamy as well as adultery; before they could be legally separated, a husband would only have to prove adultery.[64] Morally, however, the situation was more complicated still. Vows uttered in Church were not easily forgotten and rejecting a wife simply on the grounds of illness would not cohere well with a predominantly Christian society, even with Rochester's additional concerns. Indeed as Heather Glen asserts in *The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*: "Rochester implies" "that because Bertha is mad he cannot divorce her. [...] The point here is not so much to ask why the law would not allow Rochester to divorce Bertha, but that in the terms of the novel it is necessary for him to be saddled with an immovable burden. This way, Rochester is guilty of error, dissipation and attempted bigamy, but he is also redeemable and forgivable."[65]

Although throughout the course of the narrative, John Robert is described as attractive despite his appearance rather than because of it, people *are* drawn to him and Hattie is not deterred from him due to his looks but because she is a little afraid of him; indeed Pearl even finds his dishevelled eccentricity endearing. However, after John Robert has made his feelings for Hattie clear, agreeing that he is 'in love' with her, she sees him in hideous and primitive terms:

> She could hardly bear to look at him, at the cool dignified remote philosopher, the guardian of her childhood, suddenly transformed into this pathetic spitting moaning maniac. At the same time she felt his presence, his closeness to her in the room, as that of a large uncontrolled animal.[66]

At the point of revelation in *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason is similarly described:

> What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark grizzled hair, wild as a mane hid its head and face. [67]

Interestingly John Robert and Bertha Mason are not described in these animalistic terms *before* their secrets have been revealed. Rochester describes Bertha as "a fine woman, in the style of Blanche Ingram: tall dark and majestic".[68] It is her illness and her lack of temperance which transforms her into something other. Although he is dishevelled and

eccentric, Hattie and Pearl "took it for granted that John Robert was 'awfully distinguished'",[69] a judgement that is at odds with the idea of him as 'a large uncontrolled animal'. He too is metamorphosised through the unveiling of his secret self. There is a distance created by this style of narrative where the individual who is associated with the damning act is both recognisable and 'other', a key component of the uncanny as described by Freud,[70] as well as drawing upon the gothic tradition utilised by Dickens and Brontë. John Robert is recognisable in the text and yet his 'otherness' is highlighted through his bestial characteristics and the revelation of his perversion. Likewise, a contemporary reader of Murdoch's fiction may be aware of an additional sense of the uncanny through recognition of similar descriptions in nineteenth-century literary depictions of 'fallen' female characters, which Murdoch here adopts to portray the fall of the male. Even Lady Dedlock suffers a similar fate to that of Bertha Mason and John Robert Rozanov, when her secret has finally become impossible to harbour and she is found dead at the paupers' graveyard: first she is identified by Esther as the impoverished Jenny, then as a 'senseless creature' and lastly recognised as her mother:

> I saw before me lying on the step, the mother of the dead child. She lay there, with one arm creeping around a bar of the iron gate, and seeming to embrace it. She lay there, who had so lately spoken to my mother. She lay there, a distressed, unsheltered, senseless creature. [...]
>
> I passed on to the gate, and stooped down. I lifted the heavy head, put the long dank hair aside, and turned the face. And it was my mother cold and dead. [71]

Lady Honaria Dedlock here also resembles Bertha Mason; both are animalistic, with long dark wild hair: the manner in which these two women are portrayed in the midst of their disgrace differs only in that Esther's style is softened by her grief. This movement away from a more typically realist description of the surroundings in these scenes to a greater degree of imagination in the writing at this point, identifies the emotional turmoil behind the event and is as typical of Dickens and Brontë as it is of Murdoch. In Dickens' account of the discovery of Lady Dedlock, she is at first described by Esther in simple, straightforward language but, as exemplified in the quote above, the writing becomes increasingly elaborate and infused with emotion as the revelation gets closer to the final moment of awareness, when it abruptly reverts once more to simplification. This mixing of the romantic and realistic can be seen in Murdoch's writing too during the scene where Hattie discovers John Robert's real feelings. She too alternates between a bare realism and an intense emotional address which sees everything intensified with

new meaning; the latter can be seen in the animalisation of John Robert and the former in the following quote:

> Hattie had come down at seven-thirty. John Robert peered out of the kitchen. She looked tired and pale but had put on a brown straight rather 'grown-up' dress which Pearl had packed for her, and had put her hair up. In reply to his questions about breakfast she had said that she only wanted a cup of coffee. [72]

It is this style of writing that Nicol addresses in his paper on Murdoch's 'mannered realism', writing that "[i]t is realism but realism done to excess" and that:

> This impression is surely created by the effect on readers of encountering realist modes of writing in 'the age of suspicion'. In his essay "Time and Description in Fiction Today" (1963) Robbe-Grillet notes how nineteenth-century novels 'are crammed with houses, furnishings, costumes, exhaustively and scrupulously described, not to mention faces, bodies, etc.' Where the original function of all this description was 'to make the reader see', convince him or her 'of the objective existence – outside literature [...] description does not work in the same way for the late twentieth century writer or the reader. Description used to 'reproduce a pre-existing reality; it now asserts its creative function'. Where 'once it made us see things now it makes us destroy them' (Robbe-Grillet, 1989b, 146-7).[73]

So in Murdoch's fiction, although the technique is similar, the effect is quite different, and as she is deliberately exaggerating both a typically masculine tradition (realism) and a female stereotype (the emotional romantic style), her choice to utilise these approaches in a way that inevitably draws attention to their fictional nature also brings the reader's focus onto the gender of the style in which she is writing and, of course, the gender of her narrator. The masculine narrator conveys a mixed style, depicting the modes of expression of both gender stereotypes, and as both are depicted in such a way as to emphasise their fictionality the reader is prompted to question the history behind the gendering of these traditions. By drawing upon *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*, authored by writers who were personally at the extremes of the gender bias, yet actually adopted a similar style, Murdoch subtly reminds the reader of this fact and questions these stereotypes, which in itself reaches out to the theoretical premises of aspects of third wave feminism. In *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories*, Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon refer to Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford's assertions on victimisation and third wave feminism, stating that they need, "a feminism which could no longer, in any way, be identified as "victim feminism", a feminism that does not "hurt itself with...simplistic stereotyping and ideological policing ('Harvesting' 2,4)".[74] By self-consciously mixing stereotypes in this way Murdoch questions Hattie's

definition as a victim, but crucially she also queries John Robert's role as the aggressor. Her authorial awareness of gendered stereotypes affects the way that the reader's sympathies and expectations are directed, especially in this circumstance which illuminates a male-female power struggle whose sinister depths were only alluded to by her nineteenth-century precursors. Hattie, as the dependent virgin is set up as a victim but, in a fashion typical of feminist re-writings of patriarchal grand narratives, she seems to overturn this presumption. However, Murdoch's text questions the validity of the developments of such re-writing by reminding the reader of Brontë's rebellious and triumphant heroine. Where Hattie might have in the 1980s developed a self-sufficient existence independent of male support (emotional or financial) she decides, as Jane does, to marry the partner of her choice. Yet this ending is ambivalent, because he was also the partner of her grandfather's choosing, and in this way she also resembles Esther who is 'given' to Woodcourt by Jarndyce. The conclusion is then apparently traditional, the novel ends with marriage, suggesting the triumph of patriarchy but the reference to Bronte's novel indicates that this may not be a victory, indeed that the patriarchal superiority was never as complete as supposed. Murdoch goes a step further than feminist writers like Angela Carter because she does not simply accept the male domination of literary history, but implies that women did have an important place in the canon; and that even if this was not openly recognised it was still influential.

iii. Incest and re-writing the nineteenth century

Discussing mental illness and illegitimacy was no longer taboo in the early 1980s when Murdoch was writing, but the incest taboo still persisted. Incest is a theme that hovers on the peripheries of both *Bleak House* and *Jane Eyre*, and was a strangely apt prohibition to consider, especially in light of the patriarchal suppression of young dependent females in both narratives. It is typical of feminist rewriting of androcentric plotlines in the late twentieth century that the heroine should be de-victimised but Hattie's role is more complex than a simple recasting of her as the powerful survivor depicted in such tales as Carter's "The Bloody Chamber". Hattie, who might easily have been depicted as an abuse victim, is shown to have a certain degree of power over John Robert, perhaps even a greater power than he has over her. Although it is *her* moral judgement[75] and intelligent understanding of the predicament which creates the power imbalance, his physical strength is still superior to hers, a fact she shows respect for when she bolts her bedroom door before sleep. This is an interesting progression from the similar scenarios in *Bleak House* and *Jane Eyre* where the power balance initially

falls in favour of the older male characters, John Jarndyce and Edward Rochester. Their power is partly based on their financial strength and social status which can in turn affect the fortunes of the orphaned Jane and Esther. Jane declares her liberty to Rochester during the proposal scene, "I am a free human being with an independent will; which I now exert to leave you",[76] yet despite this proclamation, she does not go at this point, but only much later after his living wife has been revealed, and the status he might have conferred upon Jane through marriage is no longer possible. Rochester does not, even at this point and despite his assertions to the contrary, see Jane as his equal. Although he fears her and society's condemnation sufficiently that he conceals his still living wife from her, he is not so concerned that he is afraid to ask her to stay with him as his mistress after the truth has been exposed, "You shall go to a place I have in the south of France: a white-walled villa on the shores of the Mediterranean."[77] It is interesting that Rozanov contemplates a similar flouting of convention by dreaming of escaping with Hattie in the same way that Rochester offers to Jane.

> Sometimes vaguely he dreamed of taking Hattie right away with him, *capturing* her, keeping her in some Spanish-style palazzo in some isolated part of southern California and overwhelming her with luxuries and treats. [78]

In stark contrast to Rochester, however, Rozanov does not seriously contemplate it as something that will occur. He expresses his concern over this early in the novel when the notion is still just a fantasy: "Might she not be embarrassed, annoyed, irritated, bored, frustrated, longing to be away? The mere idea of finding her so caused him such anguish as to make the experiment impossible."[79] He does, however, suggest it to Hattie but once he is certain she has understood him he refuses to consider it further, although, unlike Jane, she presses the point, "Why can't we buy a home together, like you said, you actually talked about it, have you forgotten, about going to California and buying a house for us near the ocean".[80] The effect of Hattie's questioning of Rozanov's resolve is two-fold: it highlights her innocence and shows that even when tempted Rozanov is very unlikely to take advantage of the situation, further complicating the reader's position as moral judge of the situation. Unlike Rochester, he does not even believe in Hattie's love. At the point of crisis Rochester may be emotional but he does not doubt his ability to successfully secure Jane until she actually leaves him, and even at the last moment he says, "[b]ut Jane will give me her love: yes-nobly, generously";[81] that this is not phrased as a question despite her assertions she must leave shows his self-assurance. Rozanov, however, despite his attempts to alter the course of Hattie's life is left floundering, certain that he will be rejected. This lack of confidence on Rozanov's part

cannot wholly be assigned to the difference in situation; Hattie is not after all suggesting they attempt anything other than a platonic relationship, but the disgrace associated with adultery in Victorian England would have been acute. Copulating outside of marriage would have been considered damning after death and potentially isolating in life, as exemplified by the fate of Lady Dedlock in *Bleak House.* Although Rozanov's moral dilemma is greater in magnitude it is consequently still comparable. He does not, however, operate with Rochester's suavity, but instead he begs Hattie to stay with him.

> 'Don't leave me Hattie. Just for today stay with me, let us be quietly together. I'm sorry I behaved in this beastly way. But I'm glad that I love you and that I've told you, really. I'm in awful pain but I'm happy. Don't go to the Slipper House, don't leave me alone, don't drive me mad by going – just after – all this. Just give me today, please.'[82]

For Charlotte Brontë, however, it was integral that Jane held the moral high-ground unequivocally if she was to maintain sympathy as a woman, which is why it is Jane who walks away with no intervention from anyone else, and at the point when temptation is at its greatest. Rozanov responds to Hattie's suggestion that they go to California by defining himself as a victim, "I *am* a helpless victim – I'm pinned down and screaming – can't you understand, can't you feel the difference between us now?"[83] The roles appear to have been reversed and it seems that it is the man that has no power, but it is not so simple, as Hattie, unlike Jane, does not leave of her own accord but is pushed by Rozanov out of the door towards Tom McCaffrey. It would be easy to see Tom as another Mr Woodcourt in *Bleak House*, rescuing Hattie/Esther from the unhealthy advances of a patriarchal figure, but there are significant differences. Unlike Esther who *does* want to leave Jarndyce, Hattie does *not* want to leave, she is not staying with Rozanov out of a sense of duty but because she wants to, whether this is an informed decision considering her youth and inexperience is open to question. Also crucially when Hattie leaves she is ultimately given her independence by Rozanov, as his death leaves her financially secure and free to make her own decisions; although she still may have felt an obligation to marry her grandfather's choice. Esther does already want to marry Woodcourt but she is not consulted at this point, Jarndyce takes her on a mystery trip and on arrival admits that he has bought the house he shows her, for her and her new husband. She never makes a choice, and is never free to make one. Rozanov attempts to direct Hattie but ultimately fails due to his own emotional excesses; Jarndyce succeeds in moving Esther from one betrothal to another and from one Bleak House to another, like a pawn in a game of chess.[84]

John Jarndyce acts in an even more dynamic way than Rochester, arranging for Esther to marry Alan Woodcourt without consulting her, thereby acting in a male parental possessive role and in an almost incestuous inversion of fortunes gives away the adopted daughter he hoped to marry. However, Jarndyce's interference in this respect can be likened to Rozanov's behaviour regarding Hattie, although in both cases it appears that they, albeit accidentally, choose the partner who will actually secure the future happiness of their 'wards'.[85] They both show a desire to control the sexuality of the women involved if they cannot be the one to take the role of perpetrator. In Murdoch's novel this is stated explicitly:

> In his desolation the characteristically dotty idea of marrying Hattie off quickly came to him as a salve. Why should he not at least attempt to arrange her marriage, to meddle thus far in her life and her future? It had been one of his most secret and peculiar miseries, one which he continually revived for his discomfort that he would never know when and with whom Hattie lost her virginity, and moved definitely out of the magic circle in which he had installed her. He would have to wait and guess and never be certain, and could he bear that? Hence there arose the idea of hastening the event and controlling it himself.[86]

Rozanov also manoeuvres Hattie into Tom's arms quite literally, pushing her out of the door of his house towards the waiting Tom and slamming the door behind them. His action in this respect, however, indicates a lack of control rather than the authority of Jarndyce's considered actions which must have taken some time to arrange. Rozanov loses his power with his revelation and this final move is an impulse born out of his moral fear, when Tom rings the doorbell "his immediate thought is of the police" and when he opens the door he "did not hesitate for a second".[87]

Murdoch has thus contemporised this "Beauty and the Beast" narrative of the vulnerable female and the powerful older male, creating a situation where the balance of power is constantly shifting and neither individual is favoured so greatly by society that they can dominate proceedings, or leave the other in a considerably weaker social position. It is as possible for a man to fall from grace in Murdoch's world as it is for a woman, and this is exemplified by Rozanov's suicide at the close of the narrative, whereas *Bleak House* depicted the death of Honaria Dedlock, and *Jane Eyre* portrayed Bertha Mason's. The realist-gothic nature of the plot is also contemporised: there is no great house with secret passageways and forgotten corners; and the grandeur of the key male protagonist is academic and self-made rather than aristocratic. John Robert's house in Hare Lane is an ancestral home (in as much as it could reasonably be in the twentieth century for someone from his background) in that it is inherited, and holds an important

and meaningful history for him. It is characteristically dark but it is uncomfortably small and the secrets that are revealed within its walls are housed firmly in his mind rather than in his territory. Even the use of 'N' to narrate the tale in the tradition of works such as Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (where the narrator has happened upon the tale rather than being a key participant), can be seen as a way to engage with the gothic tradition. Murdoch stated on more than one occasion after the publication of *The Philosopher's Pupil* that N could be identified as the psychiatrist Ivor Sefton,[88] adding a further twentieth-century ironic twist to this tale (and perhaps a social comment on the appropriateness of this medical profession to this genre, dealing as it does with the traumas and mysterious of the darkest recesses of the mind, rather than the more traditionally gothic house). The manipulation of the realist style by Murdoch in the 'mannered' way Bran Nicol discusses, has brought attention to the gendering of narrative style and that of the narrator: this raises questions which reveal that issues concerning equality of status and sex can be raised in an experimental style that is not necessarily entirely new, but which operates within an already recognised framework.

iv. A dual focussed narrative

The title of *The Philosopher's Pupil* is deceptive and has arguably misled a number of critics. There is an ambiguity surrounding both the 'philosopher' and the 'pupil' of the title which has been for the most part overlooked. Initially it seems that the philosopher is John Robert Rozanov and that the pupil is George McCaffrey, and this is a conclusion that the majority of critics have accepted unquestioningly.[89] However, if George and John Robert's relations were the central concern of the novel then there would be no reason for spending so much time on Rozanov's relationship with Hattie, or indeed, Hattie's individual perspective and experiences. This approach cannot even be explained by suggesting that certain minor characters' presences in the text have the function of illuminating aspects of the main protagonists' subconscious, or inner life, as only marginal characters can be understood in this capacity. In her book *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel: Time, Space and Memory* (1983), Elizabeth Ermath explains Dickens' use of numerous peripheral characters as a means to illuminate aspects of the central protagonists' experience and personality. In the following, she explains this technique with reference to Pip in *Great Expectations:*

> As his double life increases in complexity, a variety of doubles appear as carriers of qualities that he finds too difficult to imagine or to accept in himself, especially the libidinal energy

> of Orlick and the snobbish cruelty of Bentley Drummle: characters linked in Pip's own consciousness with his private hopes and fears.
>
> This parcelling out of one psychic energy among several characters creates problems of articulation for individuals that cannot be solved by them because these problems stem from general problems of articulation in the society as a whole. Dickens' curiosities – characters like Quilp or Wemmick – take on emblematic value in ways that distort the sense of ordinary relations central to realistic agreements. His compounding use of details like the prison in *Little Dorrit* or Chancery in *Bleak House* has such an emblematic function. [90]

As I have already argued, Murdoch has been influenced by Dickens and she admired his work, but in this instance Ermath's theory does not apply, for Hattie is not a peripheral character. Any protagonist who is given the amount of attention that Hattie receives, must be in some way a key to the interpretation of the novel as a whole; and if the title refers only to Rozanov and George, then Hattie's role would be to elucidate the relationship between these two men, whereas she holds an entirely separate section of the plot, and George is only something of a peripheral character in *her* drama, and she in *his*. Their only solid connection is through Rozanov but even he does not see George as important for much of the narrative. When Rozanov does acknowledge George as noteworthy to him it is because he is already deeply depressed due to his frustrations over Hattie, and because George is now perceived by him as exacerbating this unhappiness by possibly threatening Hattie's innocence - something that John Robert's controlling interest in his granddaughter will not allow to pass without intervention. Until the occurrence of the "Slipper House riot"[91] John Robert is described as being only "vaguely aware" that George was "hurt and maddened by John Robert's calm coldness, by the evident fact that John Robert not only did not care about him, but did not think about him."[92] It is only after John Robert has read the inaccurate account of the riot in the Ennistone Gazette (which suggests that as a result of George being seen at the window in the Slipper House during the party that George and Hattie may have had intimate relations) that he becomes "as obsessed with George as George was with John Robert. The fatal connection now running through Hattie had tied them together at last".[93] However, the scenario that makes John Robert notice George is a fiction, as George has not done anything to Hattie and she has no interest in him. His presence in the Slipper House which caused the speculation was brief, accidental, and totally uninvited by Hattie. John Robert's obsessive interest is not primarily associated with George, but with Hattie and more particularly in her sexuality:

> It had been one of his most secret and peculiar miseries, one which he continually revived for his discomfort, that he would never be able to know *when* and *with whom* Hattie lost her virginity, and moved definitely out of the magic circle in which he had installed her.[94]

His new fascination with George is an extension of his general 'obsession' with his granddaughter. Admittedly the offence is perhaps more deeply felt because he has disliked George - his disinterest in his former student is described as "not totally uncoloured by malice"[95] - but it is Hattie and the violation of her innocence that is the chief source of John Robert's disquiet at this stage. Even the thought of Tom (whom he chose as a suitable spouse for Hattie) being invited to Hattie's late at night, causes him obvious displeasure. When John Robert is assured of Hattie's innocence by her screams following his questioning her virginity, he removes Hattie from Pearl and the Slipper House, and installs her in his own home, and then, secure of her, he never mentions George again.

George never discovers or suspects the nature of Hattie's hold on John Robert and sees her only as a character of minor importance compared with the central drama as he perceives it, that of his connection to Rozanov. He is described as being "curious about 'the little girl'" but deterred from going to greet her with his brother and sister-in-law because he has " a sudden sense of how it was becoming harder and harder to communicate with *anyone*."[96] This, then, is a general worry that causes him to refrain and a sign that his curiosity cannot be great: the description associated with her in relation to him shows that he does not see her, as Rozanov does, in a sexual light. In fact we are told that George is not especially interested in sex despite his reputation, as N surmises, "he was not (in the crude accepted sense) seriously interested in women. [...] In fact he was a good deal less erotically interested in women than his brother Brian."[97] N elaborates further on George's desire to remain in the background regarding Hattie, saying:

> George was also deterred from going to the Slipper House by a very special feeling of fear which came to him quite suddenly, a sense of taboo. The image of Hattie in her petticoat came back to him with intense vividness. He had thought: that girl, *his* granddaughter, is dangerous, she's the most dangerous thing in the world. It was as that thought came to him that his face cleared; for he had not at all liked the sense of being, almost, too *embarrassed* to walk up naturally to those *strangers*. [98]

The italicised emphasis on '*his'* shows that Hattie is only important to George as a result of her relation to John Robert; there is no suggestion of her being seen independently of her grandfather and so an alliance between George and Hattie that is

separate from Rozanov is thereby precluded. The sense of danger associated with her is also an extension of her relationship to John Robert, the remembrance of her in her petticoat followed by this idea is perhaps also a sign of George's awareness that even if Hattie were not so childlike, any association between the two of them would negatively impact on his primary aim, that of being reconciled to Rozanov. There is also a sense that George's social incompetence (presumably resulting from his mental state) is a source of greater anxiety to him than even John Robert and Hattie at this point, and the notion of danger connected with her is partly an excuse to save him from testing his perceived disability.

In light of these deliberations, it may seem as if George's story is the subplot and Hattie's story the main focus of the action, but there is too much independent drama connected with George to enable this. Both George and Hattie have autonomous and at times deeply controversial plotlines. The death of George's son and his treatment of Stella, as well as his mental instability, all serve to gain the reader's attention; and of course the incest storyline concerning John Robert and Hattie is equally shocking and engaging. Iris Murdoch commented in connection with *The Philosopher's Pupil* that, "[o]ne of the original ideas in the creation of that novel was the fate of Schlick, who is mentioned in it, a philosopher of the Vienna School, who was murdered by one of his pupils".[99] This remark seems to put George and Rozanov as the key focus, but she goes on to say:

> George, of course, was fundamental to the story. The incest theme wasn't a deep original theme but came up because of thinking about Hattie and her relation to her grandfather. It then became an integral part of the tale. [100]

This shows that both Hattie and George are equally vital to the plot and Rozanov makes the third connecting point of the triangle. George is therefore at the centre of his own narrative which although he sees Rozanov as vital to it, is for the most part quite separate to the philosopher. George's plot involves the McCaffreys, Diane, and Stella as its main protagonists. Hattie's narrative also has Rozanov as an essential component but again, he cannot be counted as having a close personal relationship to her for the majority of the novel. Rozanov is consequently isolated: he sees Hattie as the focus of his existence but she (in a distorted mirror image of the history between Rozanov and George) gives him very little of herself until the crisis point of their relationship.

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymology of the words of the title indicates the dual focus of the plot. One of the definitions of 'philosopher' is "lover of wisdom" its origin is Middle English "from a variant of Old French "*philosophe*, via Latin from

Greek *philosophos* 'lover of wisdom', from *philein* 'to love' [and] *sophos* 'wise'".[101] After looking at the history of the word and its associations with lovers and loving, the wise, or wisdom for its own sake, it can be seen to point to George's feelings for John Robert. Rozanov can also be seen in this definition as a lover of wisdom; also a philosopher in the opaque modern definition of the term as well as a more traditional classical interpretation; and as one who loves, in reference to his desire for Hattie.

