CHAPTER TWO

Theme of Love & Contingency

Murdoch's major fictional subject is love, her characters fall in love sometimes repeatedly, forming new combinations and permutations with an almost patterned inventiveness. The effect is intensely romantic, comic and quizzical. Like Shakesperean comedy (a major influence) the novels acknowledge and question the power of love. They suggest several answers. Bradley Pearson, the narrator of The Black Prince proposes a Freudian view: that is the unconscious delight in identifying people with each other. It has only a few characters to play with. The term unconscious resembles the cave in Plato's republic, where prisoners with their back to the distant sun see only shadows of fire lit images, but in his symposium human love begins the ascent of the soul and Murdoch locates in the fire of Eros the genesis of creativity and unselfing.

It is a reorientation of the selfish egocentric mechanism toward something other and goodness. It frees human beings from their narrow personal fantasies. Love expressed as art is best and most free because it is transcendent. It is separate from the messiness of ordinary love relationship, which become enmeshed in the mechanism of the possessive ego. Murdoch defines in more detail the concept of love, which centers on her novels. She
argues that love is exercised more often in the world of human beings with all its ambiguities and confusions. Love in the novels of Murdoch is represented as power, frustration, bliss, spiritual experience and sexual contentment.

Murdoch attempts to get a firmer grip on the vague term 'reality', which is at the heart of her aesthetics and concept of freedom. In order to define reality, which is the aim and object of every great artist, Murdoch resorts to such linguistic equations as the authority of truth duty and virtue, and selflessness. The term reality for Murdoch is Platonic, not a naturalistic one. The unified transcendent reality that Murdoch seeks is love. The Platonic love of a vision is goodness, truth and beauty, which makes us open to the Good. Murdoch's reality conveys a vision, which defines the energies and passions of the often-misdirected psychic mechanism.

The novels of Murdoch, of course, have a lot to represent about the world this human creature inhabits. It is rich, complicated, external, and above all contingent. The contingent nature, its complexity, particularity, and messiness is pervaded in most of her novels. The term contingency means a possible but Murdoch in most of her distinguished novels has beautifully and artistically delineated unpredictable occurrence and such unpredictable situations. Murdoch wants to free her characters form the story, her aim appears to create people with depth, ordinariness and accidentalness. She wants to write like Dicken's novels, filled with characters who are able to escape from the constriction of a highly structured plot and to gain an importance and reality of their own. She wanted to write novels, which were
made up entirely of peripheral characters and a sort of accidental people like Dicken’s people. The term contingent is important in Murdoch’s novels for she believes that the realistic novelist should depict the random and contingent dimension of human life. She suggests that there is a direct relationship between realism and contingency, and in an interview with Ranold Brydon admitted:

‘I would like to have much more accident in my work that I’ve yet managed to put in. That is I would like to be a much more realistic novelist than I am.”’

Murdoch considers reality fragmented and often inexplicable and believes that the role of art is to mirror this incompleteness. In Against Dryness Murdoch states that

reality is not a given whole. An understanding of this, a respect for the contingent, is essential to imagination as opposed 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.²

Murdoch names this background “transcendent reality” and describes it as a “sort of continuous background with a life of its own.”³ The aim of the realistic novelist is to portray as complete a rendering as possible of the
unexplainable, contingent dimension of reality and human nature. The novelist's concern is to portray the world as 'aimless, chancy and huge', and it is an error for the artist to simplify reality by attempting a rational, patterned rendering of this world. Murdoch believes that there is a direct relationship among comedy, contingency, and realism in fiction and she wrote some brilliant novels that embodies her vision of a random world.

Murdoch's first novel *Under the Net* is an existential solipsistic comedy. 'Life will drag you whichever way fate decrees' it seems to tell us. In the novel *Under the Net*, Murdoch examines the nature of reality through the thoughts and relationships of the novel's main character, Jake Donaghue. The recurring theme in the novel is the idea of reflection, in both senses of the word: Jake is continually thinking about ideas, and he is also forever trying to see himself as he really is. *Under the Net* examines the nature of reality through many reflections in the novel. Murdoch uses these reflections to mirror the true relationships between contingency and non-contingency and between appearance and reality.

Murdoch first novel *Under the Net* has an inescapable solipsistic flavour and limited range of human experience. It is a genuinely European novel, with wide literary debts, it is also certainly a novel of its time, its central character an 'outsider' figure. It's conveys the tale of picaresque adventure—a form itself raising questions about the way in which 'necessary' and contingent elements go into the making of novels. The novel is associated
with an impersonation of a male narrator that is probably best seen in
depiction of events in the novel.

Jake Donaghue, an impecunious and hack translator of the best selling
French writer Jean-Pierre Breteuil, returns from Paris to London. Here he
learns that the relationship with the girl whose flat he and his companion Finn
have been using has come to an end. Faced with the immediate needs of
shelter and survival, Jake contemplates the prospect of renewing an earlier
friendship, with the singer and actress Anna Quentin. In tracking, Anna down
to the mime theatre where has produced a complete misunderstanding of the
circle of unrequited erotic attention in which he and Hugo have been involved
with the two question sister. His emotional world-picture is transformed as he
realizes that it is Sadie, and not Anna who has been in love with him. This
experience affects his attitudes towards words and writing, producing a
recovery of specificity and a new attitude towards creativity.

A comparable comic resignation occurs at the end of Under the Net,
where Jake's adventures seem accorded contingent rather than necessary
value. The book's epigraph from Dryden's 'Secular Masque' makes exquisite
sense in this light:

All, all of a piece throughout;

Thy chase had a beast in view;

Thy wars brought nothing about;

Thy Lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old age is out
And time to begin a New.