John Robert's particular predicament makes an interesting case study in terms of Plato's assertions about the character and import of philosophers and the different natures of love: theories that Murdoch would have been very familiar with, being an aficionado of Plato's work ("Plato is not only the father of our philosophy, he is our best philosopher"[102]). John Robert's characterisation sees him fit into both the highest and lowest modes of behaviour as far as Plato is concerned. He is described in *The Philosopher's Pupil* as being "obsessed" by his granddaughter and in the course of this discussion his interest in her is implied to be of a passionate rather than a platonic nature. As N states, "He had never deeply desired any woman except Linda [...] The last thing in the world that he expected was that he should suddenly find himself moved by a child".[103] Pausanias describes in *The Symposium* two different kinds of love, acknowledging the base kind which he terms "Common Aphrodite" and deems represented by the goddess of the same name in Greek mythology, daughter of Zeus and Dione. He also refers to "Heavenly Aphrodite" which in his opinion is a more elevated form of love. The former is defined as "being such as the meaner sort of men feel", "it is of the body rather than the soul" and "it desires only to gain an end, but never thinks of accomplishing the end nobly".[104] There are a number of complications associated with this method of approaching John Robert's characterisation, which will have to be identified and examined individually. Firstly Murdoch's characters tend to engage in a journey of discovery throughout the course of the plot, often in terms of the Platonic cave myth from the *Republic* which she explores in "The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists", in that they move figuratively from dark to light. Murdoch interprets this idea as follows:

> The pilgrimage which restores our knowledge of this real world is explained in the *Republic* by the images of the sun and the quadripartite divided line, and by the myth of the cave. The prisoners in the cave are at first chained to the back wall where all they can see are shadows, cast by a fire which is behind them, of themselves and of objects which are carried between them and the fire. Later they manage to turn round and see the fire and the objects which cast the shadows. Later still they

> escape from the cave, see the outside world in the light of the sun, and finally the sun itself. The sun represents the Form of the Good in whose light the truth is seen; it reveals the world, hitherto invisible, and is also a source of life. [105]

Rozanov's enlightenment may be identifiable with philosophical motifs but part of the difficulty in examining his spiritual journey in this way is that his learning process is *about* the inability to replace life's real chaos with philosophical techniques. He is forced, through his discovery of his feelings for Hattie and his impotent struggle to overcome them by rational or intellectual means, to concede defeat to the contingency of reality, a notion that Murdoch was much in favour of in both her philosophy and in fiction. In "Against Dryness" Murdoch writes regarding literary prose:

> Real life is not a given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to imagination as oppose to fantasy. Our sense of form, which is an aspect of our desire for consolation, can be a danger to our sense of reality as a rich receding background. Against the consolations of form, the clean crystalline work, the simplified fantasy-myth, we must pit the destructive power of the now so unfashionable naturalistic idea of character.
>
> Real people are destructive of myth, contingency is destructive of fantasy and opens the way for imagination. Think of the Russians, those great masters of the contingent. Too much contingency of course may turn art into journalism. But since reality is incomplete, art must not be too much afraid of incompleteness. Literature must always represent a battle between real people and images; and what it requires now is a much stronger and more complex conception of the former.[106]

Of course, in this instance, Murdoch is discussing how literature might be improved as an art form, but the same principle can be applied to some of her central characters in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, for George is almost entirely driven whereas Rozanov is contained. George therefore suffers from a tendency to focus on fantasy rather than rationality, hence his paranoid delusions and descent into mental instability, and Rozanov's existence can be seen for the most part to operate in the reverse extreme, although this too leads to discontent. Unlike Rozanov, George acts rashly and impetuously, smashing the Roman glass in the museum and losing his job; this and driving the car into the canal with Stella inside are just two examples of extreme behaviour in the novel. His inability to recall how he behaved or his motivations for acting at all is evidence of his lack of forethought and the annihilation of a moral structure with any continuity and recognisable support to it in his life. This does not of course mean that he is necessarily either amoral or immoral, but I will return to this

rather complex point later. In contrast to George, Rozanov's life after his marriage is described as solely intellectual:

> John Robert's heart had long ago been walled up and frozen: or rather his heart had become an intellectual organ [...]. His relations with his pupils were sometimes intense, but for John Robert these relations were strictly a function of intellectual excitement. When they ceased to be able to interest him philosophically he forgot them. [107]

John Robert's personality is presented as if he is a philosopher in all aspects of his life, and this is also presented as a choice: "He had long ago decided upon his 'way of life.'"[108] His reaction to Hattie is shown as something alien to him and something that he is incapable of dealing with:

> Other people solved such problems without even noticing them, or else lived thoughtlessly without their ever arising; he could not. *Was* it that he loved her? Was this *love*? Did he after all understand so little of the concept?[109]

There is also a contradiction inherent in the definition of love given by Pausanius in *The Symposium* which is relevant here and is likely to have interested Murdoch who commented in interviews on the personality and temperament of philosophers. Love, according to Pausanius, when related to desire, (Plato's low Eros or Common Aphrodite) is not in control; but wisdom, and indeed, philosophy require discipline, hence the elevated status of the philosopher in Plato's *Republic* where the appropriate personality of a philosopher is deemed to be "just and civilized" rather than "uncooperative and savage".[110] Murdoch stated in an interview with Bryan Magee that "philosophy has a plain impersonal hardness".[111] This anomaly between love and the philosophical person is further exemplified with George's love of John Robert and John Robert's love of Hattie. George's desire for John Robert is shown to be certainly partly responsible for George's descent into madness, his feelings during his attempted murder of John Robert are described as bordering on sexual, locating his approach firmly with the "Common Aphrodite" of *The Symposium*. Although this definition undoubtedly oversimplifies the characterisation of George and John Robert, it is nevertheless pertinent. Perhaps there is a deliberate and subtle pun on Murdoch's part with the Common Aphrodite being the daughter of Zeus and Dione:[112] Dione is a similar sounding name to the Roman goddess Diane (in Greek myth, Artemsis) but is not otherwise connected with her, however, George's lover (a reformed prostitute) originally called Diamond chooses the name Diane for herself thereby providing herself with an equally tenuous connection to the goddess Dione. This association can be seen to draw a link between George and the Common Aphrodite. However, neither George

nor John Robert are depicted as particularly virulent. N states this quite clearly with regard to George and as much as John Robert may fear his sexual interest in Hattie, he not only does not act on it but is so horrified by doing so that he commits suicide to avoid it. John Robert's abstinence and his final sacrifice are the qualities that he arguably shares with the Heavenly Aphrodite but his acts (or lack of action) cannot be deemed wholly disinterested when the nature of the crime is considered. John Robert is attempting to save his own soul and maintain some degree of conventional moral fortitude by his choices. He is not acting entirely in the interests of Hattie then and indeed, the fact that he indulges himself so far as to reveal his feelings to her, shows this.

> John Robert then approached the revelation of his secret. He intended only to come near to it, not to tell it. He knew that even that this was a mistake and morally wrong, but he could not, looking now at Hattie across the table, and after the peculiar exciting awful tension of their fight, resist moving that step closer to her.[113]

It is also evident from this quote that John Robert is not wholly in control of himself here. George makes no apparent attempt to control his urges in this respect, such as they are, but his suffering is different, because what he desires is not forbidden him on account of his own rules or choices but by circumstances. George has both a wife and a mistress and neither really complains about the other, but it is his obsessive interest in Rozanov which torments him. Although this interest is described as similar to a sexual urge, it is not a sexual fulfilment that is required but a manner of acceptance that remains impossible to fathom.

The role of the lover and the nature of love are examined in some detail in *The Philosopher's Pupil* and the role of conventional morality within unconventional passions is a central concern. The emphasis is placed on the import of the Roman goddess, Diane, through the naming of the Spa's garden after her and through Diane Sedley (George's mistress). The garden is also the setting for the ominous and unpredictable Lud's Rill which allegedly foretells disruption in the town when it spurts out of control scalding hot water, surely a conceit for passion's uncontrollable and sudden effects. Indeed the emphasis on love and the 'religions' of the past are evident in the description of the Ennistone Spa from their introduction by N. The Ennistone baths are reputed to be associated historically with a "cult of Venus".[114] However, there are other ancient deities associated with the Baths, namely Freya and with a nod to Plato's philosophy on the subject, Aphrodite[115]. All three of these are goddesses of love from three different civilisations: Rome, Scandinavia and Greece respectively. The

connection between the town and the notion of love is given a specifically literary and also dramatic slant by N:

> The idea that the waters had an aphrodisiac effect was periodically popular. Shakespeare's sonnet 153 is said to refer to Ennistone, wherein the Bard's lively fancy pictures the spring which thence became hot, and whose waters were said to cure the 'sad distempers' and 'strange maladies' which attend imprudent love. A seventeenth-century medical pamphlet makes an ambiguous reference to the Ennistone waters (see Bowcock's book, the index under 'venereal disease') […]. A minor eighteenth-century poet called Gideon Parke wrote a masque called *The Triumph of Aphrodite* which was to take place in the Bath House.[116]

N goes on to say that *The Triumph of Aphrodite* is to be performed by the youth of the town with the help of Hector Gaines, who "was rumoured to have found a lot of pornographic lines which had been deleted by a nineteenth-century editor".[117] As a result of these associations, the town is therefore from the point of its introduction linked with wide spectrum of manifestations of love and desire.

The references to these goddesses and indeed, to the work of Shakespeare, initially appears to place the town, and consequently its residents, in a long line of traditional romantic imagery, now made tame by the passage of time and frequent use. However, out of the one hundred and fifty-four Shakespearean sonnets that the town could be linked to, it is the one that features Cupid and a reference to "venereal disease"[118] that is chosen, and although the connection has some comic potential it is also a reminder of the dangers of desire and its unpredictable nature. Diane may be the goddess of chastity but she is also the goddess of hunting and more importantly of the moon.[119] This is an elaborate conceit of Murdoch's incorporating Plato's cave myth. George's wife's name, Stella, is from the Latin word meaning Star;[120] the sun is a star; so when he redirects his attention to his mistress he is focussing on the light of the moon which is reflected from the sun. Even in her former incarnation as Diamond, his attention when focussed on his mistress would be, figuratively speaking, toward a reflected light or toward the ground from which the stone is mined. George is later blinded by looking directly at the sun, an experience which effects his transformation into a calmer and kinder individual and his reconciliation with Stella. This occurrence is arguably to draw a parallel to one of the slaves in the cave myth eventually turning to the true light of the sun and, as Murdoch asserts in her interpretation of Plato's myth, to the Good.[121] That George is blinded initially by this light can incidentally be seen as further evidence of the *Jane Eyre* influence on this novel as argued in the first section of

this chapter, where Rochester, the erring anti-hero of Brontë's work is also temporarily blinded at the *dénouement* to the plot and in the course of his transition from focussing on a 'fallen woman' to a 'good' woman. Similarly there is the influence of *King Lear* (which again was a text much revered by Murdoch[122]) and the sexually dissolute Gloucester's punishment by blinding followed by his epiphany, "I stumbled when I saw".[123] That Diane is the one encouraged by George to wear a necklace he jokingly refers to as "her 'slave's collar'"[124] does not mean that he is not also enslaved to Rozanov, Stella, and ultimately himself. George, like many of Murdoch's protagonists is also at the mercy of the contingent force of life or fate.

The reference to the philosopher of the title is then not quite as obvious as it first appears and the same is true of the pupil. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives two meanings of 'pupil': firstly "a person who is taught by another" which is from the late Middle English "in the sense 'orphan, ward'" and secondly, with reference to the seemingly black part of the eye which allows in light to the retina, which is "late Middle English: from Old French *pupille* or Latin *papilla*, diminutive of *pupa* 'doll' (so named from the tiny reflected images visible in the eye)".[125] 'Student' is the way the word has generally been interpreted and referred to George, but all of these meanings are relevant to Hattie. Although Hattie is John Robert's granddaughter and so it might be supposed that she would be cared for by him when orphaned, the reader is shown that this is anything but a traditional grandfather-granddaughter relationship. John Robert accepts financial responsibility for Hattie when her last surviving parent, her father (John Robert's son-in-law) dies. John Robert then sends her to stay with her aunt, and whoever else he deems appropriate and useful in-between her schooling, meeting up with her for a relatively formal interview at sporadic intervals rather like a sponsor or a patron and not like a close blood relative. He sustains no more intimate contact with her than this at first because he does not wish to have a child interfering in his strict and austere regime of study and very little else, ("[h]e was widely quoted as saying 'I detest children'"[126]). Later when he realises he has feelings for her, he distances himself because he does not dare to be close to her: "[h]is present aloof relation to her at least precluded problems, situations, consequences."[127] He therefore can be deemed to treat her outwardly rather more like a ward than as his grandchild, but inwardly he is interested in her in quite a different way:

> Perhaps the thing that he felt, and thought he could identify, was always changing. Had it, in especial, changed lately as Hattie grew – older? To say that John Robert was 'in love' with his

> grand-daughter was to employ too vague and dubious a concept. What was certain was that he was obsessed by her.[128]

Again this work bears a resemblance with *Bleak House.* Dickens' novel depicts the unusual association between the initially apparently disinterested (except on a charitable basis) John Jarndyce - who the reader is told could be sixty years old[129] - and his ward Esther Summerson. It is possible that she is nearly forty years his junior when he proposes to her and admits to having long hoped she would be his wife. John Jarndyce is consequently old enough to be Esther's grandfather, and although, as far as the reader can reasonably be aware he is not a blood relative of hers, this is no certainty, as Jill Durey asserts in her article, 'Marrying One's Ward and *Bleak House':*

> He knew that he was distantly related to the Dedlock family, but had not known until Esther told him well after their secret betrothal that she was Lady Dedlock's illegitimate daughter, so guardian and ward are related by marriage. Although not close enough to be within the Church's forbidden degrees of relationship, their kinship ties are significant. [130]

Durey goes on to say that neither the law nor the Church would have viewed it as morally acceptable for a guardian (who was deemed to be acting in '*loco parentis'*) to marry a ward, although it was not illegal in Dickens' England.[131] Esther does view Jarndyce as a father, and has even gone so far as to wonder in her childhood if he really is her parent.[132] John Robert similarly desires a closer relationship with Hattie and although his thoughts are never explicitly stated the reader is left in no doubt that not only is his interest inappropriate or as John Robert surmises, "something 'appalling'",[133] but that it is also illegal, as his fear that the police will interrupt his and Hattie's solitary talk later in the novel shows. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also explains that this meaning of 'ward' "to act as a guardian to a child" can also mean "to control" and may also refer to "the care or charge of a prisoner".[134] This neatly coheres with John Robert's unapologetic attempts to 'control' and direct Hattie's adult life in an even more authoritarian fashion than he has her childhood.

The word 'pupil' used in the title when considered to be referring to the black hole in the eye which allows in light is also very interesting considering that this is a novel where sight and blindness as well as light and dark are key allegorical motifs for the process of human understanding. That this word derives from the Old French for 'doll' is even more intriguing considering that Hattie is repeatedly described in 'doll-like' terms.[135] That 'pupil' originates from the tiny reflected image in the eye is even more telling, especially considering that the etymology of the word as stated in the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the 'doll' image that the pupil was named

after, was thought to be trapped in the eye itself.[136] This suggests a connection with the Lacanian and Sartrean theories of 'the gaze'. As is evident from my first chapter on *The Unicorn*, Murdoch was interested in theories of 'the gaze' and in utilising them through her fiction. Here Murdoch can be seen to draw upon a similar device to Vladimir Nabokov's objectification of the female Lolita through the 'gaze' of Humbert Humbert who has a similar although considerably more violent and demonic interest in his step-daughter to John Robert. Lolita is famously encapsulated in the narrative of her male captor, reinvented and mythologised by him and even renamed from the rather apt (even in terms of the rhyming pun of haze and gaze) Dolores Haze to Lolita. The opening and the ending of *Lolita* perhaps best exemplify Nabokov's process in this respect:

> Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.
>
> She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita.[137]

The first paragraph of this novel plainly states Humbert's ownership of this very young girl and his claim to recreating her or casting her in the role of a sexual fantasy. At the close of the novel, an older version of the same girl is revisited by Humbert and appears as a single mother; the reality of her as a person for the first time becomes then distinctly apparent. Iris Murdoch admired Nabokov's writing ability, stating in *Against Dryness* in relation to her concerns about the future of the novel that "[i]t takes a foreigner like Nabokov or an Irishman like Beckett to animate prose language into an imaginative stuff in its own right".[138] Her debt of inspiration to him is clear in *The Philosopher's Pupil* as it is perhaps the only other widely read novel in the English language to deal with such sensitive issues in such a direct and unusual fashion, as Nabokov's two great romances *Ada or Ardor* and *Lolita*.[139] Neither Nabokov nor Murdoch condemns their male anti-heroes but, significantly, neither do they agree with them. Hattie can be seen to be similarly possessed and reinvented through Rozanov's gaze but crucially Rozanov's objectification of Hattie is through lack of contact whereas Humbert's objectification of his step-daughter is exacerbated through his physical relationship with Dolores. Like *Lolita, The Philosopher's Pupil* is also a novel that has a secondary fictional filter before it reaches the reader and although John Ray Jr. (who interestingly shares John Robert's initials) creates the frame for Humbert's narrative and may have edited sections, he does not intrude to the extent of N. This additional distancing gives the reader of Murdoch's novel the opportunity to see Rozanov as many

things, not just a man obsessed with his granddaughter. Murdoch thereby makes a space for the potential to create a sense of pity in the readership towards him although absolution is impossible.

v. Morality in *The Philosopher's Pupil:* A Novel 'Beyond Good and Evil'?

In *The Philosopher's Pupil*, Murdoch is working with highly complex moral issues. The influence of Nabokov's *Lolita* is apparent through the Hattie/John Robert Rozanov incest plot but Murdoch deals with a similar situation in a style quite distinct from Nabokov's. Many of Nabokov's heroes and heroines appear initially to be cruel, self-interested, and virtually untroubled by their consciences; and yet Nabokov's great skill is to present these personalities as they are, whilst daring to challenge his readership to find such protagonists charming or even pitiable in spite of this. Murdoch arguably provokes her readers in a comparable fashion, repeatedly drawing characters that act in what would usually be deemed an 'immoral' way and yet despite this she still works to engage the reader's sympathy, and sometimes their empathy as well. In her characterisation of John Robert, however, she goes further than she has done previously and gives the reader a greater insight into his mental turmoil associated with his desire for Hattie. Such ethically convoluted protagonists in Murdoch's fiction are usually seen through the eyes of others, such as Carel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels*, Gerald in *The Unicorn* and Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* to name just a few. Bradley Pearson is a notable exception, but the sexual taboo is not as pronounced in *The Black Prince* and the style of the novel is considerably more satirical than these other examples. Both the condemnation and the absolution of these characters are made simultaneously easier and more difficult by this approach, but this leaves the onus on the reader to suspend or make judgement with very little inside information. In *The Philosopher's Pupil,* Rozanov and George are viewed both internally and externally, thereby creating a novelistic experience that more closely resembles Nabokov's approach in both of his infamous sexual taboo narratives, *Ada or Ardor* and *Lolita*, where the story is told from the viewpoint of protagonists directly involved in the instigation of the taboo. *The Philosopher's Pupil* can also crucially be categorised in literary generic terms as a romance which both of these novels by Nabokov are; and this alters the tenure of the ethical approach. Brian Boyd has argued most persuasively in his work on *Ada or Ardor*, that Nabokov is a 'moral author' (an opinion quite apart from popular public opinion) and an assertion that seems surprising from a first reading of any one of his controversial plotlines but perhaps most especially when considering

Lolita or *Ada*, as the former examines the abuse of a young girl and the latter the sibling love affair between Van and Ada Veen which results in the suicide of their younger sister, Lucette.

> I do not want to suggest that Nabokov wrote *Ada* primarily to expound an ethical system, but the evidence shows that he expended extraordinary artistic energy in documenting via Lucette the demonic side of Van and Ada in a way that the ordinary reader cannot even suspect. Nabokov is not a solemn moralist but his efforts in *Ada* prove beyond all doubt that he was a serious and scrupulous one. A common view of his novels holds that he treats a few characters, creatures of unusual intelligence, often artistically gifted and trilingual or nearly so [...] as favourites and lavishes attention on them while ignoring or heaping contempt upon almost everyone else. Van and Ada seem Nabokov's obvious favourites in *Ada*, but [...] Nabokov throughout the novel criticizes severely their lack of self concern for those they dismiss as immaterial to their own needs and wants.[140]

Both George and Rozanov resemble to a certain extent the typical Nabokovian central male protagonist, as many of Murdoch's 'magician' characters do: glittering, sexually desirable, unorthodox, and eccentrically charming; but both of them fail to exhibit the personality trait that makes Humbert and Van Veen easily identifiable as Nabokovian creations. Arguably, indeed, this is one of the most easily identifiable aspect of Nabokov's entire *oeuvre*: his characters may occasionally suffer feelings of guilt but they are ultimately capable of going beyond good and evil, if only in their own private universe, or at least they act out evil without accepting the possibility of moral censorship. Conversely, Murdoch's characters remain in a recognisable moral environment. Rozanov understands the concept of going beyond good and evil from a *theoretical* perspective, but his ethical awareness prevents him from acting upon it. George tries to reach this position through his actions, but fails to understand what it is and, hampered by his rather conservative values, along with a preference for reputation rather than actual achievement, in this respect, he also fails. Nabokov's characters, however, not only understand the concept but embrace it, often though, only with a view to commit moral atrocities that they can argue themselves into accepting but not the world at large.

Nietzsche's theories on morality, explored particularly in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morality*, can be used to illuminate Murdoch's ethical landscape in N-Town. Nietzsche never intended to encourage an immoral or amoral world-view, but one where the validity of conservative values could reasonably be brought into question, a vision that Murdoch certainly examines in *The Philosopher's*

Pupil (although admittedly she notably reverts to traditional fictional motifs and family values at the close of this novel, but this is something that can easily be questioned and need not necessarily sit outside of the debate). Nietzsche's views are exemplified by the following quote from the preface of *On The Genealogy of Morality:*

> Let us speak it aloud this *new challenge*: we need a critique of moral values, *for once the value of these values must be called into question* [...]. One has taken the *value* of these "values" as given, as a fact, as beyond all calling - into – question; until now one has not had even the slightest doubt or hesitation in ranking "the good" as of higher value than "the evil", of higher value in the sense of its furtherance, usefulness, beneficiality - with respect to men *in general* (taking into account the future of man). What if the opposite were true? What? if a symptom of regression also lay in the "good", likewise a danger, a temptation, a poison, a narcotic through which perhaps the present might be living *at the expense of the future*? [...] So that precisely morality were the danger of dangers?[141]

It is easy to see how the idea that Nietzsche was responsible for some of the ideology of Nazi Germany might have taken hold, but surely what Nietzsche is asking is that his readership considers another alternative to the accepted and rather rigid socially conservative moral structure in place. This is also the impetus behind Murdoch's work. Murdoch's philosophy makes it quite clear that she believed in 'the good' and a sound ethical system which is not unrecognisable in relation to, but would have differed quite significantly from, that of many of her contemporaries at various stages of her life. Her support for homosexuals alone would have been an unpopular choice in the 1950s and 1960s, and yet in 2011 this is recognised by many as being a part of sound ethical values. She did, however, describe her writing in 1985 (only two years after the publication of *The Philosopher's Pupil*) as providing, "a kind of assertion of old-fashioned values, of the reality of virtue". She goes on to say:

> There's positive critical warfare on this subject between, as it were, the "old-fashioned" critics and writers, and those who want fiction to deny the traditional idea of character and the traditional notion of absolute guilt or of the reality of virtue, which they regard as "bourgeois" or "religious" in some acceptable sense.
>
> [...]
>
> A writer cannot avoid having some sort of moral position, and attempting to be nonmoral is in a way a moral position, an artificial one. I think that a novelist, a storyteller, naturally portrays his own moral judgements. But these very judgements are not just a small area of human discourse; they're almost the whole of it. We are always making value judgements, or exhibiting by what we say some sort of evaluation, and

> storytellers dealing with persons must constantly be doing this. Its Tolstoy's great apprehension of the whole moral scheme which makes his novels great, not his artificial censorious feeling that he had to burn *Anna Karenina*; that's an incidental thing. But the moral perception and depth of the writer is something very important. It's a kind of realism – seeing what the world really is, and not making it into a fantasy.[142]

Like Nabokov, Murdoch does operate within the moral realm but she is not afraid of depicting characters who push those boundaries and play out the "critical" and moral "warfare on this subject". Murdoch firmly believed that to write realistically and by that, morally, it was necessary to include depictions of evil that were believable.

> It is curious that modern literature, which is so much concerned with violence, contains so few convincing pictures of evil.
>
> Our inability to imagine evil is a consequence of the facile, dramatic and, in spite of Hitler, optimistic picture of ourselves with which we work. [143]

The moral struggle in *The Philosopher's Pupil* is between John Robert and George, and yet in stark contrast to a more traditionally morally didactic tale (where the struggle would be between an obviously 'good' character and an 'evil' one), here the situation is more complicated and even within their 'good' and 'bad' thoughts and actions there are elements of the opposing force. As Father Bernard says to George, "[w]e are frail human creatures, all our good is mixed with evil".[144] Once again there is evidence of Murdoch's particular brand of realism at work, presenting the searching idiosyncratic quality of actual life in her art, not the recognisable 'artistic reality' of a more usual created representation. Her values may be traditional, but her attempt to create a searching vision of the human that is perfect only in that it presents all aspects of human life from the most sordid to the most heroic and all in one person, is far from conservative. To reiterate, she encapsulated her views on this topic when she stated, "I think real people are far more eccentric than anybody portrayed in novels. Real people are terribly odd, but of course they keep this secret. They conceal their fantasies. Obviously people don't tell most of the things that they think to anyone, not even their psychiatrists." To return once again to her debt to Dickens she goes on to state, "Dickens is accused of exaggeration and so on, but I don't think he exaggerates; he just discerns how strange human beings are". [145] There are recognisable 'good' characters in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, Bill 'the lizard' Eastcote, Zed, Adam and even Tom and Hattie who are emerging from innocence, learning the difficulties of the taint of experience. John Robert and George, however, provide the most challenging examples of 'moral warfare'. That this aspect is central to their relationship is clear from the

introduction of their connection, as George meets Rozanov just after he has first got interested in moral philosophy.

Both George and John Robert desire at different points in the novel to challenge the traditional moral framework. George says to John Robert: "You destroyed my belief in good and evil, you were Mephistopheles to my Faust".[146] Yet although George's interest in behaving unconventionally may be inspired by Rozanov as the philosopher's fleeting interest in George after he has announced his destruction of the Roman glass shows, it would over simplify George's very real humanity to say that Rozanov is the only reason he behaves like this. N writes whilst introducing George:

> I confess I cannot offer any illuminating explanation. Every human being is different, more *absolutely* different and peculiar than we can goad ourselves into conceiving; and our persistent desire to depict human lives as dramas leads us to see 'in the same light' events which may have multiple interpretations and causes. Of course a man may be 'cured' (consoled, encouraged, improved, shaken, returned to effective activity, and so forth and so on) by a concocted story of his own life but that is another matter. [...] The language of sin may be more appropriate than that of science and as likely to 'cure'. The sin of pride may be a small or great thing in someone's life, and hurt vanity a passing pinprick or a self-destroying or even murderous obsession. [...] Pride and vanity and venomous feelings obscured his sun.[147]

George's motivation is deemed by N in this passage to be probably connected with wounded pride but ultimately impossible to explain in finite terms. George, however, does not manage to achieve a passage into an amoral landscape; this is partly because his own understanding of what this means is flawed and also because he does not allow himself to do so. George seems to think that attempting to murder his wife, drowning the infants in the baths, keeping a prostitute as a mistress and murdering John Robert might take him beyond the constraints of Western civilised behaviour. These actions would be deemed unacceptable, even criminal, but there is nothing about them hypothetically speaking that makes them unusual. Unlike John Robert's interest in Hattie which does not fit the unwritten rules of acceptable behaviour being simultaneously 'good' and 'evil', and therefore neither, George's actions are within the social structure because they are recognised criminal behaviour. George is therefore not beyond the social structure, his is an undesirable but accepted part of it. That George is unsuccessful in his acting out of these incidents, largely due to his own inability to make a discerned leap from good to evil, shows his reliance upon the social structure in place. This is repeatedly illustrated. An example of this would be his rescue of Stella from the sinking car and also his paralysis in his marriage and with his mistress; he does

not separate from Stella and neither does he treat Diane particularly badly. Marriage is a social structure that he succumbs to and one which, despite his murderous fantasies, he seems reluctant to reject. Ultimately George aspires to be a libertine or a historically recognised villain, but even in his imagination it is clear that this further enmeshes him in the social structure that exists even in terms of religion. George's desire to kill the infants in the baths is of course reminiscent of King Herod's desire to murder the boy infants after he heard the prophesy relating to the birth of Christ (Matthew 2:1-16). It also reminds the reader of the Pharaoh's killing of the first born child in the Old Testament which led to the child Moses being rescued from the water by the Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 1: 22-Exodus 2). A psychoanalyst, perhaps the eminent Ivor Sefton himself, might link George's desire to commit an actual murder with the accidental death of his own child which the reader is told by Stella was her fault (if indeed it was anyone's) rather than George's. This kind of moral bartering system, itself akin to the Old Testament, "eye for an eye" (Exodus 21:23-25) theory of punishment and resolution, is also coherent with Nietzsche's assertions on the history of moral conduct.