Event's stream passes us like the crowds and the face of each is seen only for a moment. What is urgent is not urgent forever but only ephemerally. All work and all love, the search for wealth and fame, the search for truth, like itself, and made up of moments, which pass and become nothing. Yet through this shaft of nothings Jake drives onward with that miraculous vitality that creates his precarious habitations in the past and the future. Through Under the Net, Murdoch conveys a powerful thought that a spirit broods and hovers over continual death of time, the lost meaning, the unrecaptured moment, the unremembered face, until the final chop that ends all our moments and plunges the spirit back into the void.

Murdoch advocates selflessness that stems from and understanding of the centrality of the self in the individual's perception and its deluding nature as well as a particular vision of what it means to act in a moral way. Murdoch like Weil, connects a selfless attitude with love which, in its everyday manifestations, is:

normally too profoundly possessive and also too 'mechanical' to be a place of vision. There is a paradox here about the nature of love itself. That the highest love is in some sense impersonal is something which we can indeed see in art, but which I
think we cannot see clearly, except in a very piece-
meal manner, in the relationships of human beings.\(^5\)

The novels of Murdoch frequently portray obsessional relationship too, in which one person's love for another is simply expressive of a specific need rather than a sense of the reality of the other. An example of this love can be seen in A Severed Head in this novel Murdoch takes the bedroom farce to a whole new level. Its a tangled tale of love adultery, deception, self-deception, jealously and attempted suicide. All these are rendered with deadpan humour and with just enough darkness lurking behind the scene to make it even more interesting.

A Servered Head, is a story of Martin Lynch-Gibbon, a wine merchant and amateur historian who took the best first of his year in History at Oxford and always regretted in a way that he had not become a don. He has a beautiful and civilized wife, Antonia, who is some years older than himself, and a young mistress, Georgie Hands, a lecturer at the L.S.E. Antonia announces that she has fallen in love with her psychoanalyst Palmer Anderson. Anderson is a man of great charm for whom Martin has felt a fleeting homosexual attraction. Matters become complicated by the arrival of Palmer's half-sister, Honor Klein, an anthropologist, who makes Martin uncomfortable by suggesting to him that he is 'letting them off' and that this good neither for them nor for him. Martin feels that he is in love with Honor with an overwhelming urgency that he never experienced before. When Martin goes to Cambridge to see her he feels extremely surprise to see her in

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bed with her brother. This gives him a power over Palmer and Antonia returns to live with him. Then Georgie becomes engaged to Martin's brother Alexander. Later she attempts to commit suicide, cut off her hair and sends it to Martin. Antonia declares that she is going away with Alexander who has been her lover ever since she and Martin were married. Martin is frustrated he does not want to met Antonia or Alexander. He does go, however London airport to watch the departure of Honor and Palmer. Through he refused Palmers invitation to accompany them to the east. He comes to know that Georgie too, is to depart with them. As he returns to his house alone, he is surprised by a knock on the door; honor has after all, returned to him. Both of them decide to face some kind of uncompromising future.

Martin wants love in his life that is the real human nature, we have something we can relate to Martin's feeling—much less clearly realized then Alexander's. He thinks, with a selfish dissatisfaction, of Georgie, and that:

I wanted love, I wanted to save me, some colossal
and powerful love such as I have never, known
feeling (ASH p.68).

Honor Klein combines these saving qualities of the 'human' vision of the reality of he head, and the colossal love. Martin's obsession make him feel that, because of her (Honor) 'extreme untouchability', he has not really touched her and peering about in a London mist, realizes together the contingency of the world, the solidity of things and the nature of his ailment.
Therefore the realization of love and the realization of the solid contingency of the world are set together in the novel. He thinks:

The task of Peering through the mist was becoming exasperating and painful. I cannot see, I cannot see, I said to myself it was as if some inner blindness were being here tormentingly exteriorized. I saw shadows and hints of things, nothing clearly at all (ASH p.158).

Therefore, A severed Head is certainly a cunning comedy in a virtuoso manner, with ever extending sexual variation, a skilled use of repetition and the element of contingency in human life. The novel is a fine example of contingency in love and life.

Murdoch's subject is love: obsessive, incestuous, adulterous, selfless, blind, lost and unlikely and remembered. Its objects are various and fungible and its appearances are fantastically symmetrical. Its developments are entirely subject to accident on the one hand and the rigorous necessity of permutation on the other that, for all the damage in inflicts, that we can realize it with something approaching amused disbelief. Those among her principal characters who suffer from it use a rhetoric in which the erotic is indistinguishable from the metaphysical. The characters that exclaimed that love promised salvation and its loss damnation that the success and failure of romance raised the lover to heaven or cast him into hell would be regarded as guilty of improper or tired exaggeration. Murdoch's characters believe that
love will redeem his sufferings annihilate the obscure, guilty confusion of his
finite chance-harried being, sublet his will into a necessity that governs
accident and ordains significance.