> Throughout the greatest part of human history punishment was definitely *not* imposed *because* one held the evil doer responsible for his deed, that is, *not* under the presupposition that only the guilty one is to be punished:-rather as parents today punish their children, from anger over an injury suffered, which is vented on the agent of the injury – anger held within bounds, however, modified through the idea that every injury has its equivalent in something and can really be paid off, even if only through the *pain* of its agent.[148]

Of course Stella is an unreliable source of information where George is concerned, lying, as she does, when George asks her if he meant to kill her initially. However, as she is not relaying this information regarding Rufus directly to George, it also helps to explain George's confused feelings toward Stella and it seems that Stella may well be telling the truth. It doesn't actually matter though, as George is never sure whether he is innocent or guilty and is therefore not clear over who should be punished and how, which may explain why he never completes a violent action toward a human with success. This also exposes the unsuitability of an exchange process for a debt of this kind, as does George's attempted murder of John Robert.

Rozanov is unable to go beyond good and evil but he is equally unable to continue to work within the confines of the framework already in place. This is most apparent from his discussions with Father Bernard Jacoby, his relations with George and of course his dealings with (and over) Hattie. Both academically (philosophically) and in his personal life, therefore, John Robert cannot progress. His lifestyle does not, or has

not, permitted an emotional attachment to Hattie or indeed to anyone save Linda, but he even regrets that relationship in retrospect. Now his feelings for Hattie have gone beyond good and evil in that they are no longer recognisable in the accepted modes of the connection between two individuals of their respective ages, or indeed two individuals who are related, which means John Robert has to consider a further possibility. In the confines of his previous way of thinking this means that John Robert must see his 'interest' in Hattie, such as it is, as something that is evil. As he cannot define it in any other way he becomes terrified of himself and for his granddaughter, even imagining the police will somehow be aware of his thoughts. This is particularly interesting as a moral problem because John Robert never *does* anything that could be deemed inappropriate: his actions, if not his thoughts are without taint. As John Robert is a man who we are told has always lived in his mind, his thoughts alone are enough in his own judgement to condemn him. In the eyes of the world this is not the case. He fears the intensity of his own emotional life to such an extent that he cannot perceive a manner of controlling his desires and urges anymore and commits suicide in an attempt to save himself and Hattie, writing in his suicide note that his life is "a happier life for having ended now" and asking Bill Eastcote to "[p]lease look after Hattie".[149] It is interesting that John Robert chooses the route that George contemplates for himself and then rejects; George wants revenge, John Robert for all his ethical degeneracy chooses self-sacrifice and Nietzsche's influence can be seen here too. Helen Zimmern writing on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* comments:

> [...] Nietzsche railed against what he saw as the slide of Western culture into a morass of conformity, mediocrity, and bureaucratic specialization that stifled man's higher creative impulses. [...]
>
> Nietzsche especially reviled the heritage of Christianity in promoting what he called "slave morality" that legislates norms of rectitude, thereby fostering herd like quiescence and stigmatizing "the highest human types." Unlike the spirit of Greek tragedy, which heroically affirms life in and through suffering, Christian morality, in his view, breeds a timorous retreat from life by postponing happiness and redemption to the next world. [150]

George and John Robert both reject Christianity, especially the doctrines of the New Testament, George referring to it as the "old magic"[151] and John Robert stating that he "abominate[s] the concept"[152] of God and yet neither can entirely escape Christianity. Murdoch writes again and again of what Evelyn Waugh, author of *Brideshead Revisited,* called "the unmerited and unilateral act of love by which God continually calls souls to Himself".[153] For Murdoch though, who is writing a religious novel in an

era without a dominant religion and without one she can own for herself, God need not exist as a singular entity recognizable by all her characters as the same being, as long as the qualities of His theology are recognizable in their outlook. Father Jacoby perhaps epitomizes this view when he states that he doesn't "believe in a personal God" but that he believes "in a spiritual reality".[154] Part of writing a world that has no clear moral structure due in part to the lack of religion is to test the moral structure that is still present but no longer dominant, and Murdoch pits Christianity against the myths and magic of the past, of Greek and Roman gods, of Scandinavian goddesses, and at the close of the novel although there is no dramatic collective epiphany, Christianity certainly wins. Whilst discussing *The Philosopher's Pupil* Murdoch stated that some people might see a return to "old-fashioned values"[155] in her work and it is true to say that in this novel, although the moral boundaries are tested to their utmost they are reinstated and cemented once more at its close. In the style of a Greek tragedy, George may be about to commit a murder on several occasions, John Robert may be obsessed with his granddaughter, but none of these potentially terrible and taboo occurrences actually come to pass. The novel closes strangely in an apparent parallel to *Jane Eyre* with Father Bernard mirroring St John Rivers' final spiritual epistle. John Robert's death has prevented any future complications arising from his disclosure and his suicide, although demonstrably not a traditionally acceptable Christian practice, does at least indicate that he has taken most of the suffering onto himself. George too, is apparently saved from himself and quite literally 'sees the light' becoming afterwards a more subdued individual. These occurrences are not necessarily overly convenient, nor are they unrealistic. Murdoch's words about her own goal in writing to encourage the "old-fashioned sense"[156] of characterisation does not make her writing trite; she has pushed the boundaries of morality and of conventionality as far as possible within this fictional realm and the reader, like the characters, may well breathe a sigh of relief that the obsessions and misery occasioned by such charming yet ill-intentioned protagonists is at an end.

vi. The Wider Significance of *The Philosopher's Pupil*

John Robert's suicide makes an interesting comparison to both Murdoch's previous incest narratives and that of Lucette's in *Ada.* Boyd's remarks on Lucette's suicide can be used to reflect on Murdoch's approach:

> Lucette, we should now be able to see, is the real reason for the prominence given to incest in *Ada*. Incest here functions not as it

> has generally been conceived, as an emblem of solipsism or self-love – Nabokov detests such symbols – but rather to stress the intimate interconnections between people's lives, interconnections which impose on human life all the obligations of moral responsibility.
>
> [...]
>
> Through such things as the playful and prominent Chateaubriand allusions and an apparent acceptance of the modern standard of sexual freedom without responsibility, *Ada* encourages a sophisticated, unserious approach to incest. But this is only another feint to make the reader first acquiesce in a dismissal of responsibility and see how wrong that acquiescence has been. That this is the real role of the incest in *Ada* is confirmed by the fact that Chateaubriand is present not, as reviewers and critics have assumed, to mark the relationship between Van and Ada but to mark the presence and entanglement of Lucette in their relationship. [...] Lucette is called after Lucile, after Chateaubriand's dearest sister, who served as the basis for the Amélie of *René* and who is believed to have committed suicide. [157]

A thread here becomes apparent linking Murdoch's incest narratives to a wider web of influence because Murdoch must have been working with Chateaubriand before Nabokov utilised the French Romantic's work in *Ada*. The footnote to Boyd's comment regarding Chateaubriand's sister states regarding her potential suicide that:

> It seems likely [...] that it was so, for not a single church in Paris has any record of a religious funeral and only suicide can explain why Chateaubriand did not even return from Villeneuve, why Lucile left the Augustinian convent on the eve of her death, why she was buried in the common grave and why Mme. de Marigny, who had 'paid the last tributes of respect' to her younger sister, did not follow the bier." (André Maurois, *Chateaubriand: Poet, Statesman, Lover,* trans. Vera Fraser [New York: Harper, 1938], p.137)[158]

George A. Painter asserts in his 1977 biography of Chateaubriand that his relationship with his youngest sister, Lucile was "the first profoundly intimate relationship of his life", going on to say that "he described with instantly recognisable detail in his story *René* the intimacy of their youth at Combourg, and the hero's discovery that his sister Amélie had loved him all too dearly." Painter asserts that although incest was "a literary commonplace in the last generation of the French pre-romantics" "the themes of romantic fiction were sometimes the realities of experience".[159] It is clear from this description of Lucile Chateaubriand and the implied incestuous content of *René*, that she is the inspiration behind Catherine Fawley in *The Bell* who also attempts suicide after being a novice at a convent and it would seem may also have had an incestuous relationship with her brother. Her physical appearance and her demeanour also match

that of Chateaubriand's sister, Lucile. Catherine Fawley has something "timid and withdrawn in her face", "large sea-grey eyes" and a "secretive smile"[160] she too, like her twin brother, has a "dark fringe" of hair and a "pale look".[161] George A. Painter in his biography of Chateaubriand describes Lucile as a "thin, timid, unhappy child" with "dark hair combed and quaffed to the top of her head".[162] Most of Murdoch's plotlines that feature incest as an obvious and key component occurred in and around the 1960s, with *The Philosopher's Pupil* being a notable exception emerging in print in 1983. *Ada or Ardor* was first published in 1969 but its conception is thought to have been in 1958 and this novel then covers the same time period of an apparently vogue interest in incest, including the cinematic adaptation of *Les Enfants Terribles* (1950) and the English translation of the Jean Cocteau book by Rosamond Lehmann published in the United States in 1966.[163] Ian McEwan's *The Cement Garden* featuring sibling incest was published in 1978; and in 1976 London Weekend Television adapted Andrea Lehman's 1969 novel, *Bouquet of Barbed Wire* for ITV.[164] Lehman's work portrayed a father's possessive feelings for his daughter. A.S. Byatt's novella, *Morpho Eugenia* which portrays brother and sister incest was published in 1992 and subsequently made into a film which was released in 1995. Novelist, Kathryn Harrison's memoir of her incestuous relationship with her father, *The Kiss,* was published in 1997. Interest in breaking this particular and most controversial of taboos can be traced to the aftermath of the Second World War, the increased emphasis on the family unit in the 1950s, and the ensuing sexual revolution in the 1960s. Not only were writers trying to deal with the aftermath of the horrors of the war, but also the artificial enforcement of an apparently 'perfect' family unit which consisted of a movement back to the traditional role of women as mothers and wives. As Jennifer Somerville and Jo Campling argue in *Feminism and the Family,* "[t]he Second World War occasioned the break-up of many families" and "[t]heir reaction to the declaration of peace was a general embrace of marriage, children and family life." They go on to assert:

> The fear of longer term disruption to stable family life is reflected in key policy documents of the period: the Beveridge Report (1942), the Royal Commission on Equal Pay (1946), and the Royal Commission of Population (1949). In the immediate aftermath of the war, most of the measures to assist mothers to work outside of the home were dismantled. The post-war welfare state in Britain and American social welfare programmes were predicated on a model of the nuclear family with bread-winner father and house-wife mother, and on full income. There was a predictable marriage boom followed by an equally predictable baby boom in 1946-8, though despite government propaganda there was no return to large families.[165]

Most notably an examination of family life and taboo spurned the second wave of feminism but it also inspired a group of writers and film makers to re-examine the family unit. Nabokov's opening to *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* enforces this exploratory aspect to his work by misquoting Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, of which Boyd comments regarding Tolstoy remarks made elsewhere in the novel also:

> The Tolstoy references here and the blunder Ada denounces confirm that the mistranslation in another of Ada's dinner table talks should be seen as essential to understanding the Tolstoy mistranslation with which *Ada* begins: "All happy families are more or less dissimilar; all unhappy ones are more or less alike."
>
> In inverting Anna Karenina's opening sentence, Van tries to claim that unlike Tolstoy's novel *Ada* is no tragedy but the happy story of a unique family. But at Ada's denunciation of the *souci d'eau* mistranslation suggests, the original meaning should be restored: "All happy families are alike, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." For while Van is justified in claiming that the Veens like the Kareninas, are unique, the contrast he implies between the two – that he and Ada are supremely happy in their love as the Kareninas are not – is eclipsed by the fact that both families include a heroine that takes her own life.[166]

Iris Murdoch is similarly interested in the family unit and in examining its definition and its boundaries. Ultimately traditional family roles were at the heart of the sexual revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. The aftermath of World War II, when the awareness of the narrowly avoided threat of a dramatically altered national identity made some people cling more rigidly to traditional structures, and which later occasioned others to want to rebel against these structures and subvert them. That the plight of the housewife was the focus of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1966) one of the earliest works of Second Wave Feminism and a best-seller, reveals the discontent felt by many woman during this period.

The traditional limitations of moral behaviour and whether they were correct were also brought into question, as was the role of the novel. Immediately after the war, Nietzsche, for example, who might have provided a framework within which to look beyond conservatism, was unhappily associated with the Nazi movement mainly due to his sister Elisabeth's interference:

> Elisabeth had no qualms about presenting her brother's philosophy as offering support for Nazi aspirations. She told Hitler that he was exactly what her brother meant by *Übermensch* (the "overhuman", one who transcends the merely human). It was hardly surprising therefore that Nazi

> theoreticians read Nietzsche and tried to use him in support of their own program. [167]

There is, however, little evidence that Hitler was familiar with Nietzsche's actual works and it seems that Nietzsche himself was, in the words of Maudmarie Clark, "disgusted with anti-semitism".[168] The interest in Nietzsche continued as he was demonized and later absolved with Walter Kaufman's book published in 1950 in the United States which, Clarke claims:

> [S]howed that the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche involved a complete distortion, achieved by unscrupulously tearing a few of his words out of context and ignoring most of what he had written on the topics in question. In fact, Nietzsche had foreseen and spoken out against the dangers of German nationalism and anti-Semitism more clearly than anyone.[169]

Murdoch was certainly familiar with Nietzsche's work, describing Margaret Thatcher in a journal entry of the 1980s as "will to power"[170] and the influence of Nietzsche's personal life on Murdoch's work can be seen in *The Message to the Planet* (1989) where the treatment of the very possibly mentally incapacitated Marcus Valler is startlingly similar to that of Nietzsche whilst in his decline:

> [S]he subjected her brother to what he would have considered the ultimate indignity, often having the half-paralyzed and insane Nietzsche – dressed in ways that encourage perceiving him as a kind of holy apparition – appear on the balcony of his residence to groups that gathered below in anticipation of such appearances. When death finally granted him escape, he was eulogized by one of his most stead fast friends, Peter Gast, with stress on the line, "Holy be thy name to all coming generations."[171]

Nietzsche was certainly important to Murdoch in the 1980s,[172] and *The Philosopher's Pupil* can be viewed as an exploration of going beyond traditional moral codes, its advisability and its feasibility. It is also a novel that can be used to understand Murdoch's approach to incest elsewhere in her work as well as her 'traditional' or perhaps what might be more appropriately termed, liberal-conservative moral values in her fiction. Unlike Nabokov and Nietzsche, Murdoch ends her novel with hope for a return to if not necessarily religious, then at least spiritual values, and a moral structure which although not entirely resembling that of Victorian England, still encourages a sense of moral responsibility and places an importance on the preservation of innocence and an old fashioned sense of 'the good'. Her embracing of homosexuality and gender confusion at the *dénouement* to this work shows her liberal and contemporary angle to this conservative tradition. She may have admired the artistry of Nabokov but her

ethical direction rests in her conclusion in a primarily more instantly recognizably moral structure.

The Philosopher's Pupil has rightly been treated with caution by literary critics because it is a cautionary tale, concerned with the dangers of a society that has lost its traditional moral structure and where individuals are struggling to negotiate their lives, still under the influence of the past definitions of good and evil but no longer certain whether they still apply. Murdoch highlights these concerns by drawing upon the literature of the Victorian period which appeared to have a more certain moral and literary structure. By drawing parallels between the plot of *The Philosopher's Pupil* and the style and content of nineteenth-century writing she questions how reliable this tradition was and how ethical it could be deemed. She encourages the reader to contemplate whether there are elements of the nineteenth-century ideology which are still relevant to the 1980s, and whether these novels have been fairly and accurately assessed both by their contemporaries and by Murdoch's. The issue of sexual equality naturally arises and the possibility of moving away from a gendered writing style. However, this novel is much more convoluted than this and is concerned with philosophical and cultural definitions of good and evil, how they are presented in literature, and whether they can be improved upon. *The Philosopher's Pupil* is a deceptive fiction, enticing the reader into what appears in many ways a conventional novel in the realist tradition but which actually involves engaging with a multi-layered narrative that plays with a broad panorama of literary genres and historical presentations requiring ultimately the re-writing of a fictional narrative that has become part of the national literary identity.

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[1] Charles Dickens, 'Preface', *Bleak House* (London: Everyman, 1994) xlii.

[2] Murdoch, *Proceedings of Encounters with Iris Murdoch Symposium*, ed. Richard Todd, Dooley 173.

[3] Bran Nicol, *The Retrospective Fiction,* 2nd ed. (1999; Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004) 151.

[4] Bran Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel," *Iris Murdoch and Morality,* eds. and introd. Anne Rowe and Avril Horner (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010) 17-30.

[5] Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel," *Iris Murdoch and Morality* 21.

[6] Iris Murdoch had certainly read *Bleak House* as she comments upon it in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Vintage, 2003) 98.

[7] Iris Murdoch stated in an interview with W.K. Rose (1968) that the writing of Raymond Queneau and Samuel Beckett had impacted on her writing but "the only person" she was "certain" had influenced her work was "Henry James" (28). In a later interview with Jack I. Biles (1977) she asserted that she had been influenced by "Homer and Shakespeare" as well as "Jane Austen, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Tolstoi and James", as well as Proust (64). George Eliot is mentioned with

respect, but although Murdoch admits that she reads her works she does not cite Eliot as influencing her own writing. For Murdoch on George Eliot see Murdoch in conversation with Barbara Stevens Heusel (197).
All of these interviews are featured in *From A Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction,* ed. Gillian Dooley.
[8] Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009) 349.
[9] Dickens, 'Preface', *BH* xlii.
[10] Slater, *CD* 305.
[11] Donald Fanger, *Dostoyevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoyevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens and Gogol.* 1965. Foreword, Caryl Emerson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1998).
[12] Elaine Showalter, *ALO* 41-43.
[13] Elizabeth Jane Sabiston, *Private Sphere to World Stage from Austen to Eliot* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 57.
[14] Unsigned, rev. of *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë, *Christian Remembrancer*, Apr. 1848: 396-409, *The Critical Heritage: The Brontës.* Ed. Miriam Allott (1974; London: Routledge, 2003) 89.
[15] James Lorimar, rev. of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *North British Review*, Aug. 1849: 455-93, *The Critical Heritage: The Brontës* (London: Routledge, 2003) 114.
[16] Charlotte Brontë, letter to George Smith, 11 Mar. 1852, *Selected Letters of Charlotte Bronte,* ed. Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 200.
[17] Dona Budd, "Language Couples in *Bleak House," Nineteenth-Century Literature* 49. 2 (1994): 220.
Lynn Cain, *Dickens, Family, Authorship: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Kinship and Creativity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008) 128.
[18] Helen Simpson, "Femme Fatale," *Guardian* 24 June 2006 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/jun/24/classics.angelacarter>.
[19] Boyd Tokin, 'Margaret Atwood: A personal odyssey and how she rewrote Homer' *Independent* 28 October 2005.
http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/margaret-atwood-a-personal-odyssey-and-how-she-rewrote-homer-512771.html.
[20] Murdoch, interview with Michael Bellamy, Dooley 48.
[21] Murdoch, interview with Sheila Hale, Dooley 32.
[22] Rebecca Walker, introd. and ed., *To Be Real: The Changing Face of Feminism,* foreword, Gloria Steinem, afterword, Angela Y. Davis (New York: Anchor, 1995) xxxiii.
[23] Sarah Gamble, "Postfeminism," *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post-Feminism.* Ed. Gamble (1998; London: Routledge, 2006) 36-44.
[24] Anny Sadrin, "Charlotte Dickens: The Female Narrator of *Bleak House," Dickens' Quarterly* 9 (1992): 47-57.
[25] Ellen Moers, "Bleak House: the Agitating Women" *The Dickensian* 69 (1973) 13-24.
[26] Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens,* abr. (1992; London: Vintage, 2002)
[27] Lynn Cain gives an overview of critical approaches to Esther's narrative and to the authors who have drawn comparisons between Jane Eyre and Bleak House. See: *Dickens, Family, Authorship: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Kinship and Creativity* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008) 128-129.
[28] Lisa Jadwin, "Caricatured, Not Faithfully Rendered": *Bleak House* as a Revision of *Jane Eyre, Modern Language Studies* 26.2-3 (1996): 111-133.
[29] Slater, *CD* 282.
[30] Cain, 128.
[31] Jadwin, 111-112.
[32] Slater, *CD* 361.
[33] Slater, *CD* 269, 335, 359.
[34] Jadwin, 116.
[35] Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (Bungay: Chaucer Press, 1983) 319.
[36] Slater, *D.W.* 319.
[37] Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel," *Iris Murdoch and Morality* 23.
[38] Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel," *Iris Murdoch and Morality* 23.

[39] Grimshaw (2005) discusses "Transvestism in *The Philosopher's Pupil'.* She quotes Sandra Gilbert's comments on twentieth century women writers interest in creating "gender-free reality...so pure, so free that 'it' can 'inhabit' any self, any costume".
Also see: Sandra Gilbert, "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980): 394.
Deborah Johnson (1987) discusses the significance of Murdoch using male narrators at length, drawing particular attention to the male-female dichotomy in *The Philosopher's Pupil,* 49-53.
[40] Murdoch, *PP* 23
[41] It is Esther's unknown parentage which occasions the mother of her suitor, Mr Woodcourt, to try and impress upon her the superiority of the heritage of the Woodcourt family and how Esther's unknown origins make her consequently an inferior mate for Mrs Woodcourt's son. "He may not have much money, but he always has what is what is much better – family, my dear" (374).
[42] Dickens, *BH* 555
[43] Jadwin 113, 121. Esther accepts the patriarchy whereas Jane refuses to accept the superiority of another on the basis of sex alone.
[44] Jadwin points out that Esther does not even relent at the point of Miss Barbary's death, whereas Jane feels no compassion for Mrs Reed when she dies (123-124).
[45] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre.* 1847. Ed. Margaret Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 89.
[46] Brontë, *JE* 266.
[47] Diana, Mary and St John Rivers are eventually revealed to be Jane's kin. The sisters do express their enthusiasm for Jane to marry St John but at the point of his proposal they are ignorant of the family connection. St John's offer is made based on his assessment of the situation alone, which he makes clear when he offers Jane marriage if she accompanies him as a missionary; a turn of events Diana considers to be "madness" (437-438).
[48] Murdoch, *Recontres Avec Iris Murdoch,* ed. Jean Louis Chevalier, Dooley 82.
[49] Gregory J. Rubinson, *The Fiction of Rushdie, Barnes, Winterson and Carter: Breaking Cultural and Literary Boundaries in the Work of Four Postmodernists* (Jefferson, CA: Macfarland and Company, Inc., 2005) 149-150.
[50] Murdoch, *Recontres Avec Iris Murdoch,* ed. Jean-Louis Chevalier, Dooley 82.
[51] For more on gender in the writings of Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson, see Rubinson (2005). Angela Carter's "The Language of Sisterhood" is also illuminating in relation to her views on women and writing. See: Carter, "The Language of Sisterhood," *The State of the Language,* ed. Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980) 226-234.
[52]Murdoch, interview with Michael O. Bellamy, Dooley 53.
[53] Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel," *Iris Murdoch and Morality* 22.
For the original quote see: Iris Murdoch, "Existentialists and Mystics," Conradi *EM* 221.
[54] Murdoch, *Encounters with Iris Murdoch Symposium,* ed. Richard Todd, Dooley 190.
[55] Murdoch, interview with W.K. Rose, Dooley 29.
[56] Murdoch, interview with Sheila Hale, Dooley 32.
[57] Jadwin, 112. It should be noted that although Jadwin refers to both Jane Eyre and Esther Summerson as 'governesses', Esther is not described as such in *Bleak House,* but rather as a 'companion'. Esther, unlike Jane, is not employed to instruct. However, the requirements of each role are not particularly clear during the literature of the Victorian period and there is some cross-over between the positions. Kathryn Hughes' historical study, *The Victorian Governess* features a number of first-hand accounts that make it clear that the terms, 'governess' and 'companion' were frequently interchangeable. Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001) 45, 48, 96.
Hattie's relationship with Pearl can also therefore be classified as both that of a 'companion' and, loosely speaking, as that of a 'governess'.
[58] For a discussion on the character of Diane Sedleigh and feminism see: Grimshaw, 93-105.
[59] Murdoch, *PP* 374.
[60] Murdoch, *PP* 167.
[61] Dickens, *BH* 691.
[62] Brontë, *JE* 322-323.
[63] Murdoch, *PP* 308.
[64] Valerie Sanders, 19.