Murdoch's well known novel *The Unicorn* is concerned with
obsessional neurosis. The novel portrays a relationship between love and
hatred with an eerie sense of terror. Marian Taylor, recovering from an
unhappy relationship, takes a job as governess at the remote Gaze Castle.
Marian discovers that she will have only one charge, not a child but a mistress
of the house Hannah Crean Smith. Marrian comes to know from Denis Nolan
(a servant) that Hannah has in fact been imprisoned in the house under the
guardianship of her husband's ex-lover Gerald Scottow ever since she tried to
murder her husband, Peter, seven years previously but pushing him over a
ciff. The story is completed by two poor relations: Jamesie Evercreech,
sexually and emotionally enslaved by Gerald ever since he tried
unsuccessfully to rescue Hannah and Jamesie's older sister violet a
somewhat sketched in figure of doom. The nearest house is riders, occupied
by the Lejours : Max, the elderly, scholarly father, his son Pip and daughter
Alice. Pip was in love with Hannah and discovered an ensuing struggle
between Hannah and Peter had led to the murder attempt.

In the novels of Murdoch the complex of brother, sister and
homosexual outsider seems to carry an emotional weight not always easy to
grasp or realize the power. Hannah is to be seen an obsessional neurotic
suffering from repressed feelings of love and hate. The feelings of Hannah
ultimately can be seen to extend all the community and which paralyse her, are clearly involved in the relationship between the three of them Gerald, Peter, herself — with Pip Lejour an unforeseen and ultimately helpless outsider.

The obcessive acts are from one point of view evidence of remorse, efforts at expiation, and so on whilst on the other hand they are at the same time substitutive acts to compensate the instinct for what has been prohibited.

In *The Unicorn* Hannah's life is in common with a case history of an obsessional neurosis not even in Freudian terms, the whole of the story does not act alone. She is acted upon too, her relationships with the other characters recall those of the king in Freud's description of the things which are in common between primitive systems of taboo in kingship, and obsessional neurosis.

Throughout her fictional career Murdoch experiments on various degrees of contingency. She portrays different shades of contingency with different aspects of life. Murdoch's novels recognize a version of the contingency, the perplexity, the maddeningly seductive illusion of intelligibility and intelligence that is a specialty of the brilliant novelist. Murdoch organised her fiction around the sensation of understanding that defied intelligible expression, the feeling of being overwhelmed and by an insight that is
somehow meant something particular. The desire to be innocent again, the
desire to be redeemed, the desire that all this should mean something: these
are the concepts that are dexterously delineated by Murdoch.

Murdoch's in *An Unofficial Rose* a shifting to and from various centres
of consciousness imparts an effect of authorial omniscience of which full and
ironic use is made. The novel is an attractive work with a number of
contingent graces. The contingency tends to mask the form, so that the
reader's overall response is one of subdued, aesthetic pleasure at the blend.
The novel represents a chain of unrequited affections that seems, as implicitly
in *A Severed Head*, almost willfully self-parodic.

The novel conveys the life and incidents of recently widowed, Hugh
Peronett, who during the course of *An UnOfficial Rose*, comes to
contemplate his past in terms of failed potential. He ponders one of his
serious act of infidelity during his marriage that was a brief but passionate
affair with Emma. The momentary kiss with Mildred meant more to her than to
Hugh. Hugh had drawn back from a relationship with Emma for a number of
reasons connected with the security of his marriage. Emma becomes a
successful writer of detective stories, has as her assistant and companion in
thrall the very much younger Lindsey Rimmer, whom Emma at one point
explicitly sees as playing 'Ariel to her Prospero' (UR p.269). Hugh's son
Randall one of the important characters of the novel, want to learn more about
Emma and discovers Lindsay and falls in love with her. Finally Randall leave
his wife Ann for Lindsey, Randell too persuades Hugh to sell his valuable
Tintoretto painting and thereby provide him money. Mildred desires a relationship with Hugh, finds herself – in a brilliantly comic scene of mistaken intentions, she advises Hugh to take up with Emma again, a course of action which will release Lindsay for Randall. Ann has been shown a virtuous version of the truthful formless figure, is thereby made available to Mildred’s brother Felix and Mildred realizes that both are inarticulately in love with each other. There are a variety of reasons and skillfully interlinked but themselves (Ann & Felix) of varying degrees of convincingness, the vistas of freedom so allowed are not taken up. Ann is truthful and possess no fantasizing nature: she realizes the inadequacy of her love for Felix. Randall absconds to Italy with Lindsey, gradually finds the thrill of the affair evaporating. Miranda the daughter of Randall and Ann, has demonically desired Felix ‘ever since she could remember’ (UR p.254), and manipulates her mother into the destruction of the potential relationship with him. At the end of the novel Randall seems about to repeat his father’s action of returning to a second-best but secure relationship.

D.W. Harding complained of Murdoch’s work that frequently ‘we are asked to accept explicit statements about feelings and motives instead of watching them arise intelligibly from characters acting within circumstances’.

The novel portrays human freedom in terms of the freedom to explore possibilities. It is worth mentioning that in An UnOfficial Rose as elsewhere in Murdoch a comic subplot, organically related in an almost Shakespearian manner to the main action, reinforces the sense of pattern. The novel is an
example of the airy world of the imagination, which is above the mess of morality into which the forces of contingency and darkness are present. At the moment when Randall thinks of his freedom on receiving the cheque from Hugh, he feels completely alone, his father assassinated, 'Even the image of Lindsey was dissolved in 'a big golden consciousness, vast and annihilating as the beatific vision' (UR p.203). At the moment when Randall proceeding through a 'Renoir landscape, which is suddenly a heavenly version of Hyde Park' remembers Emma sands.