[65] Jill Matus, "Strong Family Likeness: *Jane Eyre* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës*, ed. Heather Glenn (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 117.
[66] Murdoch, *PP* 456.
[67] Brontë, *JE* 307.
[68] Brontë, *JE* 321.
[69] Murdoch, *PP* 258.
[70] Freud explores these issues in more detail in *The Uncanny* (1919), trans. David MacLintock. (London: Penguin, 2003) and his essay "Medusa's Head," (1922) trans. James Strachey et al. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works* (London: Random-Vintage, 2001) 273-274.
[71] Dickens, *BH* 736-737.
[72] Murdoch, *PP* 450
[73] Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novel" *Iris Murdoch and Morality* 12.
[74] Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism Cultural Texts and* Theories (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009) 158.
[75] Grimshaw (2005) comments on morality in this novel with reference to the critical work of Cheryl Bove (187).
[76] Brontë, *JE* 266.
[77] Brontë, *JE* 320.
[78] Murdoch, *PP* 309.
[79] Murdoch, *PP* 309.
[80] Murdoch, *PP* 525.
[81] Brontë, *JE* 336.
[82] Murdoch, *PP* 457.
[83] Murdoch, *PP* 525.
[84] Jarndyce says to Mr Woodcourt "take from me a willing gift" regarding Esther (*BH* 777).
[85] *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* states that the origin of the word 'pupil' is "late Middle English (in the sense 'orphan ward')" (1505-1505). This could then be another meaning of the title of the novel and one which would refer to Hattie's relation to John Robert. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).
[86] Murdoch, *PP* 312.
[87] Murdoch, *PP* 528.
[88] Murdoch, interview with Barbara Stevens Heusel, Dooley 205.
[89] Miles Leeson does refer to Father Bernard Jacoby as also being a candidate for the position of 'pupil' (93).
[90] Elizabeth Ermath, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel: Time, Space and Memory* (1983; Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998) 183-184.
[91] Murdoch, *PP* 374.
[92] Murdoch, *PP* 416.
[93] Murdoch, *PP* 416.
[94] Murdoch, *PP* 312.
[95] Murdoch, *PP* 416
[96] Murdoch, *PP* 247.
[97] Murdoch, *PP* 79.
[98] Murdoch, *PP* 247.
[99] Murdoch, interview with Barbara Stevens Heusel, Dooley 204.
[100] Murdoch, interview with Barbara Stevens Heusel, Dooley 204.
[101] "Philosophy," *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, (1998) 1395.
[102] Murdoch, interview with Brian Magee, Conradi *EM* 6.
[103] Murdoch, *PP* 306-307.
[104] Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Boston, MA: IndyPublish, 2005) 11.
[105] Murdoch, "The Fire and the Sun," Conradi *EM* 389.
[106] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi *EM* 294-295.
[107] Murdoch, *PP* 306.
[108] Murdoch, *PP* 307.
[109] Murdoch, *PP* 308.
[110] Plato, *Republic* 207.
[111] Plato, *Republic* 5.

[112] Plato, *Symposium* 11.
[113] Murdoch, *PP* 454.
[114] Murdoch, *PP* 25.
[115] Murdoch, *PP* 25.
[116] Murdoch, *PP* 25.
[117] Murdoch, *PP* 34.
[118] Murdoch, *PP* 25.
[119] Hanks and Hodges, "Diane," *ODFN* 84.
[120] Hanks and Hodges, "Stella," *ODFN* 308.
[121] Murdoch, "The Fire and the Sun," *EM* 389.
[122] Murdoch comments that "the reading of *King Lear* is indeed exhilarating" ("The Sublime and the Good," *EM* 216).
[123] William Shakespeare, "King Lear," Greenblatt *NS* 2417.
[124] Murdoch, *PP* 75.
[125] "pupil," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., April 2010; online version November 2010, 27 February 2011 <http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/154768>. An entry for this word was first included in *New English Dictionary*, 1909.
[126] Murdoch, *PP* 134.
[127] Murdoch, *PP* 309.
[128] Murdoch, *PP* 308.
[129] Esther is twenty when she is summoned to *Bleak House*, as she is fourteen when she receives the communication directing her to go to school (18) and it is when she leaves, six years later (24) that she is invited to be Ada's companion (25).
It is Esther herself who surmises that Jarndyce is "nearer sixty than fifty" (60).
[130] Jill Durey, "Marrying One's Ward and *Bleak House*," *Notes and Queries* (March, 2008) 39.
[131] Durey, 40-41.
[132] Dickens, *BH* 76.
[133] Murdoch, *PP* 309.
[134] "ward," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989; online version November 2010, 27 February 2011 <http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/225623>. Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary*, 1921.
[135] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this work.
[136]"pupil" 3 ed., April 2010; online version November 2010, 27 February 2011 <http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/154768>. An entry for this word was first included in *New English Dictionary*, 1909>.
[137] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*. 1955. Ed., pref., introd., and notes Alfred Appel Jr. (Middlesex: Penguin, 2000) 9.
[138] Murdoch, 'Against Dryness', Conradi *EM* 292.
[139] F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* could also be considered here but the incest in this novel is clearly condemned and not romanticised.
[140] Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's Ada: The Place of Consciousness.* 2nd ed. (Christchurch NZ: Cybereditions Cooperation, 2002) 113.
[141] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*, introd., Maudmarie Clark, trans. and notes, Maudmarie Clark and Alan Swenson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998) 5.
[142] Murdoch, interview with Jo Brans. "Virtuous Dogs and A Unicorn," Dooley 157.
[143] Murdoch, "Against Dryness", Conradi *EM* 294.
[144] Murdoch, *PP* 494.
[145] Murdoch, interview with Michael O. Bellamy, *From A Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction* 53.
[146] Murdoch, *PP* 146.
[147] Murdoch, *PP* 83-84.
[148] Nietzsche, *OGM* 39-40.
[149] Murdoch, *PP* 538.
[150] Helen Zimmern, introd. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, by Friedrich Nietzsche (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997) vi-vii.
[151] Murdoch, *PP* 497.
[152] Murdoch, *PP* 186.
[153] Evelyn Waugh, quoted in *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography*, by Douglas Lane Patey (1998; Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 233.
[154] Murdoch, *PP* 186.

[155] Murdoch, interview with Jo Brans 156.
[156] Murdoch, interview with Frank Kermode, Dooley 10-11.
[157] Boyd, 125-126.
[158] Boyd, 328.
[159] George D. Painter, *Chateaubriand: A Biography.1768-1793.* Vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977) 64-65.
[160] Murdoch, *TB* 38.
[161] Murdoch, *TB* 72.
[162] Painter, 19.
[163] Jean Cocteau, *Les Enfants Terribles* (Paris: Grasset, 1929); as *The Holy Terrors*, trans. Rosamond Lehmann ©1957. (New Directions: New York, 1966).
James S. Williams, *Jean Cocteau* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2008) 145, 205, 246.
Les Enfants Terribles, writ. Jean Cocteau and Jean Pierre Melville, dir. Melville, perf. Nicole Stéphane, Edourd Demothe, and Renée Cosima, Melville Productions, 1950.
[164] *Bouquet of Barbed Wire*, writ. Andrea Newman, dir. Tony Wharmby, perf. Frank Finlay, Susan Penhaligon, James Aubrey, and Sheila Allen, London Weekend Television, 1976.
[165] Jennifer Somerville, *Feminism and the Family: Politics and the Family in the UK and USA* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) 56-57.
See the introduction to this work for a broader discussion of the historical context in terms of the family and the home front.
[166] Boyd, 124.
[167] Maudmarie Clark, introd. *OGM* xi.
[168] Clark, introd., *OGM* ix.
[169] Clark, introd., *OGM* xi.
[170] Conradi, *IMAL* 572.
[171] Clark, introd., *OGM* x.
[172] Murdoch, interview with Simon Price, Dooley 153.

Chapter Four

The Literary Inheritance of Iris Murdoch's 'Enchanter Figures'

Iris Murdoch is famed for her 'enchanter figures' (sometimes called 'magicians'): eccentric, enigmatic and dangerous protagonists that appeal to the other characters in her novels often in spite of their better judgement. *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight* feature two of her most successfully charismatic and amoral instances of this type: Julius King and Lucas Graffe. Some depictions of this character variant, such as Charles Arrowby, Hilary Burde and Bradley Pearson are rendered less attractive by their eccentricity and tendency to fantasise (a warning sign in any work by Murdoch), whereas other examples are depicted as sinister through their perverse appetites, like Carel Fisher or John Robert Rozanov. However, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Julius King and *The Green Knight's* Lucas Graffe remain confusingly seductive *and* villainous to both fellow protagonists and readers alike. All of Murdoch's 'magicians' share characteristics with the Byronic hero, but these two are particularly pertinent illustrations of Murdoch's use of the Byronic hero model: both because they initially appear in many ways to fit the prototype more precisely than many other protagonists of hers, and, perhaps more importantly, because their characterisation questions the Byronic mould in several keys ways. They consequently exemplify how Murdoch has made this eponymous hero type her own, most notably through the sexual habits and appetites of her characters. That both of these protagonists, and consequently the novels they appear in can be linked to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and his depiction of Satan therein further enforces the point. When the apparently irredeemable Julius, who charms and manipulates the innocent for his own ends, is revealed as a former concentration camp inhabitant, this further disrupts the novel's already fragile and changeable moral universe. It would be fair to say that Murdoch's own comments in "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" might be applied to the noticeably complicated novelistic ethos here: "I want to connect a literary problem with a more general political and moral problem. [...] Wherein does the reality of a person preside and in what way can one, or should one, display that reality?"[1] Also later when she writes that she hopes, "to use certain philosophical conceptions in the diagnosis of certain literary ills [...] I shall be content if something is clarified, even if something is discussed."[2] Both *The Green Knight* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* raise a multitude of issues without dogma or intrusive judgement; and both question where 'a person's reality resides' and how that reality might be best transferred to fiction.

In both *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight,* Arthurian myth and legend is also utilised by Murdoch in the characterisation of these 'Byronic' protagonists. However, care must be taken when so assertive a use of intertextuality is made in Murdoch's fiction, and in *The Green Knight* especially, the use of the source text is both more straightforward and more complicated then has generally been acknowledged. This is true of the assessment of even so astute a critic as Elizabeth Dipple who, in 1996, noted that Murdoch's intertextuality had a kaleidoscopic quality that has made academic efforts to contain her novels in a single reading virtually impossible.[3] As a post-war author who wished to assert the continued relevance of the novel form, Murdoch's utilisation of the themes, motifs and style of her literary forefathers can be viewed as a deliberate attempt to confront and challenge both the authors in question and the literature they created. In a convoluted version of Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading, A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight* can be seen as attempts to challenge the generic and stylistic forerunners of the novel form rather than simply as a struggle between authors.

In an extrapolation of two novels which play with both religious allegory and Arthurian myth, an examination of Murdoch's 'enchanters' is pertinent but would not be thorough if it did not also consider the women they appear to manipulate and who have been for the most part marginalised by critics.[4] In the anonymously penned *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Chrétien de Troyes' *Perceval, The Story of the Grail,* as well as Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* to name just a few of the Arthurian sources arguably utilised by Murdoch, women are not just subordinates but often powerful figures in their own right. Helen Cooper asserts that woman "play a crucial role" in Malory's work stating that "[w]ithout Igraine, Dame Lyonesse, Guenivere, Isode, or Elaine the mother of Galahad, almost none of the events of the *Morte Darthur* would happen. Most of them, moreover, are active agents, not mere passive damosels".[5] The same is true of Bercilak's wife, the persuasive temptress of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The female bearer of the grail in *Perceval* is given the most important role in the Fisher King's procession, and it is a woman who alerts Perceval of his errors in the home of the Fisher King, and indicates the significance of the elements of the procession to him as he is ignorant of their import. To some extent, however, these female protagonists appear subordinated to the men even though their roles are pivotal, and the same initially seems true of many of Murdoch's heroines. *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Morgan, shares her first name with King Arthur's half sister, Morgan le Fay, who is depicted in both *Le Morte Darthur* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as an

independently powerful magician, capable of controlling and deceiving men and women alike. However, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Morgan le Fay assumes the guises of an elderly woman and a young wife so that she seems defenceless. Although Morgan le Fay never gains the ruling supremacy Arthur has, and which she sometimes arguably appears to desire, her magical abilities, her intelligence and her guile, make her any man's equal as she proves on a number of occasions: misleading and entrapping Accolon, Lancelot, and even Arthur himself. Gawain's trials in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are even attributed to Morgan le Fay. But like the Byronic hero, she is not just a force of evil, as she proves by reportedly joining the women grieving at Arthur's demise and attempting to use her abilities to heal rather than injure.

Appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour is highlighted as a key theme in both Chivalric Romance and the writings of Byron; but the examination of love as well as the trying of the quality of passion against religious fortitude and taboo, are equally essential to these writings, particularly the incest taboo. Murdoch utilizes such source material elsewhere in her writing, but nowhere are the two strains brought so intricately together than in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight.*

i. Iris Murdoch, Romanticism and the Byronic

Murdoch's 'enchanter/magician figures' have never been subjected to a definitive classification, although the term appears in almost every study on her fiction; and there has never been an in depth exploration of her interpretation of the type in relation to the rich British literary heritage of the Byronic hero. It is interesting that the association between the Byronic hero and Murdoch's writing has not been more fully explored. One explanation for this might be Murdoch's apparent ambivalence over Romanticism in literature in general. Her views on the movement are specific, her views on the genre are less clear and both take some untangling. *The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited* (1961) is for the purposes of this argument probably the best place to start. In this essay Murdoch describes Romanticism as, at times, "dangerous"[6] and her reason for doing so is principally connected to the role of the artist:

> A great novelist is essentially tolerant, that is, displays a real apprehension of persons other than the author as having a right to exist [...]. The great novels are victims neither of convention nor of neurosis. The social scene is a life-giving framework and not a set of dead conventions or stereotyped settings inhabited by stock characters. And the individuals portrayed in the novels are free, independent of their author, and not merely puppets in

> the exteriorisation of some closely locked psychological conflict of his own.[7]

Her criticism of the Romantic appears to be more of a criticism of bad novelistic practice in general which may have been exacerbated by the mood and aims of the Romantic Movement rather than a distrust of romance in general. Although this is not made transparent through the course of her 'thesis' she does include Scott in a list of great novelists who are not 'Romantic' in the derogatory sense she has defined, admitting that "it is paradoxical to call, for instance Scott an un-Romantic writer". She goes on to praise "Dostoevsky, Melville, Emily Brontë, Hawthorne" stating that her definition of "Romantic" can be assigned to these authors as they "give the impression of externalising a personal conflict in a tightly conceived self-contained myth; and it would be perverse to argue that they are great in spite of their Romanticism".[8] Perverse it may be but this is what is implied. She goes on to write: "The pages of Shakespeare abound in free and eccentric personalities whose reality Shakespeare has apprehended and displayed as something quite separate from himself. He is the most invisible of writers, and in my sense of the word the most un-Romantic of writers."[9] Her definition of 'Romance' must be seen as different to that generally and commonly acknowledged for the usual purposes of literary classification (albeit much discussed and disputed). Her definition is related to the Romantic Movement, but only acknowledges certain aspects of the ethos behind the Movement; it is also connected to the earlier 'romances' of authors such as Malory. Shakespeare is undeniably a 'romantic' writer and to some extent can be argued to be deemed a 'Romantic' writer; Scott, Emily Brontë and Murdoch's much loved Dickens all exhibit elements of romantic writing in every sense of the word we already know, but this is Murdoch's terminology here and it is necessary to consider first what she means by the word. Murdoch distrusts 'magic' as a source of lies and in a Platonic sense of 'craft' but does not dispute the potential import of the fantastic. Herein lies the essence of the problem; it is an issue that is as much philosophical as it is literary, and it concerns 'truth'. Murdoch admires authors who she deems express societal and human 'truths'. Romance traditionally is not concerned with truth but that is not to say that its generic form cannot be utilised to express truth. In Murdoch's understanding, 'Romance' is determined by occurrences outside of reality, but they can be given worth if they are presented in such a way as to engage with human concerns that is both truthful and ethical. Shakespeare is such an author to her, as are Dostoevsky, Melville, Brontë, Hawthorne and Scott. She is less enthusiastic about Malory partly due to the overt use of magic in his tales, but also and perhaps more importantly because he does not create a recognisable and easily identifiable world with

fully developed and believable human characterisation. There may be an ethical drive behind such tales but it is less easy to connect them to the lived-in world and the characters are less easy to contemplate as intricate and thereby 'real' human beings.

Admittedly there is much to question in the Romantic sensibility in her terms or in the broader literary framework, especially for an author who saw the role of the novel as both an artistic and a social one, something that links to her status as a post-war author. In a general sense, the self-aggrandizement and egotistical sensibilities of authors associated with the Romantic Movement, such as Byron and Shelley, sat very uneasily in a period reverberating from the after-effects of a war that had left Britain challenged in every way imaginable and still reverberating from the newly exposed horrors of the concentration camps. Murdoch approves of T. S. Eliot when he asserts, "The progress of the artist is continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality".[10] This fits with Murdoch's writing on Simone Weil's concept of 'attention' and of living well.[11] This is an argument distinct from her views on artistry and yet the two apparently overlap here illustrating how close her vision is for both the ideal creative role and the personal one. Yet, though she deems that the same ethos should be behind both, she also asserts that the personal life should remain separate from the artistic impetus. This consideration explains Murdoch's dislike for the Romantic cult of self but it does not follow that she would not find it worthwhile to utilise elements of the Romantic ideology in her fiction. The Romantic genre itself receives less censure from Murdoch than the personal artistic theories that sit behind it (something that is apparent through her mention of writers of Romances in her list of most valued novelists) and this may also be because German Romanticism was a movement that was adopted – albeit in monstrously skewed fashion - by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party and used by them to further their campaign. As George Victor writes in *Hitler: The Pathology of Evil*: "Romanticism stresses nostalgia over modernism, idealism over reason, subjectivity and mysticism over objectivity, intuition and revelation over evidence, symbolism and obscurantism over literalness and clarity, and nationalism and racism over internationalism and universality. Hitler and the Nazi party were clearly in the Romantic tradition."[12] The problems of Romanticism were consequently a topic of contemporary debate with authors such as Sir Isaiah Berlin directly relating Romanticism to the political and social climate in *The Roots of Romanticism* (1965). Murdoch's awareness of the horrors of the war is clear through her fiction, perhaps most poignantly through the character of Stuart in *The Good Apprentice* who in conversation with his uncle describes how he associates the deaths of the Holocaust with the Passion:

> 'Something a chap at college told me. He'd been to visit Auschwitz, the concentration camp, you know they've made it into a sort of museum now. And he said the most awful thing he saw there were plaits of girls hair.'
>
> 'Plaits - ?'
>
> [...]
>
> 'Yes – and they cut off the hair of the people to use – to make wigs I suppose – and there was an exhibition there -' He paused, and for a moment Thomas thought he was going to burst into tears. 'There was a great huge pile of people's hair, and there were long plaits, girl's plaits, beautifully carefully plaited, and I thought – that there was a morning – when a girl woke up from sleep – and plaited her hair – so carefully – and - ' Stuart clenched a fist and fell silent, breathing deeply.[13]

Although Stuart is preoccupied by these images and he returns to them later in the text they are not made a major focus of the plot and indeed, Stuart is a secondary character who does not have the appeal of the other male protagonists in the novel, being more serious and introspective. Murdoch rarely addresses the war directly in her fiction and in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, she writes of the difficulty in directly addressing real life trauma in art:

> But we need only to reflect seriously upon really terrible human fates to see that they exceed art, are utterly different from art: bereavements such as we all suffer, oppression, starvation, torture and terrorism [...]. And the fate of the Jews under Hitler which has become a symbol of the capacity and strength of human wickedness.[14]

After the Second World War, the literary community was tentatively trying to discover an appropriate way to respond to the assertions of Theodor Adorno that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric".[15] Andrzej Gąsiorek describes the situation in *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After*:

> Even a cursory glance at the numerous discussions of the novel's future in the aftermath of the Second World War reveals that many writers shared certain concerns. They thought the novel was under pressure from the events of recent history, which seemed to not only be unrepresentable but also to have shattered pre-war illusions [...].These concerns fall into two categories: the first concentrates on external events (war, social change, cultural transformation); the second focuses on developments internal to the novel (style, technique, form). Modernism had produced often dazzling works of art but had driven fiction so deeply into subjectivism that it had been left with few resources for dealing with social issues. [...] The novel, exhausted as a form, unable to meet the demands placed on it by a changing world, and challenged by the mass media, was thus thought to be in terminal decline.[16]

Murdoch was greatly concerned about the fate of British literature and the believable depiction of evil in fiction, a necessity she felt was related to the artistic connection of truth and reality. Her essay, "Against Dryness" outlines where writers are failing and how she though the form could be improved, suggesting that non-English authors were writing in the most relevant and exciting fashion.

Her use of the Byronic hero does not necessarily engage fully with Romanticism at large, but with a very specific role whose place in the Romantic canon is disputable. Byron has also not always been associated with the Romantics, so although any exploration of the character type can be seen to refer generally back to the Romantic Movement it cannot be viewed as a comment on the movement as a whole, or its political and ideological wider reference system in the way that her non-fiction writing sometimes does. That Lucas Graffe and Julius King are both Jewish seems a deliberate attempt by Murdoch to distance this use of Byronism from the Romantic as utilised by the Nazi party and so perhaps an effort to examine the dangers of the Byronic hero in a more localised human context, in relief from this infamous usage of its ideas and aims. Rather I would suggest that the use of Byron and of Arthurian romantic writing is a way for Murdoch to engage with the national literary heritage, challenging the writers of the past and attempting to show by doing this that the novel is still a viable form. In a similar way in which an author might suffer from the Bloomian theory of *The Anxiety of Influence*, Murdoch is showing that the novel can overcome the fears associated with it by her contemporaries. She does this by confronting the style of writings and genres of the past and emerging capable of consuming this history, deliberately 'misreading' it and presenting it as a new and unique form of art.

ii. Murdoch's interpretation of the Byronic hero and the buried text

The Byronic hero has had a diverse and colourful history and even its name is disingenuous, as its inception is not entirely attributable to Lord Byron. The influence of John Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* on Byron's heroes has been widely remarked upon, not least by Byron himself in his preface to *Cain.*[17] It was Byron though, who first brought the character type to wide public attention, and helped to mould it into what we now recognise as the 'Bryonic hero' in his narrative poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage;*[18] but even Byron's literary usage of his namesake only accounts for a small contribution to the understanding of just what or who the Byronic hero is, and how it was understood in his lifetime. As Frances Wilson asserts of Lord Byron in *Byromania:*

> Not only was he famously chameleon, being, he said, 'everything by turns and nothing long', but the layers of Byron's persona were themselves based upon literary imitations. 'Byron did not project life into literature nearly so much as he projected literature into life', Peter L. Thorslev argues in *The Byronic Hero*, and the Byronic was no more the invention of Byron that the Satanic was thought up by Satan himself. The doomed *homme fatal* is the producer of bibliogenesis: the Byronic hero can be found in the devilish charms of Milton's fallen angel in *Paradise Lost*, Goethe's *Faust*, Lovelace in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, Valmont in Choderlos de Laclos' *Les Liasons Dangereuses* and the gothic villains of Mrs Radcliffe's bestselling novels. Mario de Praz even argues that Byron's reputed sadism towards his wife came not from the twists and turns of his individual psyche but as a result of reading the Marquis de Sade.[19]

The Byronic hero, has Byron's name, but is not entirely attributable to him, it is not even a wholly literary concept but bound inextricably with a cult of personality, primarily that of Lord Byron himself but also of numerous Byronic descendents both from artistic creation and real life. Byron's influence in this respect can be seen in such diverse literature as Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (Mr Willoughby), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (Heathcliff), D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Mellors), and Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada or Ardor* (Van Veen) to name just a few. As Murdoch was writing such a long time after Byron and her career spanned over forty years, it is reasonable to assume that she was not just influenced by Byron's take on the Byronic hero, not that his version can even be deemed stable throughout his career. The Byronic hero is by its nature, capricious and fickle, it is no wonder then that it has evolved at such a rate or that it has been adapted to the requirements of each generation : it was after all named in 'honour' of the man who has been deemed the first example of modern day celebrity.[20] So how is the Byronic hero generally defined and which characteristics have stood the test of time? Atara Stein's 2004 critical study of the afterlife of the Byronic hero provides a useful starting point. She writes that in the nineteenth century and twentieth century, the Byronic hero has been typified by his autonomy being both a "loner" and someone who "creates his own rules"; he has abilities above and beyond that of normal humankind but often has difficulties communicating and empathising with other people. Underneath this cool facade, he has untold depths of suffering from a usually mysterious source. He is simultaneously a rebel, a champion, an aggressor and a victim, both superior to others then, and inferior. Stern states that he is "a hero that inspires awe but cannot be emulated" and that even if he begins as an elevated authority figure, or his acts help others, he cannot become part

of the understood social structure.[21] His sexual behaviour is also usually on the borderline of socially acceptable behaviour, often flouting conventions altogether, and frequently acting in a morally dubious fashion. Judging his actions, however, can be difficult, because he is never a straightforward depiction of villainy: he may have an incestuous relationship with his sister, but his desire for her would not be simply brutish; he may murder a man, but it would be difficult to classify his motivations for doing so as being entirely without reason. This criterion is attributable to Byron's Manfred, Cain, and Don Juan, but arguably there are numerous notable differences between the Byronic hero's afterlife and Byron's own protagonists, some of which can be seen in Murdoch's take on this character type. This is not necessarily problematic, however, as the intermingling of Byron's own life with gossip, rumour, fabrication (sometimes by him) and his literary adventures made it difficult, even in his lifetime, to give the Byronic hero a definitive form; this is of course fitting to such an intelligently enigmatic character. It is easy to see though, even from this brief description, how Murdoch's 'enchanter' figures can be deemed as Byronic. These so-called enchanters or magicians, presumably termed as a result of Murdoch's second novel, *The Flight From the Enchanter* (1955) which focuses on the equally fascinating and repellent Mischa Fox, can be seen as a modern interpretation of the Byronic hero.

Perhaps the most obviously Byronic of Murdoch's enchanter figures are *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Julius King and *The Green Knight's* Lucas Graffe. Prior to the start of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Julius King has had an affair with the highly strung Morgan. The relationship clearly has a profound impact on Morgan who spends the majority of the rest of the book trying to rekindle Julius' attraction for her, but he remains apparently disdainful of her efforts, although whilst discussing relationships with her he does refer to their previously "thrilling sex life".[22] However, this conversation leads him to reveal his interest in damaging the apparently happy unions of other people, rather than securing a relationship of his own and he makes an apparently light-hearted wager with Morgan that he can separate any couple in the space of only a number of days. Morgan bets him ten guineas and gives him four weeks to separate Morgan's brother-in-law, Simon, from his partner, Axel without hurting either of them. What she is unaware of is that Julius also intends to play a game with her, her sister Hilda, and Hilda's husband Rupert, by duping Morgan into thinking Rupert is in love with her and *vice versa*. There is no patent indication that Julius is sexually attracted to any of the characters during the period narrated, although his sadistic interest in the relationships of the other characters, may suggest an attraction to one or all of these

individuals. His description of Morgan's sex life during the time they were together as 'thrilling' is not without a degree of irony and this may only be *his* interpretation of *her* experience – not an indication of his. There is also an incident where Morgan visits Julius and he is obdurately unmoved by her attempts at seducing him, although when she strips in his flat he cuts her clothes into pieces and then locks her in his living room, naked, for Simon to discover and rescue. Although strange, this domineering sadistic behaviour may betoken a nascent sexual attraction for Morgan that is still prevalent although undesirable in its previous form; she is certainly not discouraged by it, describing him afterwards as "a *god*".[23] The event was, according to Peter Conradi, inspired by an actual episode, likely to have been heard from Murdoch's one time lover, Elias Canetti, and involving another of his lovers, Friedl Benedikt.

> The scene links variously to Canetti. His hero Kien in *Auto da Fé* dreamed of cutting up women's dresses; and the theme ran through Canetti and Friedl's story. The painter-dwarf Endre Nemes had raped Friedl and torn her clothes to ribbons before slashing his own pictures. Nemes turned up when Friedl was with Canetti in Paris, having 'brought thirty dresses from Sweden; Canetti kept making Friedl put one on, 'then tearing it off her and loving her, & making her put on another'.

It has been suggested that Murdoch's enchanter characters were inspired by Elias Canetti. Conradi describes him as one possible inspiration behind the characters of Mischa Fox in *A Flight From the Enchanter* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Julius King in *Iris: A Life*, saying of Julius: "he owes as much to the mythomaniac and manipulative Canetti, who in the words of Friedl's sister Susie, 'loved creating and undoing human relations and toying with people, watching their relations as a scientist might watch his white mouse'".[24] However, to focus on the biographical impulse behind a character type, which, although inspired by her literary past is by virtue of Murdoch's innovation, entirely her own, would be to do her artistry a disservice and to ultimately risk marginalizing the importance of such a protagonist. Peter Conradi has referred to the potential in drawing such a parallel between Canetti and these characters whilst simultaneously asserting Murdoch's distaste for associating life and art in such a way:

> Life, Iris (like Dostoyevsky) believed, is so fantastic that we instinctively mix in a little fiction to make it plausible. Life feeds the novel as well as literature. Iris insisted in interviews that she had witnessed without naming him an 'alien god figure' whose entry into situations, with the collusion of his slaves, caused trouble. [...] The satanic Julius in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is not Canetti (Iris' disdain at the suggestion is easy to imagine). But she could not have created Julius had she not known Canetti, and she gave Julius some of his traits.[25]

Iris Murdoch's own words in "Against Dryness" that "[l]iterature must always represent a battle between real people and images" is particularly pertinent here as she makes clear the relevance of real inspiration but nevertheless enforces that it is still an act of creation rather than an assimilation into fiction of people or events already in existence. Canetti's behaviour can therefore be seen as inspiration for the creation of Julius, and the event as described by Conradi emphasises the potential for a sexual undercurrent to the situation, but further comparisons risk misinterpretation of life and of art. It is, however, both relevant and important to note the connection between reality and fiction which is a feature of the Byronic and which destabilises both areas, reminding the reader of the fragility of truth in both the art and its real inspiration. This effect is twofold, however, as the fantastic quality of the presumed reliability of reality lends stability to the written world, contained as it is within the boundaries of both the reader's imagination and the writer's. As a consequence everything becomes art, and the godlike qualities of invention and manipulation are available to us all: in fiction, and in our own lives. Relating to the Byronic hero, to a certain extent, is necessary if he is to incite sympathy, and by connecting him to the biography of the author he becomes both fantastic and ultimately believable. His role as artist and creator, his godlike characterisation, seems a reality as the reader begins to comprehend their own potential for such acts.

Although attractive and often very sexual, the Byronic hero's romantic tastes frequently strain the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour. As the appropriateness of the character in this respect is dependent on the historical period in which the protagonist is created, this is naturally prone to change, but it is true to say that in line with Byron himself, the acts might occasion controversy society they are not usually so extreme as to render the protagonist and the author entirely abhorrent to the reader. For example, Byron features sibling incest which is consensual in *Cain*, but not interfamilial sexual abuse. In *Don Juan*, he depicts his hero as taking advantage of women in the lower classes, but not his own, and this was analogous with the period he wrote in and the readership he attracted. As Andrew Elfenbein explains:

> The high society that Byron enjoyed during his heyday in England was most striking for adhering to older, looser codes. In such society, adultery was commonplace and unremarkable so long as it was conducted with a proper degree of discretion [...]. As for working-class women, men of Byron's class traditionally had assumed that such women were sexually available, and Byron seemed to have treated them essentially as prostitutes.

> Byron's most notorious affair, his love for his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, was partly an extension of this aristocratic sexual ethos. Aristocratic privileges depended on intermarriage: aristocrats defined themselves by drastically limiting the pool of prospective marriage partners to those recognized by bloodlines, and marriage between cousins was quite common. Scandalous as Byron's incest may seem, it should be thought of less as a practice completely out of the mainstream than as an exaggerated, pressured version of the sex between relations that was typical of aristocrats.[26]

Although Byron removed the direct references to incest in *Manfred* the awareness of his own close relationship with his sister meant that the implied filial tie between Manfred and Astarte did not go undetected, and Byron did not escape reproach.[27] However, Elfenbein's comments indicate that if Byron's personal life had not been known or discussed, the plot would not have been subject to such censure.

Murdoch's anti-heroes, however, are different from their predecessors as they are less focussed on love and desire for themselves than the typical Byronic hero, and even seem to be disinterested in sex. Although that might be for certain examples such as *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Julius King, merely because they have no need to display their sexual interests, as Murdoch's heroines are generally determined to pursue them. Their sexual appeal is not diminished by their lack of obvert promiscuity; it is rather increased as the women try and unravel the mystery that might occasion such restraint. *The Philosopher's Pupil's* George McCaffrey and John Robert Rozanov have numerous female followers, and even *A Word Child's* Hilary Burde, and *The Sea, The Sea's* Charles Arrowby, have more than one female pursuer during the course of their respective plots. Not all of these characters have always rejected female attention and they don't necessarily deny it at the time of the novel's action; but they are generally either not particularly virile, or they have such perverse sexual tastes in the course of the plot that they are unable to partake of their predilection. George, we are informed, is not very sexual, despite having a wife and a mistress, both of whom are engaged rather more for his reputation, than in response to his desires. Charles Arrowby spurns the advances of numerous past amours in favour of imprisoning his ageing childhood sweetheart, Hartley, whom even he does not attempt to seduce. The sexual preferences of characters such as Charles Arrowby and John Robert Rozanov are not socially acceptable, not even in certain circles, and yet they continue to pursue the improbable satisfaction of their desires, even when they know they are causing distress to the object of their affections. In this sense though they cannot be termed 'traditionally' Byronic, as whatever the faults of the Byronic hero he is never shown force his heart's desire where

it is entirely unwelcome. Byron's own feelings for his sister were very likely to have been reciprocated,[28] and in his dramatic work, *Cain,* the central protagonist and his sibling wife are clearly fond of each other. Such incidents also impact upon the interpretation of the more ambivalent passions in *Manfred*. Murdoch's heroes' attitude to passion is, however, to some extent commensurate with Byron's heroes. Deborah Lutz writes in *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic villains, Byronism, and the Nineteent-Century Seduction Narrative*:

> The very foundations of love for the Byronic hero are based on failure and the forgetting of what is possible. The Byronic hero in his purity can, by definition, never be redeemed by becoming a couple, he is interminably thrown back into black despair; he is interminably cast adrift into absence and dark night. [...] To make the impossible possible is the erotic excitement of the dangerous lover romance.[29]

To whom within the general readership the sort of impossible passions Murdoch considers which actually cause pain to others might appeal, however, is a mystery, but there is evidence that other writers contemporaneous to Murdoch were also testing the reasonable bounds of the Byronic hero, and the public reaction to such a hero in works such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and *Ada or Ardor*. This was presumably done to experiment with how far the public would tolerate an author going before the narrator or protagonist was deemed repellent and the text unreadable. However, perhaps such artistic ethical experimentation is a reasonable extension of the evolution of the Byronic hero, which has even been cited as influencing vampire literature.[30] *Wuthering Heights'* infamous Byronic hero, Heathcliff also exhibits necrophiliac tendencies when he exhumes Catherine Linton's body and then desires his remains to be intermingled with hers on his death; and this according to Ian Jack was not a singular incident in the writing of romantically influenced authors. He refers to Leicester Bradner's article, "The Growth of Wuthering Heights" which details another similar incident as potential source material for *Wuthering Heights*, in a short story called, "The Bridegroom of Barna."[31] It is also worth noting that an earlier example of the Byronic hero was Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* who rapes his daughter, Sin, and has a child with her, Death. This is all presented in terms of mythic metaphor and therefore is less repugnant to the reader than a protagonist such as Nabokov's Humbert Humbert who may easily resemble someone the reader actually knows, but disturbing sexual ideology is clearly in place at the inception of the Byronic hero.

Unlike Byron's heroes, the physical sexuality of Murdoch's protagonists is not always overtly implied or clearly stated and their secrets are much better disguised.

This lack of known sexual interest in Murdoch's 'enchanter figures' does not fit easily with the Bryronic hero mould. In Byron's *Don Juan* the sexual activity of his hero is not disguised but it is also not asserted, although it would be true to say that omitting detail merely increases the multitude of ways the reader might choose to fill the gaps considering the circumstances of much of the action and Byron's provocative style of narration.[32] In *Manfred,* however, where it is likely the hero has been involved in an incestuous relationship, the style is different, less jocular, and therefore the lack of information invites a disparate response, a more tentative one from the reader who cannot quite believe what it is that the text appears to direct him towards. Of course, we now know that Byron originally wrote a more comprehensive account of the direction in which Manfred's passions tended, and revised the content due to the public reaction to his own rumoured affair with his half-sister Augusta Leigh;[33] but this is not the version that was eventually published. Although the public were not ignorant of the potential real life subtext, asserting the taboo in his writing would have been too great a risk for an author that relied on the populace for more than their purchasing power, as his cajoling of independent rumour had given the public a degree of power in the creation and maintenance of his image and his identity. Murdoch often makes her character's sexual tastes clear to her readership but not always, especially with apparently Byronic protagonists, and there are a number of occasions where a potential taboo subject is left to her reader to guess.

In *The Bell,* Nick and Catherine Fawley are described as loving each other in a 'Byronic way' which suggests an incestuous relationship, although there is no further direct allusion to it in the action of the plot. Catherine's later suicide may, however, be considered evidence of a hidden psychological disturbance which could be connected to her sexual behaviour, a consideration which draws a link between *The Bell* and Murdoch's next novel, *A Severed Head.* In the latter novel, half-siblings, Honor Klein and Palmer Anderson have a sexual relationship and their mother is described as being "insane".[34] Palmer expresses concern that revealing his secret to his lover Antonia, "would disable her for life"[35] further suggesting that it was the knowledge of his incest with Honor that led to their mother's demise. Catherine's name is interesting, however. Iris Murdoch and her husband, the critic John Bayley, both believed that in *Wuthering Heights* the love between Catherine and Heathcliff was incestuous, the supposed foundling being in their opinion the illegitimate offspring of old Mr Earnshaw. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* she writes:

> The tragic irony that Cathy and Heathcliff are brother and sister leads to the climatic *dénouement*, and is kept concealed in a way which makes its discovery almost funny. (Where did that little gypsy child appear from? Are we to believe Mr Earnshaw's improbable tale that he 'found him' in Liverpool? Clearly he is Mr Earnshaw's illegitimate son. Once explained this is obvious.)[36]

This idea was first published in an article in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* by Eric Soloman in 1959,[37] just a year after the publication of *The Bell* and it is reasonable to assume that either Murdoch came to this conclusion independently prior to this date, or that she was aware of Eric Solomon's theory at this point. This is suggested by the fact that Murdoch's novice shares her name with the heroine of *Wuthering Heights*, and her brother shares his name with a slang term for the devil ('Old Nick'), an entity Heathcliff is frequently associated with throughout Brontë's narrative. When Mr Earnshaw first brings Heathcliff home he says of him, "it's as dark as if it came from the devil".[38] After her marriage, Isabella Heathcliff (*née* Linton), asks of Nelly: "Is Mr Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not, is he a devil?"[39] Nelly refers to Heathcliff as "the devil"[40] as does one of Edgar Linton's servants.[41] That the Fawley's name denotes the Fall also supports an incest theory, as Adam and Eve have been interpreted as incestuous due to their being made of "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The story of Adam and Eve in *Genesis* (2: 22-24) has been linked to the incest taboo as Ellen Pollak states in *Incest and the English Novel 1684-1814* regarding Henry St. John Bolingbroke. She quotes Bolingbroke's assertion that "Eve was in some sort the daughter of Adam. She was literally bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh by birth, if I may call it so, whereas other husbands and wives are so in allegorical manner only. But to pass this over, the children of the first couple were certainly brothers and sisters, and by these conjunctions, declared afterwards incestuous, the human species was first propagated."[42] Incestuous conflict in the story of Adam and Eve and their offspring is further explored by Otto Rank in *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend.*[43] This evidence, however, is embedded in the text of Murdoch's novel to such an extent that only the thorough reader would discover the clues. Nick Fawley is typically Byronic: in appearance he has an androgynous sexual appeal reminiscent of Don Juan,[44] and the dark- haired good looks of Heathcliff; he is also brooding, intelligent, and sexually confused, and as such his literary heritage is without doubt. A similarly confusing sexual anomaly to that of Nick and Catherine Fawley is apparent in Murdoch's *The Green Knight*, where the secret relationship between Aleph and Lucas causes a sensation difficult to explain through overt textual references, suggesting a reason hidden in the prose.

Lucas Graffe's sexual life is a mystery throughout the novel but this time it is a mystery that is conspicuously brought to the reader's attention, as other characters actually converse about just what his sexual inclinations might be. Lucas' role in *The Green Knight* is a confusing one and it is never clear whether his baser nature can be redeemed by more than objective moral intellectualism. He is first introduced as the missing brother of the altogether more amiable Clement, a failing actor. Both Lucas and Clement are closely associated, apparently in a quasi-fraternal fashion, with the widowed Louise and her three daughters, who are all on the brink of adulthood. Their father was the friend of both brothers. We are led to believe that Lucas has disappeared, after being cleared of killing a man with his umbrella in self-defence. The other characters accept this unnamed man was a thief. As the narrative continues, everything that Murdoch has set up seemingly as fact at the beginning of the narrative becomes questionable, if not shown to be completely untrue; including some 'red-herrings' which can only have been placed with the intention of misleading the astute reader, or perhaps more particularly, the academic critic. Clement and Lucas are adoptive siblings, Clement being the much resented and envied biological son who surprised his parents after they had adopted Lucas. The man who has supposedly died is still alive: his name is Peter Mir, and he did not attempt to steal from Lucas but was struck by him when he interrupted Lucas' attempted murder of Clement. Peter returns wanting to be avenged, or at least given something in recompense for his experience at Lucas' hands: favouring a means to be endeared to Louise's family as his chosen prize. Louise's daughters, the beautiful Aleph, the clever, serious, Sefton and the naively sensitive, Moy, are deceptively presented as archaically styled examples of three virginal girls who are yet to embark on life, and spend their days engaged in singing old-fashioned songs, artistry and education. Louise's friend, Joan an ageing femme fatale, describes them in *Alice in Wonderland* language as "three little girls" that "lived at the bottom of a well".[45] Each of the girls has re-named herself after being assigned identities from Greek myth: Alethea (truth), Sophia (wisdom) and Moira (destiny) by their father.[46] However, both of these allusions (to Lewis Carroll and to Classical myth) are, much like the title of the novel, designed to confuse the easily satisfied reader. Ultimately, however, they provide a more thought provoking dimension to the plot for the reader willing to persevere and believe in Murdoch's literary capabilities. They rename themselves Aleph, Sefton and Moy. Such obvious intellectualisation of the heroines would be artistically clumsy if there were not an additional layer of interpretation to be sought, as would the later attempt by Clement to understand *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in terms of his own

experience after Aleph has said Mir reminds her of the Green Knight. That *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the obvious source text for this novel should put the careful reader on their guard immediately. The anonymously penned fourteenth-century alliterative poem is all about the dangers of accepting incidents and individuals quite literally on face value. It is also about the dangers of sexual desire and the moral weakness that might result from temptation.

The liaison between Aleph and Lucas has apparently been continuing for a considerable length of time. Aleph states in her letter home announcing the marriage, that they were entangled before Lucas tried to kill Clement, which raises the question of whether Aleph knew of Lucas' intention. It is also not clear whether Aleph and Lucas have a blood connection that might be attributed to his earlier relationship with Louise, and which would prohibit the marriage they embark upon. Such a subtle reference to the possible sexual taboo between Aleph and Lucas is typical of Byron, and Murdoch's testing of our sexual caprices and artistic expectations throughout her *oeuvre* is also be inspired by him. As Elfenbein asserts:

> In and of itself, Byron's link between desire and danger was nothing new; it as old as literature. What is striking about Byron is the way he positions his reader in relation to sexuality. He invites his reader to become complicit with illicit desire by leaving significant gaps in his poems, which the reader is encouraged to complete. In the face of changing sexual mores, he suggests that any desire outside of sanctioned heterosexual love has lost an adequate language. The more forbidden the desire, the less explicit it becomes, so that the reader must become more active to complete what the text does not say. Although only sodomy was legally codified as the desire that could not be named between Christians ('*inter christianos non nominandum'*), Byron expands this definition to include virtually all desire worth writing about.[47]

Although this technique is not generally exhibited by Murdoch, it is evidenced in *The Green Knight.* Just why do Aleph and Lucas keep their liaison secret for the entire course of the novel, to the extent that Aleph encourages Harvey's long accepted interest in her? Lucas' sexuality is first brought to the reader's attention when Harvey innocently tries to get Aleph to speculate on Lucas' sexual inclinations and when he later inadvertently stumbles upon Lucas in a tryst with an unidentified woman. The reader is left as confused by this as the characters are, especially as he never shows any obvious sexual interest in any of the protagonists and there is no hint that he is particularly attached to Aleph until their marriage is announced. The reader has no reason to assume that there would be an objection to the age difference, as it is

suggested on several occasions that both Clement and Peter Mir might harbour a serious attraction for her and this is only criticised in the latter case because the family know so little about him. Lucas' attempted murder of Clement is not believed by the rest of the characters until the end section of the novel and presumably Aleph's relationship with Lucas has been ongoing for some time by this point. There appears to be no clear reason why the pair would not reveal their attachment at an earlier point in the narrative, and certainly no grounds to leave their revelation until they have left the country. Lucas is known as something of an eccentric but only Clement has knowledge of his more sinister side and even he does not fully comprehend or wish to admit just how dangerous Lucas could be. It therefore seems plausible that there is some other reason for the couple's secrecy which is not explicitly stated.

Aleph seems to presume in her letter home that her marriage will be a shock to her family but it is not just a shock but a source of apparent horror to them. Sefton is described as 'groaning' and 'wailing' when she reads the news, and immediately pities her mother, "oh poor Louie, poor poor Louie".[48] Emil, a family friend, responds by saying "[h]ow strange and frightful"[49] and Louise cannot bear to speak to anyone and instructs the others to explain what has happened before taking the phone off the hook. These initial responses which are given in the wake of Peter Mir's death and with the newly discovered truth about Lucas' attempted assault on his brother can be explained away; but it is Louise's thoughts when alone in her room that offer the most illuminating take on the event.

> But she thought too, whatever happens she won't come back, not like that. Only perhaps later on to *show us her children.* This idea was hideous. And now in her deep heart an even sharper pain was stirring, a pain which would stay with her always. Lucas had wanted to marry her, her, Louise. She thought, after Teddy died and Lucas came to me and wanted to marry me and I said no, it seemed as if our relations had to stop altogether. [...] I must have wounded him deeply [...] I might have saved him if only I had been near him from the start – perhaps then he would not have built up that terrible hatred of Clement – of God, if only – then I would have saved Peter – and saved Aleph. Everything would have been different – and it is all my fault. Now he has taken her away and made it impossible for him and me ever to meet again.[50]

Louise does not seem to fear for Aleph's physical wellbeing and neither do any of the other characters. Aleph is only nineteen but nobody pursues her and Lucas. This quotation does raise numerous questions about Louise's feelings for Lucas; the potential of an earlier connection between her and Lucas; and just why it is 'impossible' for her

to see Lucas again. If the taboo were as serious as incest with a blood relative it is unlikely that Louise would not try and prohibit the furthering of the relationship; but it is possible that there is a quasi-incestuous link which refers to a taboo no longer illegal but still generally unacceptable. Presuming Lucas and Louise did have a sexual relationship, then Lucas could be arguably seen, in Biblical terms as her "husband" by dint of their sexual connection,[51] which would make him technically and spiritually, although not physically, related to Aleph. If Lucas can then be seen as Louise's husband in this sense then the Canon law prohibiting sexual relations due to affinity apply. As Charles J. Reid, Jr. asserts regarding the early canonists: "[a]ffinity was based on a strong concept of the spiritual relationship that was created through the sacraments of baptism and marriage".[52] Even if Lucas and Louise are not deemed married due to a potential earlier sexual connection, Canon Law still suggests a relationship between Aleph and Lucas would be improper, as James A. Conden writes in *An Introduction to Canon Law*: "Those who have lived together in an invalid marriage or in public concubinage may not in the future marry one another's blood relatives in the first degree of the direct line".[53] There is also Lucas' implied role in loco parentis to Louise's daughters after Teddy's death. It is made clear in the text that Harvey's lack of a father necessitates someone else to fill this role: "When Harvey's father vanished, Harvey needed a father. At first Teddy was this person. When Teddy died, Bellamy and Lucas and Clement became his fathers."[54] The girls are also without a father and the same three men involve themselves in their lives as they do in that of their 'brother', Harvey. Louise also tries to assume the role of 'mother' to Harvey.[55] Such a prohibition may explain Louise's horror and Sefton's immediate thought of her mother when the news is announced. However Lucas' role as a father figure does not entirely explain Louise's reaction as the possibility of Clement being attracted to Aleph is frequently discussed throughout the novel and although it does not appear to please Louise she is not disturbed by it in the same way she is when she hears of Lucas' union with Aleph. It is Louise's concern that Aleph will have children with Lucas and that she may never see *him* again, not her daughter, that makes it so likely that there is a more developed and buried reason for her reaction to Aleph's elopement. That Louise does not seek out Clement to cement their romantic attachment until after the news of Aleph's marriage has arrived, suggests she too has been waiting for Lucas.

The links between the characterisation of *The Bell's* Catherine Fawley and Aleph also suggests a taboo relationship in *The Green Knight*. Both protagonists' personalities are in question during the narrative: both women are depicted as well liked, even

admired by their companions and yet they show, albeit briefly, a markedly different side to their characters. This capacity for duplicity in both young women further enforces the possibility that they are fully complicit in a taboo activity, although obviously their youth means they may be manipulated by older or more experienced characters. It is important, however, that they are not obviously forced into their actions. Catherine is seen as the model novice of the convent in *The Bell* and as unlike her drunken angry brother as it is possible to be; but when she and Nick are working on the lorry and Michael interrupts them, she is described as sitting with her "skirt hitched up towards her waist" and she does not alter her situation for Michael, "[i]nstead she looked up at him without smiling. Michael, for the first time since he had met her, conjectured that she might positively dislike him".[56] Catherine is usually quiet, dutiful and demure, almost to the point of being unnaturally self controlled but here for the first time she is sexualised and seen to be capable of normal human emotions. As Catherine and Nick are twins, the sexualisation of their connection is likely to be an allusion to Plato's *Symposium* where Astrophanes describes an androgynous third sex, half man and half woman who was separated by the gods, using this to explain why humans crave another person to make them whole.[57] Murdoch's fascination with Plato makes this an unavoidable allusion. As previously discussed, Catherine physically resembles Lucile Chateaubriand, but she also resembles her namesake, Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, and Aleph. All of these characters have pale skin and dark hair and eyes. It cannot be overlooked that Aleph, the child of fair haired, blue eyed Teddy, and light haired Louise also fits this description which is mirrored to a certain extent in Lucas' own image. She is described as "pale in complexion" "her eyes, beneath long almost straight dark eyebrows, large and dark brown [...] her hair, a dark shining chestnut colour, a lively complex of curls".[58] There is also a likeness to the appearance of Nabokov's Ada Veen, whose skin has a "lustreless whiteness"[59] and who has "soft black hair"[60] just like her biological brother, Van. Like Emily Brontë's heroine and Murdoch's Catherine Fawley, Aleph too has more than one side to her personality and is capable of 'performing' different roles for different audiences; she also has a significant name, or rather it is her re-naming that is significant.