All the same, Emma existed, and with what authority, with what horrible contingent power, he suddenly felt as he neared the raucous whirlpool of Hyde park corner. He felt himself in the mood of another assassination (UR p.203)

The contingency of Emma destroys Randall's freedom, almost at one blow. Emma plays the role of an enchanter who manipulates others. She manages to impinge on his view of his own acts; not only has she had an agreement' with Lindsey over him but she got hold of Ann also. She is definitely a fact, influencing the life of Randall, outside his solipsist beatific consciousness therefore, An Unofficial Rose conveys Murdoch's views on contingency and freedom the novel is a blend of uncertain lone and illusion. From the elderly widower Hugh to his grand daughter Miranda, the nine characters in this novel are all looking for love and feel contingent in their lives.
A Fairly Honourable Defeat is an example of Murdoch's development in sophisticated dimensions, which reflect on the difficulties of handling the contingent mess of life within the constraints of the novel as a form. Its nature is characterized in terms of the ways in which it can be shown to adhere broadly to the pattern of Shakesperean comedy. There are repeated specific allusions in A Fairly Honourable Defeat to A Midsummer Night Dreams, though the march of the plot seems to have more in common with Much Ado About Nothing.

In this dark comedy of errors, Julius, a cynical intellectual decides to demonstrate through a Machiavellian experiment how easily loving couples, caring friends and devoted siblings can betray their loyalties. As puppet master, Julius artfully plays on the human tendency to embrace drama and intrigue and to prefer the distraction of confrontations to the difficult effort of communicating openly and honestly. The novel is incredibly engaging and entertaining, although not necessarily fun. The novel conveys all of the basic Murdoch elements such as – the complexity of love and life; the overwhelming essentialness of love to life, the frailties, faults, and follies of basically good people. The actions of Julius King, however dilettante and reveal an attitude to form as opposed to contingency. As Murdoch depicts in this novel, the problem is structural: many people being luckily or unluckily, are controlled by the activity of a central character, as his own action must relate to that control. Julius King is the central character in A Fairly Honourable Defeat, a glamorous demon whose cynicism enacts Murdoch's definition of evil.
In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* the elements come together and produce a brilliant and decisive masterpiece. The novel is elegant in its style, Julius King is Shakespeare's Iago, and like him he acts out of bottomless cynicism and with limited motivation. There is a Christ character Tallis Browne who attempts a redemptive solution at the last moment. Tallis cannot tidy up, yet can live with, his relationship with his (ex)-wife Morgan (also ex-lover of Julius) and his father Leonard. Julius who has been able to sever completely his attachment to Morgan, advocates telling Leonard the truth about the older man's cancer: as the novel ends, Tallis is resolving to do this. Julius's inability to deal with contingent aspects of human relationships causes him psychosomatic ailments such as migraine and a complex of digestive disorders which heal up when he is on his own, as in the final chapter. In this, he is utterly opposed to Tallis: the relationship is a particularly clear statement of the artist-saint contrast, but Murdoch has pointed to an allegorical dimension which the diabolic Julius opposes the Dostoevskyan, Christ like Tallis.

Murdoch believes that there is a direct relationship among comedy, contingency, and realism in fiction. She has written a comic novel that embodies her vision of a random and godless world. Her next novel *An Accidental Man* is a brittle comedy of manners with over twenty-four characters, contains four deaths, two attempted suicides, and characters suffering from mental retardation Schizophrenia and brain damage. The novel is an attempt to write novel with a Dickenson sweep of characters and to
create a world that conveys her belief in the comic nature of contingency. *An Accidental Man* shows Murdoch's comic skills at their best and successfully combines comedy and horror in a way that intensifies both.

At the end of the novel Mathew Gibson Grey meditated on how his brother Austin has successfully appropriated and 'contaminated' Mavis Argyll, he concludes that 'it had all been, like so many other things in the story, accidental' (AAM p.433). Gibson is troubled like his uncle Garth Gibson Grey, by his vision of a random world ruled by contingency:

> The contingent details of choice disturbed him. Everything that was offered him was too particular, not significant enough, though at the same time he realized with dazzling clarity that all decent things which human beings do are hole and corner. That was indeed as he had told himself earlier, the point” (AAM p.101).

Charlotte Ledgard has showed a similar vision of a universe ruled by chance when he was about to commit suicide: ‘Chaos upon which everything rested and out of which it was made’ (AAM p.306). The unreflective Gracie Tisbourne is frightened by 'a sense of the world being quite without order and of other things looking through' (AAM p.408); and Ludwig Leferrer, tries to decide what he should do about avoiding the draft, sense that 'human life perches always on the brink of dissolution, and that makes all
achievement empty' (AAM p.371). The novel delineates the lives of several of
the characters irrevocably altered by a bizarre series of accidents, among
them Mitzi Ricardo’s broken ankle, which abruptly ends her career as an
athlete: ‘Her life had been wrecked by a momentary absurdity which it should
be possible to delete’ (AAM p.33). The death of Rosalind Monkley, Henrietta
Sayce, and Dorina Gibson Grey convey an accidental element, as are normal
Monkey’s fall and the resulting brain damage. The chaotic, accidental world
does not always result in tragedy, for that would endow it with a predictability
that would contradict its essential nature. There are some events such as
Mavis’s new spiritual awareness and Gracie’s inheritance of the family fortune,
which show a result of chance.