'Aleph' is the first letter if the Hebrew alphabet; she has rejected 'alpha' the first letter of the Greek alphabet as it "sounded presumptuous"[61] but it is Murdoch's choice that is interesting here rather than Aleph's. Patrick Hanks and Flavia Hodges state that Alethea "represents the Greek word *alētheia*" which means "truth". 'Aleph' is also the first letter of the Hebrew word *emet* which similarly means truth.[62] As in Hebrew

tradition the letters are not simply symbols for communication but are characters in religious tales; this is an important consideration, although it is only the beginning of a web of associations and allusions which might give the reader a greater insight into Aleph's character. This is particularly intriguing when considered alongside a traditional Jewish creature: "גולם", golem a. According to Ronald Eisenberg in *The J.P.S. Guide to Jewish Traditions*: "A golem is a legendary creature that is made of clay and dust by human hands in a magical, artificial way to serve its creator [...]. The legend of the golem became fully developed during the Middle Ages, under the influence of non-Jewish European folklore and the Kabbalah." He goes on to say that "[i]f the golem had been created by writing the Hebrew word "אמת" (*emet*; "truth") on its forehead, it could be destroyed by erasing the first letter to produce the word "מת" (*met*; "dead")."[63] The first letter which is the difference to life and death for the golem is *aleph*. It is curious that Murdoch's Aleph chooses a Hebrew letter rather than a Greek one, Hebrew being both the language of the Jewish faith (to which Lucas is ethnically associated, but refuses to acknowledge[64]) and also the original language of much of the Old Testament. We are told that it was Teddy, the girl's father who gave them their names, and by rejecting the Greek name her father has given her and also refusing a Greek alternative, she has ultimately rejected the filial bond and the attached prohibitions and expectations of the connection. Within this process there is an embedded allusion to Jacques Lacan and his theory regarding the "name-of-the-father":

> Originally used by Lacan (1953) to describe the castrating father of the Oedipus Complex who personifies the taboo on incest, the expression is at once a semi-humorous religious allusion (*In nomine patris*) and a play on the near-homonyms *non* and *nom*: the name-of-the-father (*nom-du-pére*) is also the father's 'no' (*non-du-pére)* to the child's incestuous desire for its mother. In Lacan's 1955-6 seminar on the psychoses (published 1981), the name-of-the-father is described as the fundamental signifier that both confers identity on human subjects by situating them in a lineage and the symbolic order, and reiterates the prohibition on incest. The foreclosure of the name-of-the-father, or its expulsion from the subject's symbolic universe, is said by Lacan to be the mechanism that triggers psychosis.[65]

The taboo in this novel would be the Freudian Electra complex rather than the Oedipus Complex, the desire being demonstrably a daughter's for the father or father substitute; and the name has been given supposedly by the father not inherited from him, but the taboo is the same. The taboo is also named by Freud in both instances after Greek tragedies, so it seems that Aleph is also refusing to acknowledge the taboo itself. Associated with this is the girls' choice to call their mother by her first name and not by

her family position, another act which distances them further from parental authority and family ties. Through her choice of name Aleph associates herself with Lucas and the family inheritance he wishes to disregard but is unable to, as Peter Mir's immediate awareness of Lucas' Jewish ethnicity shows. It is true of course that both Sefton and Moy also discard the names given to them by their father but Murdoch draws attention to the lack of potential meaning in these alternatives, whereas Aleph is described pointedly as "the Hebrew name of the first letter of the alphabet, which retained the connection with the Ancient World, and a mysterious bond with her original name".[66] If Teddy is Aleph's biological father or even if he is her step-father, the name he has chosen to give her acts to associate her with him in a similar way to an inherited surname, thereby asserting his authority over her behaviour. If he is not her father his naming of her can be interpreted as a means to make her his property and thereby influence her identity. This again relates to Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* where the re-naming of Dolores Haze by Humbert Humbert not only turns her in the novel and in his view, from person to artistic creation, but also fragments and ultimately destroys her identity. However, it is the re-naming that also can be argued to enable abuse in Lolita: as Lolita, she is Humbert's, but as Dolores Haze, she is a person with family connections and a history independent of Humbert. Dolores Haze is an independent person who has rights, so the name Haze not only serves to remind the reader of the connection to the father to prevent interfamilial abuse, but also to assert a person's association to a broader network of people who may protect them from external threats. Naming is thereby associated with power and ownership. By rejecting her name, Aleph re-invents herself and makes herself either independent or associated with another system, where Lucas and his heritage are recognised by her as a real or assumed filial bond. She can therefore be seen as rejecting one authority system for another, and thereby giving herself the structure and boundaries to prevent the total fragmentation that Lacan warns can trigger psychosis. Ultimately, however, it is possible that this re-naming by Aleph can be seen as contributing to the potential fragmentation of her person as her naming does not assert her autonomy but merely the highlights the rejection of one set of associations for another. Aleph's character is never clear throughout the novel and her chameleon personality when considered against those of Catherine Fawley and Catherine Earnshaw can be seen to betoken the mental instability they both eventually suffer from.

Aleph's characterization is, like that of many of Murdoch's young female protagonists, contradictory. She arrives at the fancy dress party as a soldier which may

suggest aggression, or an ability to command or, as Anne Rowe suggests, "a terrifying combination of mystic and warrior".[67] It may also refer to her sense of discipline and to being under command by another. Her relationship with Harvey which is apparently that of innocent childhood sweethearts diminishes into a lie when her liaison with Lucas is revealed showing her ability to enslave, but her age and Lucas' character suggest her enslavement. Once again, however, Aleph's name can be used to influence our interpretation of her in this respect. It is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *bet,* that begins the narration of the creation, not *aleph*. In his 2002 study, *The Creation According to the Midrash Rabbah*, Wilfred Shuchat presents the following two interpretations of this circumstance:

> R. Eleazer bar Hanina said in R. Aha's name: For twenty-six generations the *aleph* complained before the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He, pleading before him: 'Sovereign of the universe! I am the first of the letters, yet You did not create your world with me! God said to it: 'The world and its fullness were created for the sake of the Torah alone. Tomorrow, when I come to give my Torah at Sinah, I will commence with none but you,' as it is written, 'I [*anokhi*] am the Lord your God.'
>
> The final interpretation, however, completely out shadows all the others, and completes this part of the *midrash*. The Torah began with bet in order to disclose the moral purpose of the creation to the world. That purpose would not fulfil itself in creation but at the time of giving the Ten Commandments, which will begin with an *aleph*. Not only is this the purpose of the moral universe; it is also the purpose and goal of the Torah, and the task for Israel to realize and fulfil.[68]

The full first commandment as detailed in Exodus 20:2 is translated as: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery". This places an emphasis on a theme of subservience in Aleph's characterization but with quite a different focus. The commandment refers both to the freeing of the people from an earthly service and to the redirection of that behaviour to a divine source. What this means to the novel is complicated and I will explore these connections further but at present it is enough to be aware of the implications in terms of servitude.

Compared with Aleph, Lucas' character is examined in some detail but his reason for choosing Aleph is not explained, remaining as unclear as her acceptance of him, even though she is deemed a prize, the most beautiful of the three sisters. The answers, however, can perhaps be located in alternative potential source texts for *The Green Knight.* The story of Cain and Abel is obviously alluded to in *The Green Knight,* the

rivalry between brothers being the catalyst for the plot and the turning point of the novel. Servitude is a key theme in Byron's *Cain* and indeed, the Biblical depiction of the story of Cain and Abel. It is arguably Cain's inability to accept God's supremacy that leads to his downfall. God's words to Cain in Genesis after his offering has been rejected imply that Cain is in some way to blame for his produce being inferior to Abel's and therefore he is also culpable for inciting God's displeasure: "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door: and unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Genesis 4:5-7). In Byron's *Cain*, Cain refuses to make his sacrifice after hearing Lucifer's views on servitude, sentiments which are ultimately similar in tone and content to those presented by Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*. The connection may be deliberate as Byron refers to Milton in the Preface to the play: "With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton; but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference".[69] Both Milton's Satan, and Byron's Lucifer, present intelligent, reasoned arguments which are persuasive to fellow literary creations and the reader. Both reject ignorance and innocence alike as means to the servitude they find so unpalatable. The importance of the narrative of Cain and Abel as a source for *The Green Knight* is easy to identify in the sibling rivalry between Clement and Lucas, and yet as I have asserted in earlier chapters it is not just the most obvious source text that Murdoch has utilised. The midrash suggests that the animosity between the brothers may have been about more than jealousy over God's favour and a lack of respect for God, and that there may have been sexual envy over which sibling had which wife. The midrashic tradition asserts that the brothers were betrothed to their twin sisters (this prefigures the incest made explicit in Byron's play where the brothers are also promised to their sisters). The midrash relates that Abel was one of triplets with two girls; Cain, determined he should have the higher number of wives rather than Abel, consequently murders his brother out of jealousy.[70] This version of events is arguably illustrated through Murdoch's novel. We are told repeatedly that Clement is destined for Aleph but, as it transpires, he is in love with Louise (although they do not admit this or progress their friendship until after the news of Aleph and Lucas' elopement). It is possible that Lucas, who has previously proposed to Louise, and eventually marries Aleph, is reacting to the potential loss of both or either of these women. His adult jealousy of his brother certainly seems extreme considering the reader is given no reason to assume that the parents of Clement have

treated Lucas as an inferior, or that Clement himself has been unpleasant to him. It is Lucas that secures the family home, not Clement, and it is Lucas who has the more successful career. Even if the past did contain an injustice against Lucas, he has adjusted to adulthood more capably with regards worldly achievements, although close human attachments do appear initially to elude him. Clement's death would not resolve the issues in the past, but if it is fear of Clement as a rival for Louise and/or Aleph which is the real reason behind the attack, it appears more logical, as it would remove a threat. This is never clarified though. Lucas' alleged suffering as a result of a mysterious injury, partially explained but never satisfactorily identified is, however, certainly a component of the Byronic hero type.

Murdoch's version of the Byronic hero, therefore, would seem to be a being who is intellectually superior, cruelly experimental with human kind in a dispassionate way that betokens a borderline sociopath, usually estranged from society through a previous injury from an external source, and sexually compelling, if not always aesthetically appealing. So far, so Byronic, yet Murdoch's 'magicians' do not just appear to draw on Byron's heroes but they also seem to bear the mark of the evolution of the Byronic hero. Atara Stein notes with reference to *Wuthering Heights:* "[p]art of what makes Heathcliff so horrifying is that he has "a greater ability to manipulate social structures than Byron's heroes share".[71] Heathcliff becomes more of an oppressor than his original tormentors".[72] This influence can be seen in Murdoch's anti-heroes: Lucas Graffe, we are told, has suffered from losing the focus of his adoptive parents' love, but this does not explain his determination to torment Clement throughout his life and eventually to attempt murder. However, although the eventual punishment may not match the original crime, it is never clear in either the case of Heathcliff or of Lucas, just how serious the original crime was, and this to some extent ties both of these characters in with their antecedents. Just as in *Manfred*, the reader is occasioned to make moral judgements without being fully aware of all the facts. Indeed, although the inability to govern social structures is a characteristic of Byron's tales, as the protagonist is often compelled by a sense of fatal inevitability, his narratives also tend to be set in a broader social sphere and the characters are prone to greater geographical movement than is the case in Murdoch's fiction, or in Brontë's, where such a disparity can also be seen. However, it may not be the case that there is a disparity; rather, it is possible that the reader does not at first comprehend the initial transgression that leads to the hero's sense of injury as the information provided is so scant. In all of these cases, scenes within the main action of the plot are restricted and this may partially account for the reader not fully

understanding the situation as there is a lot that is concealed from the reader. Much of the action that matters to determining the nature of the injustice levelled at the hero, happens in locations to which the reader does not have immediate access, whether that is as a result of the fact that certain locations are omitted from the action of the story (such as Heathcliff's activities whilst away from the Heights) or because certain time periods are not described in detail, such as the childhood of Heathcliff, or the circumstances of his conception.

It is true that a degree of disparity between initial transgression and later villainy can also be seen in Byron's work. Don Juan's later actions are not shown to be commensurate with his earlier disappointments; and *The Giaour* arguably depicts punishments that do not seem apposite to the original misdemeanour, although the inequality here is not however entirely within the control of the hero. Murdoch's Byronic styled heroes like Brontë's choose to inflict what appears to be an excessive and often inexplicable degree of punishment on others, some of whom are not related to the original crime, or if they are, only tenuously so. In attempting to hurt Catherine Earnshaw/Linton, her husband, Edgar Linton, and Hindley Earnshaw, Heathcliff commits crimes against their children, continuing to hurt them after their parent's demise. Of course, determining whether the punishment is commensurate with the original offence depends on recognising the possibility that the first offence goes back further than it first appears. If Murdoch's assertions regarding Heathcliff's parentage are correct, then his revenge is even more inappropriate, as the original crime was old Mr Earnshaw's in conceiving an illegitimate child and thereby initiating a long line of abuse and counter-abuse which culminates in the death of Heathcliff by voluntary starvation. Hindley's abuse of Heathcliff is consequently also misplaced as this is also a reaction to his father's perceived offence. A comparable situation is present in Murdoch's work. Is Lucas truly the adopted child from unknown origins or can his familial history be traced in the same way as Heathcliff's? Like Heathcliff, he too bears the marks of foreign ancestry. Such a connection suggests the possibility of foundlings in both novels. It is then feasible to presume that the younger Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* being as Nelly asserts "a seven month child"[73] is the daughter of Heathcliff rather than Edgar Linton (it being only seven months since Heathcliff has returned to that part of the country when her mother dies in labour). The parallels between Catherine and Aleph as well as the broader connections between these novels further indicates that Aleph's parentage is also at the very least questionable.

Murdoch's use of the Byronic hero then in *A Green Knight* fits with that of the tradition of the Byronic. Lucas' treatment of Clement is unethical but his reasons are less than clear which renders the reader incapable of judging him accurately. Murdoch manipulates the history of the Byronic hero differently in her other novels challenging her readers' preconceptions of good and evil in literature, partly inspired and shaped by that of the Byronic hero.

iii. "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (*Paradise Lost,* Book IV. l. 95)[74]: The Murdochian enchanter figure and the conflict between good and evil.

In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* the past of Julius King is largely unknown for much of the text but in the final pages the reader learns he has been the inhabitant of a concentration camp during the Second World War. This too is not a piece of information Julius offers freely but it is discovered accidently. We are then left unsure how to react to a character who has behaved cruelly to others throughout the entire course of the narrative. Tallis, the character Murdoch described as symbolic of a modern day Christ figure, does not judge Julius but Murdoch obviously intends to challenge the reader. His manipulative behaviour is not directly connected to this past injustice so the two occurrences are not obviously related. Like the other instances of the Byronic hero I have discussed, the original source of suffering for the hero is greater than originally understood, but throughout *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and especially in the depiction of Julius, Murdoch asks whether this does necessarily excuse the eventual actions of the protagonist in question. Prior to the revelation that Julius has been in a concentration camp, the reader has no reason to sympathise with Julius or even to like him. His charm and his intellect might make him engaging, but his callous behaviour towards all of the other protagonists makes him ultimately unpalatable. The knowledge that he was a victim of the Holocaust has the potential to redefine Julius as a victim rather than an oppressor, and consequently presents a very real moral problem to the reader. This difficulty is of a kind that particularly interested Murdoch, as she writes in "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts":

> We are admittedly specialised creatures where morality is concerned and merit in one area does not seem to guarantee merit in another. The good artist is not necessarily wise at home, and the concentration camp guard can be a kindly father. At least this can seem to be so, though I would feel that the artist had at least got a starting point and that on closer inspection the concentration camp guard might prove to have his limitations as a family man. [75]

Of course, the fact that Julius has been in a concentration camp does not mean that he has ever actually done anything 'Good', only that he has been persecuted. The disclosure does not serve to alter Julius' characterisation but to confront the possibility of the reader's classification of people and the presumption that a victim is a good person, or that a person who has suffered would not wish to exact suffering upon others. The incident is not dwelt upon and takes up only a few lines but it is enough to make the reader think again about Julius and to reconsider their opinion of him.

Such opposing forces in one protagonist is typical of the Byronic hero as exemplified by Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*;[76] and both Lucas in *The Green Knight* and Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* can be associated with Milton's depiction of Satan. Elizabeth Dipple wrote in her essay '*The Green Knight* and other Vagaries of the Spirit; or, Tricks and Images for the Human Soul; or, the Uses of Imaginative Literature' that, "Julius King, the Satan figure, bears some resemblance to Lucas Graffe of *The Green Knight* , but nothing in the analogy holds up to serious analysis".[77] It does, however, bear academic interrogation as both are satanic characters who challenge the very description of them as 'Satanic' and they are each inspired by Milton and influenced by Byron's literary heritage. They are also two of Murdoch's most successful enigmatic and charming Machiavellian protagonists. The words, "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" are attributed to Milton's infamous anti-hero, Satan, also known as Lucifer whose name meaning 'light' refers to his former incarnation as an inhabitant of Heaven. His assertion is paraphrased by the phonetically similarly named, Lucas, in Murdoch's *A Green Knight,* when he responds to his nemesis, Peter Mir's threat, "I'd like to send you to hell", with, "My dear, I live in hell, and have done since I was a small child".[78] The similarities between these two complex and enigmatic characters does not stop there; Lucas is described in terms reminiscent of Milton's Satan: appealing yet authoritative, and inspiring fear in most of those he encounters. Lucas' name may sound similar to Lucifer, and appear to derive from Lucius, which originates with the Latin term, "*lux*" meaning "light",[79] but "*lūcus"* in Latin is "grove" and connects to the phrase "*lucus a non lucendo"* defined by *Oxford Reference* as: "a paradoxical or otherwise absurd derivation; something which the qualities are the opposite of what the name suggests. [...] [T]he Latin means, "a grove (so called from the absence of *lux* (Latin)); that is, a grove is named from the fact of its not shining".[80] It is hard to imagine that a keen linguist like Murdoch who knew Latin, French and Greek and also attempted German, Russian and Turkish[81] would not be aware of this, especially considering that she was a writer who took considerable care

over the naming of her characters, a circumstance she commented upon in discussion with Jack I. Biles in 1977.[82] The paradoxical nature of the name's associations make it perfect for such a conflicting characterisation: the particular phrase to which it refers draws attention both to the light through its absence and also to the pervading darkness of the grove. Indeed, Lucas is repeatedly depicted as dwelling in the dark and only turning on electric lights when he has visitors. When the reader is first introduced to him through a visit by Bellamy, his guest enters "through an unlighted corridor" to the "unlighted" "drawing room", which is subsequently lit in Bellamy's presence. Lucas has "[h]eavy velvet curtains" "drawn across the glass doors";[83] and even "very dark narrow eyes",[84] as if he is physically predisposed to reject as much light into his body as possible. As we are now familiar with Murdoch's enduring fascination with Plato's 'cave myth' these characteristics can be seen to cohere with Lucas' rejection of the light of the Good and his focus on the darkness of the interior (both with reference to his physical surroundings and his solipsistic emotional autonomy). His rooms are only occasionally altered by artificial light, which would surely be a suitable modern day replica of the reflected light of the fire for the prisoners/slaves in Plato's *Republic*. Whether Lucas has fallen from the light as Lucifer has, is less clear, he is described as a cruel and jealous child, bullying his brother and envying Clement's biological inheritance to such an extent that he later attempts to murder him. The light may also represent his innocence at birth prior to his adoption, or the period before Clement's birth when he was the only child in his adoptive parent's house. In discussion with Diana Phillips, Richard Todd, and John Bayley, Murdoch commented that *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is a "sort of religious allegory", saying to Phillips that she "rightly identified Julius as the devil". She goes on to elaborate:

> **Murdoch**: [...] You might think of the devil being omnipresent, that's to say incarnate in different places, both because it amuses him to be so, but also out of a perverse desire to suffer. Of course, this is all really a wild quasi-theology that's as it were behind the book rather than clearly expressed in it: that the devil might also want to suffer, and that it's not just the prerogative of the gods.
>
> **Bayley**: That's very ingenious; I mean the devil is not normally portrayed as suffering, is he?
>
> **Murdoch**: Well, I don't know. He does suffer in *Paradise Lost*. [...] He suffers from being banished from God.[85]

Both Lucas and Julius are, like Satan, not straightforward depictions of evil and so cannot easily be assigned the role of villain. Bran Nicol considers the Murdoch heroic type in his essay "Iris Murdoch's Aesthetics of Masochism":

> Her fictional world is dominated by a series of "enchanter-figures" who rule over others like cruel tyrants, punishing them emotionally, often enjoying them sexually. It is natural to characterize these characters as *sadistic*, especially as they exhibit something of the distinctive sadistic coldness in their disregard for the feelings of others. But what makes them powerful is the way that others enable them to *remain* powerful.[86]

Here Nicol seems to be suggesting that although these characters can be termed cruel they cannot easily be pigeonholed as entirely evil. Murdoch's characterisation is more sophisticated and realistic than this. It is the way others respond to them that initially defines them for the reader but the truth of the person behind the action remains to a certain extent in all cases enigmatic. This is a trait of the Byronic hero. In *Paradise Lost*, Satan's comment "Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell" is followed by a monologue of regret and confusion:

> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
> O then at last relent: is there no place
> Left for repentance, none for pardon left?
> None left but by submission; and that word
> Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame
> Among the Spirits beneath,
> [...]
> But say I could repent and could obtain
> By act of grave my former state; how soon
> Would heighth recall high thoughts (Book IV, l. 76-95)[87]

This element of confusion and sympathy in the characterisation is integral to the definition of the Byronic hero as Andrew Elfenbein comments in reference to *Manfred:*

> MANFRED: Her faults were mine – her virtues her own –
> I loved her, and destroy'd her!
> WITCH: With thy hand?
> MANFRED: Not with my hand, but my heart – which
> broke her heart –
> It gazed on mine, and wither'd. I have shed
> Blood, but not hers – and yet her blood was shed –
> I saw and could not staunch it.
> (*Manfred*, II.ii.100-21)

> After having set up his reader for a sophisticated, insider knowledge of sexuality, Byron here upsets the reader's interpretive mastery. No coherent narrative emerges from Manfred's broken clauses. He claims agency and denies it; admits to violence, but not in the case of Astarte's death; and moves from describing her death in terms of organic decay (wither'd') to violence ('her blood was shed').[88]

Manfred's regret and his culpability are both evident in this quotation and even Don Juan has arguably recommendable qualities, rescuing the ten year old Leila and providing care for her. The same can be said of Heathcliff who we know Murdoch was interested in as a character in *Wuthering Heights.* His cruelty is often offset by an unorthodox sense of honour and episodes of remorse. The knowledge the reader has about his unfortunate history, although not comprehensive, also adds to their desire to sympathise with him even after acts which should by conventional moral standards be inexcusable. *The Green Knight's* Lucus Graffe is similarly ethically puzzling. His relationship with Louise and her daughters appears to be supportive and although they do not initially appear to be emotionally or socially comfortable with him, we learn he has both proposed marriage to Louise and that he has tutored Sefton. He has also taken on to a degree a paternal role to the three girls and to the apparently illegitimate son of Joan, Harvey. There is though an indication that Joan and Lucas have previously had a more intimate relationship which may allude to a certain obligation in Lucas' duty of care to Harvey. Similarly his eventual elopement and marriage to Aleph may betoken decency or conversely, selfishness. It is simply not clear what motivates him and why, and without this information his actions can be judged but not the entire person.

The confusing nature of who represents good and evil in *The Green Knight* is further explored through the character of Peter Mir. Miles Leeson in *Iris Murdoch Philosophical Novelist* states that "it is Peter who exhibits the central ethical codes which inform the basis of the Christian belief [...] Peter moves toward the good".[89] Bran Nicol also contemplates these attributes of Peter's, drawing attention to how he can be compared to Christ, "removed from the specific framework of the Bible", remarking that he is "resurrected", and quoting Clement as saying, "Peter saved his life and gave his life for me".[90] Elizabeth Dipple also enforces the Christ connection in her article "*The Green Knight* and Other Vagaries of the Spirit; or Tricks and Images for the Human Soul; or, The Uses of the Imaginative Literature".[91] However, this identification of Mir with God (albeit the Christian God on earth) is highly problematic even if the consideration is qualified as being 'removed' from the usual Biblical sphere, if indeed such a removal is possible. Anne Rowe perhaps is the closest to identifying Murdoch's

purpose in creating Mir, writing in *The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch* that he is "variously interpreted as Mr Pickwick, Prospero, the Minotaur, Mephistopheles, and the Green Knight, but defies an absolute parallel with any such character. Murdoch refuses to identify any character in this book as good".[92] I would go further than this and state that no one character embodies good or evil but the majority are shown to be capable of both extremes of human behaviour. By doing this, ironically, Murdoch makes the novel itself more easily associated with its fourteenth-century counterpart, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which similarly leaves its protagonists open to interpretation; and equally ironically it also makes her characters more realistic. Milton's Satan has been described as seeming in his own postlapsarian state to be more human than the pre-Fall Adam and certainly more so than the two dimensional image of erotically infused innocence that is embodied by his female counterpart, Eve.

iv. The enchanter figure in Arthurian myth and legend

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, published in 1992, just a year before the publication of *The Green Knight* Murdoch wrote of romance in Arthurian myth and in Shakespeare in the following terms:

> It is interesting that Shakespeare does not use the Arthurian legends or refer to them except for a sneer by Hotspur (I Henry IV, III, i, 48) and a joke by the Fool (*Lear*, III, ii, 95) directed against Merlin. *Cymberline* is not Arthurian. He knew that that stuff was not for him, its sexy magical romantic world is incompatible with the high art to which his art belonged. Of course Malory's writings are beautiful, but Shakespeare's own romanticism as seen in the comedies as clean and clear by contrast (it is 'tougher'). This also has to do with his portrayal of women. His women are free individuals, brilliant images of liberation which then lay (in many contexts still lies) in the future. Malory's women are semi-magical charmers, worthy of being celebrated by pre-Raphaelite painters. Shakespeare created his own symbols. The powerful image of the grail would have been a nuisance in one of his plays, and I suspect that he found it alien.[93]

Of course, romance in Malory is different from Shakespeare's romances, and these are both distinct from the Romantic Movement which arguably encompassed the writing of Byron. However, there are similarities; it is no accident that the two examples of romantic or Romantic writing that Murdoch brings up against each other in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight* are from these two traditions. Murdoch shows that people live their lives with symbols and images that are old, well-known,

and unoriginal; so that although the Arthurian legends may have been unwieldy for Shakespeare to utilise because he wrote plays where an image such as the grail would have to stand isolated without the necessary explanation to render its import original, for Murdoch, as a novelist, universally recognised symbols such as the grail are important, in order to engage with the reality of people's lives and are rendered usable by virtue of the wide field of reference and explanation the novel affords. A symbol does not stand in isolation in a novel: there is the possibility for further explanation and vitally there is the potential to juxtapose a number of such symbols side by side in a new context which ultimately reinvigorates all of the references and the works that they signal. Crucially, for Murdoch to renegotiate the novel form she needed to brave the aspects of its history she found obsolete or imperfect within the bounds of the form itself in order to confront the issues within the characters themselves and thereby in the reality she hoped to engage with. Not only that but she also confronts other forms of artistry and literature which she has to overcome in order to assert the prominence of the novel form. In a way reminiscent of Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence, the novel must wrestle with its predecessors and finally emerge both benefitting from the past but original. Romanticism is as old as the art of story-telling and as Murdoch stated that "we live by stories"[94] she would surely agree that story-telling is in the foundations of social development and human character: in order to explore one then she must engage with the other.