The Theme so far in An Accidental Man would not appear to be
particularly amusing. The tone of the novel is, nevertheless, comic, and the
numerous deaths and accidents that befall the characters are for the most
part viewed from a comic perspective. Frye’s theory of Camus can be helpful
to understand how Murdoch is able to treat this kind of dark, pessimistic
subject matter in a humorous fashion, as she employs the structures of both
ironic and regular comedy that Frye describes in his theory of modes.
According to Frye, the theme of typical comedy is the integration of society
and the acceptance of the comic figure. There is also a discovery about either
the hero or heroine solves the problems concerning their union, and a new
society comes into being around the hero and his bride. The society is usually
controlled by youth, as the paternal blocking figure has been vanquished, and
the event is frequently celebrated with a party or festive ritual. As the ironic mode appears in the plot, however, the comedy begins to take on the darker, more pessimistic tone and structure of irony allows the society that has been causing problems for the hero to remain undefeated, or permits the hero, having failed to transform his society. Murdoch with great dexterity combines all these elements of comedy in *An Accidental Man*, and manipulates the various comic structures for her narrative purposes.

Murdoch's eminent novel *The Black Prince* has been considered her finest work. The novel conveys technical self-consciousness; in the way in which it challenges its own text and reliability, and speculates on fiction. The novel may be thought of as Murdoch's closest approach to the post modernist novel. Thematically, *The Black Prince* represents a remarkably brilliant self-imposed challenge, since it is undoubtedly the most solipsistic of her novels: her theme, however, has constantly involved attention to the dangers of solipsism.

The novel begins with the depiction of the fictional editor of *The Black Prince* P. Loxias, another name for the Greek god Apollo. Bradley Pearson is the author of the narrative section of the novel, entitled *The Black Prince: A Celebration of Love*. The novel has been written in prison. Hence the need of the intermediary Loxias as publisher and editor who gets the manuscript out of prison and publishes it with commentary. As the sub title makes evident, the novel is about love: The Greek god Eros is epithetically *The Black*
**Prince.** The novel also conveys the intricacies of art, and the fate, destiny or doom that plague the artist who must write what he considers to be true.

Loxias conveys the notion of the fatality of the artistic enterprise when he comments early in the novel that ‘art is a doom,’ Bradley Person underscores this concept of fate when he realizes that love and art are his ‘destiny’ (BP, p.210), and that ‘true art comes with absolute necessity’ (BP, p.339). These statements are Murdoch’s reminders that the creative human mind can not help but create its own stories (myths) which are often the misleading actions of reality she names ‘fantasy’. Fantasizing is an inescapable state of human mind which shapes human decision making and the concept of reality. In an interview Murdoch said:

> I think that people create myths about themselves and are then dominated by the myths. They feel trapped, and they elect other people to play roles in their lives, to be gods or destroyers or something, and I think that this mythology is often very deep and very influential and secretive and the novelist is revealing secrets of this sort.  

Murdoch expresses her own situation through the dilemma of Pearson. Freedom through art is a difficult achievement, given the mind-boggling complexity of shifting through motives and counter-motives and finding the
true and real ones. Art may represent truth and freedom but it is a mystery why this is so.

Love is one of the central themes of Murdoch's *The Black Prince*. Marriage, as the institution love, often binds than frees. Murdoch simply calls it a 'cage' from which lovers struggle to escape (BP, p. 72, 111, 127, 145). But marriage can be even more; it can be a 'machine of mutual hatred' (BP, p. 67). Pearson sufferings begin with his search for love. His first marriage had been a hell. He retires and devotes himself to his art, but art does not come with this new freedom. Now, Bradley is unable to write and seeks some outlet of his energies. Bradley considers the thought of selfless sacrifice as real freedom but he can find no object of devotion. For Bradley the love of God is out of question he searches someone or something as an object of worship. The wife of his friend and artist-rival Arnold Baffin seduces him, and admonishes him to be free. He thinks and feels that he cannot act, worries about his feelings of destiny to be a great writer, and considers that art is a doom' for him.

Bradley finds himself into a frenzy: "what was this, love, sex, art? I felt that strong urge to do something to act, which often afflicts people in unanalysable dilemmas" (BP, p. 117). Bradley is determined by uncontrollable urges and ideas that surge through him. The mystery and opacity of personality are unanalyzable and incompletely explainable. Bradley realizes a feeling of fate and doom to explain his confusion and inaction.
The Black Prince delineates the erotic and obsessional love of Bradley for Julian Baffin, the daughter of Arnold Baffin. Fantasy and reality co-exist in a complex, intertwined relationship in the novel, a reader may well sympathize with the dignity of Pearson's experience while at the same time considering him deluded. Murdoch introduced Shakespeare into Pearson's 'ragbag' aesthetics as he produced ingenuous yet highly conscious art. He functions as the medium through which Bradley is introduced to his great love for Julian who is thirty-eight years his junior. Murdoch is herself serious about Shakespeare - she used his art as a touchstone, she maintained in an interview that while "some of Bradley's observations (about Hamlet) I think are quite acute, others are dotty." 10

The confrontation with Hamlet and Bradleys meeting with Julian represents another of his analyses of love. Bradley visualizes love as a 'demonic force engaged in continuous creation and participation', that an act of creating the beloved, like a work of art (BP, p.173). The claims of Love are overbearing, overpowering and blinding. Love can even "dim the dream of art and make it seem secondary, even a delusion" (BP, p.174). In terms of myth, the "black arrow" of love is fearfully destructive in its power to delude, and Black Eros inspires Bradley to write his book, which, as the postscripts express, may be based on a complete delusion.

Murdoch's favourite subject, platonic love finds its echoes in one of Pearson's shorter narrative disquisitions. Bradley considers Plato right: love brings with it a 'vision of selflessness'. How wonderful and good to 'will
another rather than oneself" (BP, p.176). Pearson experiences the delusions of love & considers love as freedom even though he is familiar with the stage that love is the cage that leads to marriage. Therefore, love is explained as a marvelously powerful tool, a mechanism, a lever by which to move the world. Love is a spinning mechanical force too, that, centrifugal and bent on crushing the 'machine of flesh and bones' (BP, p.265).

When Bradley absconds with Julian, he realizes his love is not only his destiny but also his nemesis. He believes he has ensured his love and liberation from doubt by willing a violent consummation, and he explains the violence of his attack on Julian in terms of anger and fury against fate which grasps him, maddens him and make him rapaciously take Julian. The love affair between Julian and Bradley is doomed. Julian leaves him and he desperately tries to win her back but is more deeply entangled in the strange relationship between Arnold and Rachel Baffin. At the end of Bradley's narrative when he tries to help Rachel after she has murdered her husband; he is blamed for the murder and is imprisoned. He is never able to sort out his different loves – the platonic, the sexual, and the artistic and the love story of his life ends absurdly.

Bradley Pearson may be called on ironic commentator on Murdoch's ideas, much of this conclusion to the postscript can be found in her essays. Some of Bradley's aesthetic is a reliable expression of the author, Murdoch successfully makes it clear that Bradley is an emotional romantic. Each character can visualize the truth of Bradleys story. Pearson's art, as he
himself confessed was not good or great art. His passions for Julian were no
doubt exaggerated and romanticized. At the end of the novel there is an apt
use of comic chorus, which shows that Murdoch is skeptical of Bradley's love
and theories of art. The final postscript by the editor Loxias convinces that
Bradley was right after all and the others totally false in their remarks on the
narrative. Loxias final words are significant for the whole novel: 'Art is not
cozy, and it is not mocked. Art tells the only truth that ultimately matters. It is
the light by which human beings can be mended' (BP, p.336). Therefore, the
freedom realized by Pearson through love or art remains open to question
and reflects that he is fantasizing in his own mediocre way. The dilemmas of
Pearson are as much reflections of inauthentic freedom and self-delusion as
they are of true freedom and true perception of reality.

The novels of Iris Murdoch present a persistently puzzling quality which
has lurked beneath their deceptively traditional surfaces. The root of this
confusion lies a picture of people as necessarily solipsistic a view which we all
at some time share and by which Murdoch is, like all of us, both attracted and
repelled. Murdoch's philosophical essays tended to shape analysis of what
she is doing, he essays voice only the rejection of solipsism, but her novels
are more complicated. Her next novel: The Sacred and Profane Love
Machine is concerned with the human tendency to see the world through the
distortion of fantasy. "We are not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we
survey," she writes, "but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature
we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy". In the
resulting false vision, things appear as the viewer wishes them to be, and other people become only means of fulfilling desires. Therefore, a character or a person violets the real needs and rights of others, failing to arrive at ‘the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real’, which Murdoch variously calls love, freedom and morality.\(^{12}\)

Such type of confusion of fantasy with the exterior world may be compared to the way all people think when they are very young children the infant has not yet clearly differentiated himself from the outside world and commonly sees others as extensions of himself.\(^{13}\) The state of merger is attractive for the child as it means that agents of gratification are under his control, experience gradually teaches him the limits of both his power and his being.

**The Sacred and Profane Love Machine** is the story of psychologist Blaise Gavender’s marriage and affair, loves he himself thinks of as ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ (SPLM, p.349). Blaise, his wife, Harriet, and their fifteen-year-old son, David, lead an affectionate conventional life in the London suburb where Blaise practices therapy. Nine years before the novel begins, however, Blaise met and fell in love with Emily McHugh, an energetic, lower class young woman whose sadomasochistic sexual predilections matched Blaise’s own. He has since maintained Emily and their son, Luca, in a run-down London apartment which he visits with decreasing frequency, though the sexual attachment between them remains strong.
The story of the novel is concerned with Blaise, but the novel opens with a portrayal of David Gavender in the throes of an adolescent identity crisis that sets the theme for much of the novel. Murdoch portrays identity crisis traditional to adolescence she represents her central concern: the vacillation between adult separation and childlike merger with parental figures. The novel deals with issues first raised in early childhood as much about love between children and parents as it is about love between adults. David is not the only character who experienced vacillation between parent/child merger and adult/adult love, but there are other adults who attempt to define themselves as separate individuals but inevitably participate in a more malign, powerful form of merging.

David's frustration with childish lack of boundaries is indicated by his fear 'of never being able to be a real person at all. He felt obscenely amorphous, globular, a creature in metamorphosis ...' (SPLM, p.4). As the novel progresses, his need for separation is gradually revealed as caused by, focused upon, and finally resolved through the necessary move away relating to others by means of merger toward relating to them by means of sex. There is a highway that is being built across the meadows near David's home symbolizes his emerging sexuality. The road is gradually constructed as the book progresses and is open at the end, Blaise and Harriet regard the road as a civilized despoiler of nature, David rather likes it. When he came to know about his father's double life, however, he visits the still unused highway, lies down upon it, and is aware both of his life as 'spoilt' by his father's sexual guilt
and of an 'automatic, sexual desire' (SPLM, p.201). The spoiling of his life is delineated in terms that might also be used to describe the effect of the highway upon the countryside.