The main source text for *The Green Knight*, the anonymously penned *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, tells of a festive challenge to the court of Sir Arthur, when a Green Knight appears before the assembled knights and ladies and asks who will accept his proposal to strike him with his axe. If he lives, he promises they will receive a return blow on the following New Year's Day. He first approaches Arthur but Gawain manages to persuade the King to let him take his place. To the great surprise of the court, the visiting knight is able to collect his severed head from the floor and reattach it after Gawain has taken his turn; and is therefore capable of returning the favour in a year's time. The following year Gawain honours the agreement and seeks out the Green Chapel where the knight resides. As he becomes weary from the journey he seeks rest at a castle owned by Baron Bercilak and his wife. Bercilak makes a deal with Gawain that his guest will remain in the castle and he will go out hunting, but at the end of the day they will honestly trade their day's fair. Each day Bercilak's beautiful wife seeks out Gawain and attempts to seduce him, gaining in persistence as time goes on. In keeping with the chivalric code Gawain cannot easily spurn the lady's advances without

offending her but he also cannot betray his host and herein lays the particular difficulty of the poem. Gawain is good to his word, giving Bercilak the kisses he has received from his Lady at the close of the day in return for Bercilak's kill from the hunt. On the third day the Lady tries to press a jewelled ring on Gawain but he refuses it. However, when the Lady offers Gawain a green girdle that she assures will save him from death, aware of his upcoming meeting with the Green Knight he accepts the gift and does not reveal it to his host. When he finally meets the Green Knight his stroke of the axe merely scratches Gawain and the knight is then revealed as Bercilak who has tested Gawain's knightly prowess through this game of exchanges. As Gawain only failed to reveal the gift of the girdle, he has only been minimally punished. Gawain takes the girdle as a symbol of his folly and Morgan le Fay is exposed as the enchantress behind the plan, apparently with the original aim of killing Queen Guenevere with shock when the knight first appeared, but also to test the values of King Arthur's kingdom.

The girdle is symbolic of temptation, compromising the chivalric sense of honour, and of sexual seduction. In *A Companion to the Gawain Poet,* Jane Gilbert refers to the import of such a token for the fourteenth-century readership and the possibility for it to be used as evidence not simply as a flirtation but of adultery. Gilbert goes on to assert that it is crucial that Gawain does not accept the jewelled ring the Lady offers him, as its value would suggests an even more involved intimate relationship between the two.[95] The contemporaneous reader would of course be aware of Gawain's reasoning behind accepting the gift and the dangerous position he is in; but they would also be aware of what the girdle might mean if Bercilak should discover it, and that ultimately hiding this particular token therefore shows Gawain's cowardice. With this in mind it is necessary to question Mir's motivation for accepting the green sash in Murdoch's novel and also Moy's role in enslaving him with it. Peter Mir dresses as "a bull: a big savage bull" at Moy's fancy dress birthday party. Moy is asked by Peter to "lead" him into the party, urging, "I am your pet, tell them I am your pet, the owl shall lead the bull, beauty and the beast".[96] She then offers a "green girdle" from her dressing gown (which we are told was once the property of Aleph) to Peter who ties it around his "bull neck".[97] It seems likely that an association between Aleph and Peter Mir is intended but the meaning of this connection is unclear. Both the Minotaur and an ox/bull can be interpreted as domesticated or imprisoned creatures but Murdoch has left it undecided who is the trapped and who is the controller. This is a novel of more questions than answers and both the concept of a 'beast' or monster that requires capture, as well as the green girdle itself are heavy with symbolism In Malory's *Le Morte Darthur,* Arthur unknowingly

commits incest with his sister just prior to seeing the Questing Beast. It is immediately after this that he learns the truth of his parentage and consequently that he has committed incest.[98] In *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition*, Carolyne Larrington points out that in the *Post-Vulgate Suite de Merlin*, "[t]he Beast is itself a consequence of incestuous sibling desire."[99] Mir's disguise and his consequent interaction with Moy are suggestive of a corruption of some sort but it is not clear from this alone just what this corruption may constitute.

Although it may seem most natural to associate Moy with the only enchantress in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Morgan le Fay, I would like to suggest that Moy can indeed be viewed as an enchantress from Arthurian myth but from the wider tradition not from this particular tale. The Arthurian tales often refer to a wider network of such literature and are not simply contained texts, although they may stand independently they reach outside of themselves into the work of other authors who have recounted Arthurian stories and often presume a degree of prior knowledge. This is similar to Murdoch's intertextual approach, although admittedly her frame of reference was much broader. Carolyne Larrington outlines the artistry of Arthurian literature and its emphasis on intertextuality:

> The Gawain poet knows how to weave together the different challenges that feminine space offer to chivalry; his is a complex game of textual reference and recognition. The late revelation of Morgan's identity, as Moore shows, is a literary treat for those of members of the audience who take pleasure in knowing about the wider Arthurian universe. Jauss, we recall, observes that the medieval text likes to 'negate the character of the individual text as a work in order to enjoy the charm of an already ongoing game with unknown rules and still unknown surprises'. Such pleasures, of recognition and suspense, are among the chief delights of reading Arthurian literature.[100]

Murdoch may utilise the motifs of the Arthurian world, but the rules are all her own. The source material for both *The Green Knight* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is numerous and wide-ranging, but even within the Arthurian realm the references are various and this is particularly true when trying to characterise her main protagonists. Aleph is the easiest character to attach to Morgan le Fay. Although clear information on Aleph's personality is scant, there is enough to suggest a concealed cunning and adamantine quality to her which would render her capable, at least hypothetically of orchestrating much of the plot. Much as the lack of information given about the key persons and themes of this novel can be frustrating for the literary critic, it perfectly replicates the mood of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* which has also left much

unresolved. Is Morgan le Fay really intending to terrify Guenevere to death? And if so, considering her extensive and sophisticated magical abilities could she not have found a more efficient method to kill her? Why would Morgan involve Gawain even after Guenevere is demonstrably still very much alive? Why is Bercilak keen to be involved in Morgan's plan? Is Morgan an agent of pure malice in instigating the games and if so why doesn't she go further? These and many more questions have haunted critics for centuries raising as many theories to explain the actions of the poem as there are potential queries and discrepancies. However, parallels between Aleph and Morgan seep into much of the information that is available in both texts.

'The beheading game' in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is known from earlier folklore but, here, as Stephen Greenblatt asserts in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, there is a crucial difference:

> [T]he outcome of the game does not turn only on the champion's courage as it does in Bricriu's Feast. The Gawain poet has devised another series of tests for the hero that link the beheading with his truth, the emblem of which is the pentangle – a five-pointed star – displayed on Gawain's coat of arms and shield. The word truth in Middle English, [...] means not only what it means now [...] but what is conveyed by the old-fashioned variant from the same root: *troth* - that is, faith pledged by one's word and owed to a lord, a spouse, or anyone who puts someone else under an obligation. In this respect, Sir Gawain is being measured against a moral and Christian idea of chivalry. Whether or not he succeeds in that contest is a question carefully left unresolved - perhaps as a challenge for the reader. [101]

This connection with "truth" or "*troth*" is significant in its relation to Aleph's role in the narrative. Originally named Alethea, meaning truth, she goes on to deceive her family and is rumoured to have gained the admiration of Peter Mir as well as Lucas. Mir draws attention to Aleph's names and their connections in the following exchange:

> 'Aleph – that's Hebrew, it's the letter A.'
>
> 'I know,' said Aleph. She blushed.
>
> 'Didn't you want to be Alethea? It means truth, well of course you know that. It's such a lovely name.'
>
> 'I just - '
>
> 'May I call you Alethea? I think I will!'[102]

Louise mentions that all her children have replaced their names, but it is only Aleph's he comments on; and her lack of explanation for why she would not wish to be named 'truth' associated with her obvious discomfort only make what she conceals more intriguing. The Hebrew letter '*aleph'* is described by Isaac Taylor in *The Alphabet: An*

Account of the Origin and Development of Letters, as "the ordinary Semitic term for an 'ox', going on to assert that "[t]he Moabite letter [...] bears no inapt resemblance to the front view of the head of the ox".[103] This is interesting considering that Peter Mir is compared to a minotaur by Moy and when this circumstance is connected with the earlier considerations of servitude implied by Aleph's name and the symbolism connected to her, Lucas, and Peter, it is illuminating. The concept of '*troth'* associated with Aleph must be employed ironically as not only does she deceive but she is also dishonourable. Carolyne Larrington asserts in *King Arthur's Enchantresses* that a woman would be expected to show loyalty to her family first and her lover/husband second, and a lack of enthusiasm for this course of action is something that characterises many female 'villains' in Arthurian legend.[104] This is connected to the distrust of the erotic in Arthurian myth. Morgan le Fay's numerous lovers and her disregard for her husband are a source of concern, and Gawain's mother, the Queen of Orkney is slain by her own son (Gawain's brother, Gaheris) for supposedly dishonouring her family through the taking of younger lovers. Her death occurs whilst in her chamber with Lamorak, and tellingly from a modern psychological perspective, she is decapitated,[105] although no such fate awaits her paramour. We know that Aleph and Lucas are sexually entangled because it is made explicit to the reader through Harvey's pursuit of his mother to Lucas' home where he spies a woman in the bedroom with him, presuming it to be Joan he leaves hurriedly but in retrospect it is fair assume it is Aleph. Her sexual interests may extend to Peter Mir indicating sexual promiscuity, a characteristic of Morgan le Fay. Mir's gift of a diamond necklace may be assumed to imply a more intimate relationship than the reader is aware of but this is not in any way clarified. Aleph's superior intellect, also arguably connects her to Morgan le Fay.

> Morgan is reported both in *Merlin* and the *Post-Vulgate Suite* to have studied hard to gain both literacy and magical knowledge. In the *Merlin* she learns to read and write when, after her marriage, her husband, surprisingly perhaps, sends her to a convent for her education. Morgan goes on to specialize in *astronomie* [...]. For her wide knowledge, understanding of medicine and intelligence, she gains the byname *le fée*. At Arthur's court, when Gawain and his brothers are knighted, Morgan, now characterized as 'a good woman clerk', meets Merlin and begins her study with him, learning 'many wonders in astrology and necromancy.'[106]

Morgan's ability to "read and write" should not be underestimated in the context of medieval society, Larrington explains that whereas reading might be expected amongst aristocratic women, writing was an unusual and "secondary" as "scribes" could be

employed to write for them if they had not acquired the skill. She also suggests that Morgan's lack of knowledge at her marriage may be partially to do with her illegitimacy,[107] something that raises further questions about her connection to Aleph.

Moy, however, can perhaps be seen as a character drawn from another powerful female magician, this time though generally a source of good, the Lady of the Lake.[108] Unlike Morgan le Fay who has in most tales acquired her abilities through strength, cunning and connections, the Lady of the Lake has natural capabilities like Moy herself, whose association with kinesis is emphasised throughout the plot.

> We can, however, confidently ascribe a supernatural origin to the Lady of the Lake, who must originally have been a water fairy [...]. The water fairy differs from the mermaid in that she has a human form; she lives under the water in a courtly environment which differs little from the real world except by virtue of being hidden from it. [109]

This is reflected in Moy's association with the colour blue, in her choice of clothing and her "royal blue" eyes, as well as the incident with the swan which firmly associates her both with the water and the natural world. Tellingly there is a mural painted in the Oxford Union Library featuring various depictions of Arthurian tales by Sandys, Burne-Jones and Rosetti amongst others, which includes a painting by Val Prinsep showing Nimuë or the Lady of the Lake, dressed in long flowing blue and white robes with a mass of straight yellow hair.[110] Murdoch would certainly have seen this depiction of the Lady of the Lake and its resemblance to Moy may have been influential. If Moy is associated with the Lady of the Lake then her power is as great, or indeed, potentially greater than that of Morgan. Larrington refers to her role in helping Arthur overcome Morgan when she plots to murder him by sending an enchanted cloak.[111] In *Le Morte Darthur* it is Nenive, the Lady's *Damosel* rather than the Lady herself, who urges Arthur to make the messenger don the garment if it is safe to do so and when Arthur forces the messenger to wear it, she consequently burns to death.[112] In Malory's version of events it is also the Lady of the Lake's *Damosel* who ensnares Merlin by capturing him under a stone[113] but this does not diminish the connection of these events to the Lady of the Lake. Stones are noticeably associated with Moy throughout the novel and therefore this links her to the Lady. In the *Merlin*, Viviane "is already able to read and write" "while in the Lancelot her counterpart Ninianne writes everything Merlin teaches her 'on parchment' and inscribes two magic words on her loins so that Merlin cannot have sex with her against her will".[114] Moy may not be academic but she is skilled in other areas, some of them, like her affinity with animals and birds, and her ability to move items without touching them can easily be associated with magical endeavours.

She is conspicuous in the text through her goodness, her purity and her fey quality, all of which can be ascribed to Nenive. Moy also, like her Arthurian counterpart, is not one of the central protagonists involved obviously in the main action of the plot, although both Moy and the Lady do influence events. All of the main characters with the exception of Moy have some kind of passion for Lucas, Moy does not, and he does not take any interest in her. Yet Peter Mir takes a particular interest in Moy, singling her out to pay attention to her over and above the other characters; it is also to her that he offers his enslavement. However, it cannot be ignored that his jovial role as her 'pet' sees him wearing the highly symbolic green sash or girdle that once belonged to Aleph just as Lady Bercilak present of a girdle to Gawain is ultimately the work of Morgan le Fay.

I would like to suggest that Murdoch's reading of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is both more straightforward and more convoluted than either the text suggests or has been usually asserted by critics. If Lucas rather than Peter Mir is taken to be the Green Knight/Bercilak character and Aleph is accepted as Bercilak's Lady then that makes Peter Mir, Gawain; and Clement, King Arthur. As in the Middle English poem, the Green Knight's challenge is not intended for the person who receives it; it is Arthur, and not Gawain the Knight seeks in the first instance but Gawain puts himself forward to take the King's place and save him. This is Peter Mir's role in Murdoch's novel where Clement is the intended recipient of the blow by Lucas' baseball bat but Peter intervenes. Gawain seeks out the Green Knight which is exactly what Peter does with Lucas, except it is the Green Knight who seeks retribution rather than his adversary, but here the situation is seemingly reversed. On Gawain's route to the Green Knight/Bercilak he meets Bercilak's wife, just as Peter Mir discovers Louise and her daughters whilst searching for Lucas. Bercilak's Lady is accompanied by an older lady just as Aleph is. Whether Aleph does anything to encourage Peter Mir is unknown, just as her relations with Lucas remain concealed.

One of the most enlightening moments in connection to Mir's feelings for the three girls comes with his gifts to them all. Aleph's is a diamond necklace, Sefton's is amber, and Moy's lapis lazuli. Aleph's is revealed third following the pattern in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* where, during the exchanges game, the most dangerous gift is offered third and also in line with numerous folk and fairy-tales where the third and final revelation is the most important or disturbing. In the New Testament this is also the case, for example, on the night before His crucifixion, Christ addresses Peter: "Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Matthew 26:34). Marie-Luise von Franz, however, writes in *The Interpretation of*

Fairy Tales that although the importance of the number three is often asserted, in many cases there are "three similar rhythms and then a final action" which makes a group of four.[115] To a certain extent this can be seen in *The Green Knight* if Peter Mir's gift presented to Moy on her birthday, can be seen as the first offering, and Aleph's diamond necklace as the last present remains the most significant. She does not appear as surprised as her sisters or her mother at the gifts of jewellery, merely reacting to their evident cost saying, "[w]ell he's rich isn't he?"[116] She then offers her own package to Moy to open. Even when the outer wrapping is removed and Moy passes her the box to open, she does not rush: "Aleph frowning slightly as if fastidious, opened the box and lifted out a heavy sparkling mass." "The others" 'exclaim' and 'avert' "their eyes" but Aleph merely puts the stones in order. Her mother is alarmed as well as surprised but her eldest daughter puts the necklace "on the table making the shape of a V-shaped collar". [117] That the necklace is described as a "collar" is significant for Murdoch, as Diane Sedley, George's lover and a prostitute in *A Philosopher's Pupil*, wears a necklace he likes to see her in, which he describes as "her 'slave's collar'".[118] Where the others choose to excitedly discuss the implications of the gifts and whether to keep them, Aleph holds back: "Aleph gathered up the sparkling mass and dropped it into its box. She uttered a long deep sigh. Then she rose and left the room taking the box with her."[119] Apparently she does not need to discuss whether to accept the present, but why is left unexplained. Like Gawain - Moy, Sefton and Louise are concerned about the implications of such gifts - Aleph does not voice any such concerns, but it is worth noting that Aleph's gift is the most valuable gift and in worldly terms the most significant, diamonds being traditionally associated with love. Where Gawain refuses the gift of jewellery from his seductress on the grounds it might compromise his honour, Aleph accepts the gift without comment. This occurrence does not reflect particularly favourably on either the giver or the receiver, of this most ostentatious present.

Peter Mir has been generally accepted as the green knight of the title by virtue of his association with the colour green throughout the narrative and because Aleph describes him as such.

> 'I am a vegetarian myself,' said Peter. 'I am very much for ecology. I am a member of the Green Party.'
>
> 'That's why you dress in green,' said Aleph, 'you've got a green tie and a green umbrella, and your suit is a sort of green too.'[120]

When they are deciding who he reminds them of, Aleph says, "I think he's the Green Knight".[121] This is the first potentially misleading suggestion on how to interpret this novel in terms of the source text. Aleph is later shown to not be honourable; and to have

a greater depth to her character than is originally thought by everyone, apart from Joan who mocks Louise in the first scene of the novel for seeing "Aleph as an angel who will never turn into a Valkyrie"; asserting that "[s]he'll choose a powerful older man who is rich and loves life, a top scientist, a top industrialist, a tycoon with a yacht and houses everywhere, and they'll have real fun."[122] Again the symbolism is too forced to be trustworthy and it also does not make sense. When Clement later tries to unravel the plot in terms of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, he reiterates the story but misses the crucial part about Morgan le Fay's role in the tale. He then tries to interpret Peter as the Green Knight because he is a "good" person and a possible "instrument of justice". He describes the Green Knight as a "magician".[123] Clement's comprehension of the original poem is limited and his use of it to investigate the events surrounding him is both confused and inaccurate. The Green Knight may be marvellous, but it is Morgan Le Fay who, the reader can assume, has created the marvels; she is the powerful magician, and as her characterisation is by no means unequivocally 'good' in Arthurian tradition (it is important to see the text as part of a wider network not as Clement does in isolation), it is unreasonable to assume that the Green Knight is a simply a force of good. There is little evidence in the original poem to support the suggestion that the Green Knight or his other incarnation Bercilak is good. Admittedly, he honours the terms of the agreement and appears fond of Sir Gawain when they both reside in the castle, but he is also in league with Morgan le Fay and subjects Gawain to a terrifying ordeal, one which tests not just the chivalric prowess of one man, but the entire might of Arthur's court. His relationship with Morgan le Fay is also probably not what it seems, as Carolyne Larrington asserts that Bercilak's wife and Morgan are probably mutually identifiable:

> Most scholars except the most literal-minded accept the Lady as a manifestation of Morgan. They cannot be one and the same as they appear together; rather as Heng notes, they are non-identical doubles...thoroughly constituted as the other's reference.' Morgan and her agent are clearly responsible for the Beheading Game and the Temptation Game; the intricate link between the Exchange of Winnings and the other games make it likely that Bercilak again acts on Morgan's instructions when he suggests the game to Gawain [...]. Morgan's primary aim in the poem is, as in the Val episode, to question chivalric values.[124]

Morgan's history is various and contradictory. She is sometimes depicted as an agent of good but at other times she is an enemy to the Arthurian realm and to Arthur himself. She attempts to kill her brother on more than one occasion, aiming to gain power for herself or for one of a number of lovers, but despite this, the siblings never lose their

bond. Larrington asserts that this can be interpreted in terms of an exaggerated version of a typical brother-sister relationship:

> Between them Arthur and his two sisters explore the two extremes of the sibling bond; with one sister he commits incest, while the other sister, in the *Post-Vulgate Suite de Merlin*, attempts to murder him. In most texts Morgan maintains a steady antipathy for her brother's wife; ultimately coming to threaten the whole system of chivalry, which is Arthur's proudest achievement. Yet, whatever the conflict between the two, from the early thirteenth century onwards, Morgan is always a comforting presence on the barge that bears Arthur away from the last battle.[125]

That Arthur never entirely rejects Morgan means that her character remains ambiguous. Even her hatred of Guenevere, which is also integral to her actions in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is not simply born of unreasoned malice or indeed jealousy. It is Guenevere's interference in Morgan's affair with the queen's relative, Guiomar, which is described in several texts as leading to the breach. That Guenevere's motives are depicted as rather spurious, being more intent on improving the career of her relative than protecting her sister-in-law.[126] This presents the potential to partially excuse Morgan's desire for revenge, especially in an environment that nurtures the notion of success through physical combat, even if it is very unusual for this to be enacted through the women in the texts. As the initial offense is of a sexual nature it is therefore no wonder that Morgan is determined to reveal Guenevere's own sexual indiscretion with Lancelot. This interpretation of Morgan is relevant to understanding Aleph and the mood of the novel in general and both areas remain morally unclear. As we have seen previously Morgan leaves her female protagonists open to interpretation in a way she does not with her male characters.

The name of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat's* Morgan is an overt reference to Morgan Le Fay. Like Aleph, she too is charming and intelligent but, unlike Aleph, she is not always deemed beautiful. She is more obviously sexually promiscuous, even sharing a romantic kiss with her nephew, Peter, who is keen to develop their relationship, although she eventually refuses, despite flirtatious behaviour. There is then an indication of moral weakness in Morgan, who only holds back at the last moment. Her relations with Julius are of a similar nature. She makes the bet with Julius to destroy relations between Axel and Simon, but she does not want to be involved in the complications of the aftermath. Her ability to act independently is limited, and she relies upon the men around her to determine circumstances. As much as Murdoch saw Morgan as a human soul being fought over by Jesus Christ (Tallis) and the Devil

(Julius),[127] her characters are ultimately too human to accurately resemble their Biblical counterparts. They are driven by personal desires and they do not consider the world at large, or the broader spiritual implications of their actions. Rather the trinity at the heart of the novel, that of Morgan, Julius and Tallis more closely resemble something from the highly manipulative, surprising and erotic world of Arthurian myth and legend where the Christian religion was ever present but where the earthly interpretation of good and evil took centre stage.

Unlike *The Green Knight* where the Arthurian connection can serve as a means to explain the unclear aspects of the plot here the reference to the Arthurian world is used to create a sense of confusion. Murdoch saw magic as a misleading concept creating a sense of *eikasis* and this is how it is presented here. The character most closely associated with the Arthurian is Morgan, who is the least capable of recognising the good. She misinterprets the excitement and danger of Julius and crucially she underestimates his ability to be cruelly manipulative. Similarly she fails to act as a responsible adult with Peter, gaining his trust but ultimately misleading and betraying him. Her misinterpretation of Julius as a 'god' is a sign not only of her lack of connection to religion and a reference to the first and second commandments but also is reminiscent of the archaic treatment of Merlin described by Caroline Larrington where he has being mistakenly identified as a god by the uneducated, due to his magical abilities.[128]

Julius's desire to play god, like Lucas', is a strange perversion of the role of the artist attempting to mould individuals into something resembling a work of art, so that the form of art extends to real life. Julius presents his plan to Morgan in the Tate Gallery and afterwards "[s]he looked around at the Turners. She could see now how limited and amateurish they really were."[129] This reveals the artistic level to Julius' behaviour and Morgan's limited insight. Her need for glasses can also be seen as evidence of her inability to see clearly, but here her view on the Turners illuminates her capacity to see Julius' suggestion as a sort of artistry and she is invigorated by it. Julius' detachment from his human subjects further enforces his casting as an artist; a consideration which is highlighted by the following statement:

> Human beings are roughly constructed entities full of indeterminacies and vaguenesses and empty spaces. Driven along by their own private needs they latch blindly on to each other, then pull away, then clutch again. Their little sadisms and their little masochisms are surface phenomena. Anyone will do to play the roles. [...] There is no relationship dear Morgan,

> which cannot easily be broken and none the breaking of which is a matter of any genuine seriousness.[130]

Although again this depiction of Julius relates back to the earlier description of Canetti it also enforces his role as magician and Murdoch's distrust of magic as a lying force. His inability to empathise with the subjects of his 'play' is disturbing as is the portrayal of him at the end of the novel: "The sun was warm upon his back. Life was good."[131] The role of the artist and the magician are inextricably linked in this novel and thus the dangerous nature of both is enforced.

Iris Murdoch's enchanter figures are unique to her *oeuvre* although they draw upon a rich and convoluted literary heritage of magnetic male personalities driven by complex moral imperatives. The history of the Byronic hero is integral to this character type, partly because it has been such a popular inspiration for authors in the years since Byron's life but also because, as in Byron's time, this character type has appealed both in life and in art. This cross-over between reality and literature was particularly pertinent to post-war authors trying to understand the charismatic charm of dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler. Throughout her fiction Murdoch strove to realistically depict and thereby comprehend the nature of evil, and of the Good. In a society that was trying to both understand the long held tradition of patriarchal authority and attempting to navigate ethical choices without the security of a traditional Christian social structure, this was most logically investigated through male characters with secular values and an unorthodox sense of ethical responsibility. Julius King and Lucas Graffe are both types of the Byronic hero but they also show signs of the evolution of this character type in line with historical cultural developments. *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight* also employ the history of this character variant alongside the myths and legends of Arthurian literature to present a complicated moral landscape designed to challenge the reader and to enforce the continued relevance of the novel form when juxtaposed with rival means of expression. The Byronic hero and the magicians of Arthurian myth and legend appear to exhibit a gender bias towards strong and sexually motivated male protagonists but by drawing upon the enigmatic and cunning female characters in both of these traditions in the portrayal of her own heroines, Murdoch questions whether that is the case, and asserts the equal importance of ambitious and intriguing female enchanters too.

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[1] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 261.
[2] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 270.