David's natural innocence is dead and this is due to his sexual initiation, which takes place through Constance Pinn who has been Emily's charwoman and is now her roommate. Pinn sleeps with David after his refusal to go to Germany with his mother, thereby breaking with her and with the innocent merging of childhood. Pinn's touching him

produced an instantaneous and very complex change
in David's being. At one moment he was hanging in
space . . . . He was disincarnate and scattered in
terrible regions. At the next moment his body had
assembled promptly and compactly round about him.

. . . . (SPLM, p.325-26).

At this moment David feels himself to be without clear boundaries as he has not yet found a substitute for merger with his parents; he achieves a limited separate identity in his body through sex.

Finally, David recognizes reality separate from himself and his fantasies. In the novels of Murdoch this is easy to recognize characters who behaving badly. This is due to their failure to meet either of her two ethical standard: they fail to see the world apart from their own minds, and in the
resulting state of merger they seek power rather than passivity. Blaise, for example, has allowed fantasies to shape his perception of and behaviour toward the external world. Blaise had enjoyed sexual fantasies of an apparently sadomasochistic nature long before he met Emily, and his acceptance of those fantasies prepared him for his match with her.

Another instance of love can be seen in the case of Edgar Demarnay, and oxford scholar and Monty small who is the neighbour Blaise. Edgar's 'love for women was unrequited and his love for men undeclared' (SPLM, p.362). The situation is exemplified in his feelings for the Smalls. He is visiting Monty because he is in love with Monty and was in love with Sophie, Monty's recently deceased wife. He had been content, however, to love Sophie and not possess her. According to him 'unrequited love is a contradiction. If its true that love, it somehow contains its object' (SPLM, p.118). Murdoch conveys the moral idea of Love that freedom from desire for possession of the loved one exemplifies a willingness to recognize the other as separate. The novel conveys the belief that love contains its own object, however, could also be seen as a denial of one's separateness from the loved one, an affirmation of innocent merging which seems to be good in context of her novels. Therefore, the novel exemplifies a tension present in all of Murdoch's novels, which suggests that in them she achieves a more complex picture of the difficulties involved in relating to other people.

The concept of freedom has dominated the novels of Murdoch. The central focus of her philosophical essay is also the problem of human
freedom. The pagan world of irrational forces to modern life has been applied by her such irrational forces have been used not only as a literary device but also as an explanatory system which emphasizes the mystery and opacity of human existence. Murdoch expresses her views of freedom with metaphors of mechanism, particularly the machinery of the human ego with its uncontrollable psychical as well as physical/sexual energy.

Love can be false, egotistical and sadistic; it can spoil as well as sponsor life. Murdoch has the potentiality to understand the absurd irreducible uniqueness of people and their relations with each other. Such concepts of love are artistically presented in her well-known novel A Word Child. The novel reveals some differences and development from it predecessors. The novel is concerned with its protagonist Hilary and his love triangles. The novel is also associated with the friendship between Hilary and Gunnar. Hilary had precipitated, on his own account, a catastrophe, which had ended his and Gunnar's careers, though Gunnar had subsequently made more of an ostensible 'success' of his life. Hilary, falling desperately in love with Anne (Gunnar's wife), had at last tried to persuade her to leave Gunnar and their young son Tristram. Anne frightened and confused by her recent discovery that she is one more pregnant, had provoked Hilary into crashing the car on the 'motor way'. Hilary had been seriously injured and Anne killed.

The theme of Love mingled with obsession has pervaded throughout the novel, Hilary and Gunnar are both haunted by their past. Murdoch skillfully distinguishes between his Hilary's fantasy apprehension of and utter trust in
Lady Kitty (second wife of Gunnar), and a reader's ability to see, as Hilary cannot, the absurdity of much of her behaviour. Lady kitty suggests that Hilary should provide her with a child. Tristram had earlier committed suicide and Gunnar, as an apparent side effect of a later operation is, according to Lady Kitty, sterile. Thus, Hilary having already fallen in love with Lady Kitty, seems to be entering compulsively on a course of action identical to the which had earlier proved so destructive.

Murdoch considers freedom as an aesthetic theory based on love. She thinks that freedom is possible for those persons who can love and accept and object (human or nonhuman) which is other and distinct from the loving subject. Murdoch concisely puts it, 'Freedom is exercised in the confrontation by each other, in the context of an infinitely extensible work of imaginative understanding of – “two irreducibly dissimilar individual. Love is imaginative recognition of, that is respect for, this otherness”.' 14. The acceptance of this otherness in all its particularity and incomprehensibility is love, which is an aesthetic concern, is freedom to know, understand and respect things quite alien to familiar points of view. Therefore, Murdoch is concerned with the aesthetic principle of love that must be applied in order to free the characters in the contemporary novel, and to respect their individuality and contingency. In her novels, Murdoch is interested in the complex relationship between love and the desire for power, realizing many people use love as a power game because they want to control the loved one's fate.
Her next novel *Henry and Cato* explores these problems in an unusually stark, profoundly ironic and simple story. The novel is concerned with two main characters and old childhood friends, Cato Forbes a Catholic convert and a priest with doubts; and Henry Marshallson, an art historian in a third-rate American college. They are contrasted and related throughout the novel.

Cato is obsessed by love for a delinquent teenage charmer of a boy called beautiful Joe. He is trying peaceably to rescue the uncivilized, taming the violence and power of the gangs with love. Henry in a wild purposeful mood decides violently to destroy what he chooses to think is a corrupt civilization, but doesn't get much further than selling his own childhood home. Other characters include Cato's lively, witty, wholesome, virginal and dropout sister, Colette, who is in love with Henry; Lucius Lamb, a faded, beautiful boy of an ageing Poet; Henry's mother Gerda, grieving for the death of her elder son. The novel depends peculiarly on its plot—which contains kidnapping, possible raps, movements of huge sums of money, violent death and a ridiculous ironic and satisfying love story.