[3] Elizabeth Dipple, *'The Green Knight* and Other Vagaries of the Spirit; or Tricks and Images for the Human Soul; or, The Uses of the Imaginative Literature,' *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 138-168.
[4] This is particularly true of *The Green Knight* where critics have focussed on the relations between Lucas Graffe and Peter Mir rather than extensively considering the women in the novel. Although Morgan is given more attention during discussions of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Murdoch's own assertion that the novel is a Christian allegory with Julius and Tallis symbolising Satan and God fighting over a human soul, has enticed critics to see them as the key players in the drama of this novel. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hattie Meynell is generally viewed as a subsidiary character to the tempestuous behaviour of George McCaffrey and John Robert Rozanov.
[5] Helen Cooper, introd., ed., and notes, *Le Morte Darthur*, by Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) xviii.
[6] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 271.
[7] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 273.
[8] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 272.
[9] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 275.
[10] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," Conradi, *EM* 283.
[11] Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts," Conradi, *EM* 375.
[12] George Victor, *Hitler: The Pathology of Evil* (1998; Dulles, VA: Brasseys, 2000) 104.
[13] Murdoch, *GA* 148.
[14] Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* 94.
[15] Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms: Cultural Criticism and Society,* (1967), introd. Samuel M. Weber, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983) 34.
Adorno later amended his view saying in *Negative Dialectics*: "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems. But it is not wrong to raise the less cultural question whether after Auschwitz you can go on living – especially one who escaped by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, may go on living." Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* (1960) trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973) 362-363.
[16] Andrzej Gąsiorek, *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995) 1.
[17] Lord George Gordon Byron, *The Major Works.* ed., intro and notes Jerome J. McGann. (1998; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008) 881.
Jerome McGann, *Byron and Romanticism,* ed. James Soderholm (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 19-35.
[18] Frances Wilson, "Introduction: Byron, Byronism and Byromaniacs," *Byromania,* ed. Frances Wilson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 4.
[19] Wilson, 7.
[20] Ghislaine McDayter, "Conjuring Byron, Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity," *Byromania.* ed. Frances Wilson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 43-62.
[21] Atara Stein, *The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction and Television* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2004) 2.
[22] Murdoch, *FHD* 221.
[23] Murdoch, *FHD* 162.
[24] For the discussion on Elias Canetti in relation to these issues see: Conradi, *IMAL* 355 and 506.
[25] Conradi, *IMAL* 508.
[26] Andrew Elfenbein, "Byron: Gender and Sexuality," *The Cambridge Companion to Byron,* ed. Drummond Bone (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004) 65.
[27] Edna O'Brien says of *Manfred* "in England the repercussions were vicious and once more the gossip regarding his incestuous relationship circulated. When it appeared in 1817, it was savaged" (131).
[28] McCarthy writes that Augusta was "enthusiastic" to leave the country with Byron and that she "shows little sense of Byron's own sense of having sinned". Fiona McCarthy, *Byron Life and Legend,* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003) 206-207.
[29] Deborah Lutz, *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth Century Seduction Narrative* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2006) 52
[30] Stein, 78.
[31] Patsy Stoneman, notes, *Wuthering Heights,* by Emily Brontë, ed. Ian Jack (1995; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).
Leicester Bradner, 'The Growth of *Wuthering Heights*," *PMLA* 48.1 (1933): 129-146.

[32] Andrew Elfenbein draws attention to this circumstance in *Manfred* saying that "Byron is playing with his audience, bowing to conventions of propriety by not naming the relationship between Manfred and Astarte, yet doing so in a way that nevertheless makes it unmistakeable" ("Byron: Gender and Sexuality," *Cambridge Companion to Byron*, 69).
[33] McCarthy, *BLL* 204-206.
[34] Murdoch, *A Severed Head*, introd. Miranda Seymour (1965; London: Vintage, 2001)144.
[35] Murdoch, *SH* 134.
[36] Murdoch, *MGM* 97.
[37] Eric Soloman,"The Incest Theme in *Wuthering Heights," Nineteenth Century Fiction* 14.1 (1959): 80-83.
[38] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 31.
[39] Brontë, *WH* 120
[40] Brontë, *WH* 250.
[41] Brontë, *WH* 253.
[42] Pollak, 42.
[43] Otto Rank, *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend*, trans. Gregory C. Richter, introd. Peter L. Rudnytsky (1912; Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 1992) 369-371.
[44] When Toby first meets Nick in *The Bell* he is described as being "immediately startled by Nick's close resemblance to Catherine. Here was the same long heavy face, the leaden slumberous eyelids, the curling fringe of dark hair" (54). Michael considers Nick fourteen as "a child of considerable beauty" (101).
In *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly says that Heathcliff has "black hair and eyes" (181).
Don Juan is more effeminate than Heathcliff, but he also resembles Nick, being "curly haired" (Canto 1 v. 25 l. 194) as well as "handsome and slender" (Canto 1 v. 54 l.426).
Lord George Gordon Byron, "Don Juan," *The Major Works*, ed., intro and notes Jerome J. McGann (1998; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008) (373-879).
[45] Murdoch, The *Green Knight* (1993; Middlesex: Penguin, 1994) 1.
Joan's comment is a reference to the Dormouse's story at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in *Alice in Wonderland* which concerns three little girls who lived down a treacle-well.
Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1865 and 1872; London: Penguin, 1998) 65.
[46] Murdoch, *GK* 8.
[47] Elfenbein, 63.
[48] Murdoch, *GK* 417.
[49] Murdoch, *GK* 420.
[50] Murdoch, *GK* 429.
[51] The theory that sexual intercourse constitutes marriage in the Bible is far from conclusive. The basis of the argument revolves around certain key chapters and the wedding vows. If sex was such an integral part of the marital covenant then the end of the marriage ceremony which declares the couple 'husband and wife' would be incorrect, however the officiator also states "What therefore that God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" which suggests that adultery would break the spiritual marriage bond. This latter statement is from Matthew 19 which also states that remarriage where the spouse is still living constitutes adultery. The reasoning behind this is that Adam and Eve were "made one flesh" by God (Genesis 2: 21-24) but as there was no formal ceremony in Genesis, this in turn further complicates this issue. Ephesians 5:28-33 further asserts this spiritual bond but does not state how it is to be known by any apart from God simply saying it is "a great mystery".
There is also the matter of the case of the Samaritan woman in the Book of John: "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." This implies three possible judgements: that all of the woman's sexual partners are her husbands, only the first is her husband or that none of them are her husbands. As this is not clarified it can be used to argue both the import of sexual relations to marriage, that multiple partners dissolve a union, or the necessity of a ceremony (if indeed the woman had been joined to any of her partners with a ceremony) (John 4:7-18). St Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 10-11 supports the idea that the first 'husband' remains the only true one, but does not explain how this is defined: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

Adam Kuper states that Adam and Eve becoming "one flesh" "underpinned the doctrine of 'coverture,' which became a cornerstone of the Catholic conception of marriage: the wife was part of the husband's body". He goes on to say that "it was the act of sexual intercourse that made husband and wife 'one flesh'. According to Catholic doctrine, sexual intercourse created kinship between the most casual of lovers. This doctrine was accepted in English law until civil courts took over the divorce jurisdiction". *Incest and Influence: the Private Life of Bourgeois England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009) 59-60.

For more on interpretations of marriage resulting from the Bible see: Monicque Sharman, *The Bible, Sex, and This Generation: How God's word Applies Today* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse. Inc, 2003)

[52] Charles J. Reid, Jr., "Incest in Christianity," *Encyclopedia of Love in World Religions,* ed.Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008) 319.

[53] James A. Coriden, *An Introduction to Canon Law* (1994; London: Burns and Oates, 2004) 141.

[54] Murdoch, *GK* 5.

[55] Murdoch writes that "Louise had often done for him what mothers do" and goes on to say "her daughters were like sisters to him" (6).

[56] Murdoch, *TB* 191.

[57] Plato, *Symposium* 16-22.

This assertion also makes an unavoidable Biblical allusion to Adam and Eve as "one flesh" (Genesis) and to Emanuel Swedenborg's arguments on marriage in *A Brief View of the Heavenly Doctrines Concerning Marriage, the Life of Man After Death and the Second Advent 1828* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2007).

To support his arguments on the indissoluble spiritual marriage between a man and a woman, Swedenborg refers to 1 Cor. 11-12 "The man is not without the woman, neither is the woman without the man, in the Lord" (4). He also goes on to say with reference to Adam and Eve's creation: "That at creation, there was implanted in the man and woman an inclination and faculty of conjunction into one, and that both of this inclination and faculty are still in man and woman" (7-8).

[58] Murdoch, *GK* 12.

[59] Nabokov, *AA* 84.

[60] Nabokov, *AA* 127.

[61] Murdoch, *GK* 8.

[62] Hanks and Hodges,"Alethea" 9.

[63] Ronald L. Eisenberg, *J.P.S. Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004) 610.

[64] When asked by Peter Mir if he is Jewish Lucas replies, "I do not know, or wish to know, who my parents were" (*GK*, 122).

[65] Macey, "Name-of-the-Father", *DCT* 263.

[66] Murdoch, *GK* 8

[67] Anne Rowe, *The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) 116.

[68] Wilfred Shuchat, *The Creation According to the Midrash Rabbah*, ed. Rabbi Dr. Raphael Posner (Englewood, NJ: Devora Publishing, 2002) 49.

The word 'Torah' is used twice here in different contexts which initially may confuse some readers. *Bet* begins the creation story in the Torah, which is the Jewish sacred text and also the first five books of the Christian Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers. When God then says that aleph will commence His "Torah at Sinai" the word 'torah' them presumably refers to the Hebrew meaning of "*tōrāh"* "direction, instruction, doctrine, law" rather than the sacred text, even though the word is featured with a capital letter. The etymology of the word with its Hebrew meaning can be found here: "torah," *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., 1989; online version November 2010, 05 March 2011 http://www.oed.com:80/Entry/203492. An earlier version was first published in *New English Dictionary,* 1913.

[69] Byron, 881.

[70] Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2008) 62-63.

Florentino Garciā Martínez, "Eve's Children in the Targumim," *Eve's Children: The Biblical Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions.* Ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuizen. (Leiden, Neth.:Brill. 2003) 50-56.

[71] Elfenbein, 156.

[72] Stein, 4-5.

[73] Brontë, *WH* 145.

[74] John Milton, *Paradise Lost, The Complete Poems* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1998) 193.

[75] Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts," Conradi *EM* 380.
[76] Anne Paolucci, "Dante's Satan & Milton's 'Byronic Hero"' *Italica*, 41.2 (1964): 139-149
[77] Elizabeth Dipple, '*The Green Knight* and other Vagaries of the Spirit; or, Tricks and Images for the Human Soul; or, the Uses of Imaginative Literature,' Antonaccio and Schweiker 161.
[78] Murdoch, *GK* 252.
[79] Hanks and Hodges, *ODFN* "Lucius," 213.
[80] "lucus a non lucendo *noun phrase*," *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English*, ed. Jennifer Speake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) *Oxford Reference Online*, 5 Mar. 2011
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t33.e3969>.
[81] Peter J. Conradi, ed. and introd. *Iris Murdoch: A Writer at War Letters and Diaries 1939-45* (London: Short Books, 2010) 3.
[82] Murdoch, interview with Jack I. Biles, Dooley 66.
[83] Murdoch, *GK* 70.
[84] Murdoch, *GK* 71.
[85] Iris Murdoch *Encounters with Iris Murdoch Symposium*, ed. Richard Todd. Dooley 180-181
[86] Bran Nicol, 'Iris Murdoch's Aesthetics of Masochism,' *Journal of Modern Literature* 29.2 (2006) 153.
[87] Milton, 193- 194.
[88] Elfenbein, 69.
[89] Leeson, 142.
[90] Murdoch, *GK* 430.
Nicol, *I.M.R.F*. 44.
[91] Dipple,*"The Green Knight* and Other Vagaries of the Spirit; or Tricks and Images for the Human Soul; or, The Uses of the Imaginative Literature," Antonaccio and Schweiker 6-28.
[92] Rowe, *IMVA* 111.
[93] Murdoch, *MGM* 141.
[94] Murdoch, interview with Jonathan Miller.
[95] Jane Gilbert, "Gender and Sexual Transgression," *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, eds. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997) 53-69; 66-68.
[96] Murdoch, *GK* 213.
[97] Murdoch, *GK* 213.
[98] Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed., introd., and notes Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 21-23.
[99] Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I.B. Taurus, London) 130.
[100] Larrington, 67-68.
[101] Stephen Greenblatt, "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1. ed, Stephen Greenblatt (1962; New York: Norton, 2000) 157.
[102] Murdoch, *GK* 193.
[103] Isaac Taylor, *The Alphabet: An Account of the Origin and Development of Letters* (1883; New Delhi: Asian Education Services, 1991) 169.
[104] Larrington, 31.
[105] See: Freud, "Medusa's Head," *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*
[106] Larrington, 15.
[107] Larrington, 15.
[108] The Lady of the Lake is also sometimes associated with other characters and recognised in these instances by their names. Larrington lists her various identifiers as: "Nymenche or Ninianne (in the *Vulgate Lancelot*)" "Niniene (in the *Non-Cyclical Lancelot*)" (100), Nimuë (157) and also Viviane and Niviene (151, 217).
[109] Larrington, 13.
[110] Larrington, 158. Also see Plate 11 in Larrington.
[111] Larrington, 36
[112] Malory, 73.
[113] Malory, 58-60.
[114] Larrington, 15.
[115] Marie-Luise von Franz, *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales.* 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1996) 89.
[116] Murdoch, *GK* 228.

[117] Murdoch, *GK* 229.
[118] Murdoch, *PP* 75.
[119] Murdoch, *GK* 229.
[120] Murdoch, *GK* 194.
[121] Murdoch, *GK* 195.
[122] Murdoch, *GK* 9.
[123] Murdoch, *GK* 431-432.
[124] Larrington, 66.
[125] Larrington, 30.
[126] Larrington, 41-42.
[127] Murdoch, *Recontres Avec Iris Murdoch*, ed. Jean-Louis Chevalier, Dooley 73.
[128] Larrington, 13.
[129] Murdoch, *FHD* 226.
[130] Murdoch, *FHD* 224.
[131] Murdoch, *FHD* 438.

Conclusion

Iris Murdoch and novel as the "great hall of reflection" [1]

In an interview with Harold Hobson in 1962, Iris Murdoch commented that "[g]reat literature is morally great and involves making judgements on the way human beings go on".[2] During the same conversation she remarked that "In *The Bell* I offer three extremely clear types of moral reaction to a certain situation and I indicate to the reader which is the right one. I don't know what more he wants."[3] It is patent that even in the early stages of Murdoch's professional novel writing career she considered that the artist had a moral role and such a role did not prohibit an authorial agenda. However, it is equally apparent that, even in the example she refers to, regarding her 1958 novel, *The Bell*, that as much as the artist may have an opinion which is comprehensible throughout the text, ultimately the reader is left with the responsibility of determining what is right and wrong, or indeed, arriving at somewhere in between. To use her word, Murdoch 'offers' the scenarios and her authorial judgement may be implicit, but it is not directive or intrusive. This is where Murdoch's greatest strength as a socially responsible writer lies and this is arguably one of the reasons why she was able to continue to be a successful author, both in terms of commercial sales and critical acclaim, whilst she addressed such controversial and sensitive subjects. To present alternatives to a reader and to put the emphasis on them to make their own decisions is not just to create "a house fit for free characters to live in",[4] but is also not to deny the reader *their* autonomy. Murdoch commented that a "literary work is an extremely heterogeneous object which demands an open-minded heterogeneous response".[5] The reaction is consequently more powerful because it is a choice not a dictate.

Freedom is an important part of Murdoch's artistic and social vision; but freedom for one individual may limit the liberty of another, and it is here that Murdoch's concept of thinking in "degrees of freedom"[6] becomes important. As she asserts in "Against Dryness":

> We are not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy. Our picture of freedom encourages a dream-like facility; whereas what we require is a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons. [...] Simone Weil said that morality was a matter of attention, not of will. [7]

To think only in terms of the individual or even in terms of a small group of people is to neglect the truth of a situation and to oversimplify the elements of it; this in turn makes it easier to reinvent the actual event or events as a fantasy that consoles. Murdoch's novelistic interpretation of the incest problem and the wider issues relating to the abuse and subordination of her characters, particularly women and children, highlights the human capacity for neglecting to really pay attention to what is happening and to try and define social problems in terms of individual isolated cases. Murdoch's presentation of incest abuse in her writing brought such issues to a wider audience and also positions her as a part of a network of artists and theorists interested in renegotiating the presentation of incest in society, the assigning of blame, and the consequent definitions of aggressors, colluders, victims and survivors. Murdoch thereby contributed to making a private problem an internationally recognised one and to changing the way that the problem was considered.

Like a number of her contemporaries, Murdoch's approach was necessarily interconnected with highlighting other social problems and the related plight of subordinated groups, such as women, children in general, and ethnic minorities of both genders. Her means are perhaps best described in her own words:

> Art is a great hall of reflection, and that's why it's important from a political point of view that there would be free art, because art is a place where all sorts of free reflection goes on. [...] Good art can't help teaching you things, but it mustn't aim at teaching. The artist's task is to make good works of art. A novel is a mode of explanation; you can't help explaining characters and scrutinising their motives. The novelist is the judge of these people – that can't help emerging – and it is more difficult for the novelist to be a just judge. In the traditional novel, which is what I'm talking about, the novelist is *ipso facto* revealing his own morality, and he should be doing so.[8]

Art as a 'great hall of reflection' illustrates Murdoch's use of intertextuality, and the metaphor of the incestuous text where the structure reflects the content. Murdoch's use of intertextuality has juxtaposed social history and artistic history with that of her present, occasioning comparisons between archaic attitudes to both society and art, and that of her contemporary readership. Murdoch has used intertextuality to interrogate the novel form, its relevance and its role as a mode of expressing and considering moral problems. It is clear from the above quote that she saw the novelist as a moral entity but it is also obvious that in her theory the author will be judged by the reader. What her use of intertextuality does is to further interrogate the morality of the author by juxtaposing numerous writers, and forms of writing, against each other to challenge their relevance

and their worth to the social values of their contemporaries and to those of Murdoch's readership.

Her way of utilising intertextuality to present incest is effective because although incest is prevalent in literature, historically, it has rarely been directly addressed as a problem for literary representation. Iris Murdoch was part of a group of authors in an age where incest was emerging as an issue to be discussed and a new means of telling the narrative of the incest survivor was required in line with the new ways of viewing the incest problem. By drawing upon previous narratives that arguably address incest either directly or indirectly, Murdoch not only redefined those narratives but, by juxtaposing them with contemporary attitudes, prompted the reader to question the validity of the past narrative. A new means of telling emerges from the old and the new combined. This has the effect of both rejecting and assimilating the past. In discussion with Brian Magee, Murdoch stated that: "If language makes the world it cannot refer to the world. The writer must realise that he lives and moves within a 'significance world,' and not think that he can pass through it or crawl under the net of signs".[9] Language then is the medium we have to express ourselves and the established signs prevail: to tell a narrative previously unacknowledged (at least directly) by this medium means that the teller must deconstruct the previous modes of address and redefine them, or show that they only partially depict the problem.

As I have shown, Virginia Woolf, and later, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, considered how a woman was to find a voice as a writer when the vast majority of literary works had historically been penned by men. The authors of trauma narratives in the post-war era had to find a means for survivors of horrific events to speak about what had previously been unspeakable, either because it had not occurred in previous ages or because it had not previously been acknowledged. The analogy of a 'great hall of mirrors' is consequently apt: the emergent narrative both resembles and is different from that of past generations. It is also unique for every individual even though their problem may be associated with that of numerous others. Iris Murdoch was unusual because she was a white middle-class author addressing trauma in the families of other white, middle-class, intellectuals, and showing, therefore, that this social group was not exempt from such issues but simply that they had kept them well-hidden. Her need to find new ways to utilise the established means of communicating narratives therefore applied equally to a number of different issues: women, the survivors of war and the white bourgeoisies. Intertextuality enabled her to navigate these categories in a way that

had previously been understood and to present the known in a way that challenged the accepted definitions of these groups and their experiences.

In Chapter One, *The Unicorn* provides an ideal starting point to consider how deeply buried the concept of abuse is, both within the social consciousness, and in the means we have as a society of expressing such issues. By comparing Murdoch's narrative of the early sixties with easily recognisable stories and story templates which have informed the national culture and the personal education of her readership, such as fairy-tales, vampire literature, knightly tales of chivalry and of course the stories of the Bible, and those of legend associated with it, the hidden stories in these past narratives are exposed. As readers we are thus asked to question all of these stories and their visual impact. The technique of *ekphrasis* is utilised by Murdoch to invoke famous images of femininity which the reader will associate with certain female icons and this interrogates the temptation to classify women and to associate particular physical characteristics with their moral fortitude. To read *The Unicorn* and to be swept away by the force of the story, to enjoy the melodramatic power of the narrative and to believe in the opinions of the protagonists may provide a consoling satisfaction but, throughout her non-fiction writings, Murdoch asks us to pay attention, and to really pay attention to this tale reveals a much more complex, and less exciting, moral problem. Hannah Crean-Smith is a woman like any other, but although she is unique as an individual, her problems are not unique and nor is her situation. Her clothes, the way she does her hair, the location she exists in, the choices that are made over how she spends her time: these things are theatrical and disguise the truth of the scenario she occupies. Murdoch desires the reader to see beyond the dramatic fantasy and contemplate the human drama beneath.

Considering the impact of the Victorians on Iris Murdoch's novels in detail in Chapter Two illuminates the parallels between the 1950s and the 1960s in the United Kingdom and the United States, and the culture of the Victorian period. The subordination of women, the infantilisation of femininity, and the casting of women in a specific and immovable role in the family, and in the wider society, can be seen in both periods of time. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have asserted in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, to desire something different than that prescribed by society in the Victorian period was deemed to be abnormal, unhealthy, even 'mad'. They have highlighted how this situation is depicted in the literature of the Victorians. They consider Harold Bloom's theory in the *Anxiety of Influence*, and how women writers who had few notable predecessors of their own sex to identify with presented such 'mad' characters

as a means of expressing and navigating their own frustrations. Although Murdoch depicts subordinated female characters who are unable to escape, in her later fiction the dominant image is of the entrapped and mentally unstable male. These men have evolved from Murdoch's all powerful oppressors in her earlier works and although they may have abused or undermined the women in their families in the past, they are now the ones who are made vulnerable. This image is a critical one, and queries the progression of the pursuit for equality, not condemning either gender, but suggesting that the domination of any person by another is undesirable.

Chapter Three further considers the importance of the Victorians to Murdoch and her writing of the 1980s, in particular *The Philosopher's Pupil.* As the first novel of Murdoch's where the issue of incest is explored at length through the thoughts of both the potential aggressor and the potential victim, this is a significant development not just in Murdoch's work but in English literature in general. A clear progression can now be seen between her writing of the 1960s, where her female victims are not given a voice (in line with psychological opinion which largely directed blame at the seductive or fantasising daughter and the neglectful mother), and her fiction of the 1980s, a decade where more incest victims were speaking out and the fictional representation of the problem had increased. By drawing on two key Victorian texts in this novel, Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Murdoch simultaneously sets up a dialogue between the two time periods and also the two Victorian novels, analysing whether the former is an example of patriarchal tradition and the latter of female suppression and frustration.

The idea of a society 'beyond good and evil'[10] is explored in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, a consideration interesting both in terms of whether it is humanly possibility in a social setting imbued with ethical directives, but also whether the break-down of morally prescriptive ruling structures in the West may have left the way open to previously unthinkable transgressions. Although Murdoch examines this possibility in this novel, her conclusion is both hopeful and traditional: the destruction of a number of taboos has been considered but ultimately her characters are still governed by a conventional morality.

By analysing the precursors to Murdoch's enchanter figures, particularly in terms of the rich literary heritage of the Byronic hero, it becomes apparent how such sexually seductive, charming, intelligent and predatory characters are frequently associated with the incest taboo throughout the canon. Chapter Four contemplates this consideration in relation to Murdoch's *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight*, further

developing the human interest in going 'beyond good and evil'. In these two novels there are also numerous obvious references to Arthurian myth and legend, and the enchanter figures and sexual transgressions in this tradition. The history of the Byronic hero and that of the Arthurian tales, appears initially to subordinate the female characters, and in these two novels of Murdoch's this also initially appears to be the case: the 'bad' also seem to a certain degree to triumph. However, on closer examination this is not the case and, as in the key source text to *The Green Knight*, the anonymously authored, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, appearances are deceptive. The female motivations and success of the female protagonists are as mysterious as those of their male counterparts and it is impossible to determine unequivocally who is in the position of greatest strength.

Murdoch's presentation of incest in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and *The Green Knight* is equally uncertain. It is implied but not fully explored, drawing again on the riddling suggestion of incest in Byron's *Manfred* and the unknowing transgression by Arthur and his half-sister Morgause. This increases the moral confusion and puts a greater emphasis on the reader as judge. They are reminded of the literature of the past and the part these stories have played in creating our national identity, occasioning the reader to reconsider the past and the present.

Iris Murdoch's utilization of intertextuality is about interrogating and redefining the fundamental identity of a nation in turmoil after the Second World War. Incest, often defined as 'the last taboo' when presented in fictional terms, offers the only possibility to experiment with reactions to situations that would not be easily identified in reality. An insight into the private life of individuals and the secrets of a family can be given in literature which cannot be offered in any other medium. Literature gave Murdoch the means to show emotional reactions and emotional confusion, the messy ambivalence of motives and the many shades of grey in between the easily definable right and wrong. She asks us to pay attention to human problems and to see beyond the personal drama, beyond what we would like to see and how we would like to present our difficulties. She offers the opportunity to her readers to reconsider their cultural heritage and how it has influenced the way they form judgements, to re-examine one of the most disturbing and deeply buried problems in our society and to ultimately offer a means for the expression of an issue that was thought to threaten the structure of our civilization to such extent it has only been openly discussed in recent years. By referencing the literary past in her literary present, Murdoch offered a moral challenge to her readers and a voice to speak the unspeakable.

[1] Murdoch, interview with John Haffenden. Dooley 138.
[2] Murdoch, interview with Harold Hobson. Dooley 3.
[3] Murdoch, interview with Harold Hobson. Dooley 3.
[4] Henry James, preface, *A Portrait of a Lady*, by James (1881; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 41-56.
[5] Murdoch, "Literature and Philosophy", Conradi, *EM* 24.
[6] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 293.
[7] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," Conradi, *EM* 293.
[8] Murdoch, interview with John Haffenden, Dooley 138.
[9] Murdoch, interview with Brain Magee, Conradi, *EM* 23.
[10] This phrase is used in relation to Friedrich Nietzsche's usage of it in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morality.*

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