Murdoch acknowledges the irrational and subconscious aspects of human personality Murdoch allows the freedom that is especially for the artist and concerned with visualizing these forces and recording them in all their reality. Murdoch thinks that love of reality rewards the artist who can record this vision of reality and thereby release psychic and other compulsive energies. Murdoch considers love a form of freedom that is open to the artist,
it is a reorientation of the selfish egocentric mechanism toward something other. She believes that good art reveals an ardent love for reality and liberates one from the mechanisms of fantasies. ‘Reality’ is important for Murdoch as it is outside the self. Murdoch is skeptical about self-analysis and self-knowledge as it is concerned to what lies outside the fantasy mechanism, Murdoch thinks that self-knowledge is usually a delusion. Therefore she stresses love and art as they are every systems addressed to the outside, the other object.

The Sea the Sea represents the tempest of passions and delusions by Charles Arrowby. He is an impresario who has retired to a seaside, retreat in order to abjure the rough magic, illusion and power-games of the theatre and meditates on the end of life. Charles is a man who considers himself not highly sexed, but attracts, voluntarily and involuntarily, two ex-mistresses, good, devoted Lizzie and witch-like Rosina to disturb his retreat. There is also a series of wanted and unwanted male visitors — Rosina’s ex-husband, an Irish actor, Peregrine, Lizzie’s peaceable homosexual companion, Gilbert, his own mysterious cousin General James Arrowby expert on Tibet, Buddhism and oriental Lore and languages. Charles love object is Mary Hartley Smith whom he considers his ‘alpha and omega’. Charles discovers her and attempts to ‘rescue’ her by abduction from what he deduces is an unhappy marriage.

The major subject of the novel is love with obsession, illusion, self-delusion, contingency and the impossibility of seeing truth. Charles is more
blatantly deluded than the heroes of *UnderThe Net, A Severed Head, A Word Child* and *The Black Prince*. Throughout the novel deeply conveyed thoughts with self-conscious element of narrative technique provide fertile ground for exploring the connection between the novel's narrative strategies and its representation of gender role. In *The Sea, the Sea*, Charles explains his love off the imprisoned Hartley to himself. The novel conveys the closely netted workings of the desire for power and the desire for self-abnegating love. Charles, who has never married, has devoted his emotional and sexual life to a series of relationship with women such as Rosina and Lizzie whose attachments to other men he set about breaking up. The only other type of relationship he has had was with Clement, an actress much older than himself and a mother figure to him. Charles analyses his relationship with women in the following terms:

> I had always run to women as to a refuge what indeed are women but refuges? And sometimes it had seemed that to be held close in a woman’s arm was the only and perfect defense against any horror. Yet they had, so many of them, been perfect to me, and yet . . . . . . after a while . . . . . . one leaves a refuge”

(SS, p.170).

Charles’s first and only love Hartley has been married to another man for decades. In the initial absence of any communication between then he begins to create a fantasy around her in which she features as "a pure
substance of my being" (SS, p.170), "my alpha and omega" (SS, p.186), "beautifully innocent" (SS p.303). The memory of their childhood relationship, seems that he and Hartley as an undivided whole: "we are each other" (SS, p.78), "we were one, and only that mattered" (SS, p.180). As Hartley resists Charles' attempts to "rescue" her from her current existence it becomes clear even as a child and adolescent he never thinks of Hartley as other, as a separate human being. Their relationship never developed into a sexual one as Hartley puts it, "we were too much like brother and sister" (SS, p.216). Charles' interest in Hartley is not predominantly a sexual one; he feels happy when he finds that her changed appearance does not interfere with his love for her. His ability to share a bed with the dying Clement, 19 years older than himself, to the very end reflects that Charles' love was predicated upon-things other then sexual attractiveness.

One of the stylistic distinctions of Murdoch's 26th novel is her handling of confusion - and puzzlement. Jackson's Dilemma is a moral suspense story in which the friends and family of Marian and Edward attempt to locate the runaway bride, fathom the causes of the break-up, and regain their own equilibrium. This is one of Murdoch's most trim and fleetly purposeful novels. The beginning concentrates on the search for Marian. Her whereabouts are concealed from the reader as from her friends who worry and bother one another about what might or should happen next. The dominating plot can be seen as an object of reflection and fun. For, through an unlikely series of coincidences and acts of personal willfulness, the central breach is clarified
and nearly everyone available for matrimony pairs off, although not quite as expected. Murdoch is dexterous in representing the perplexities and confusions in the life of human beings through the bizarre events in her novels, and Jackson's Dilemma is a fine example of this experiment.

Murdoch, an extremely selfless person was very aware of other people's suffering, which comes through very strongly in her books. She was familiar with the fact that people go through tremendous private ordeals of the soul, that's what her novels were really about. Murdoch was very much concerned with trying to simply express these themes, Murdoch's contingent vision is fulfilled in her novels, which dramatize again & again the struggle to see clearly, in a world of self-delusion, the revelations and the blinding of erotic love. Murdoch's parody of herself can be seen in the figure of Arnold Baffin in *The Black Prince*, a popular novelist who produces a novel a year, all full of high metaphysical matters and comforting the reader with a sensation of having experienced deep thoughts. The complexity of love and richness of contingency in Murdoch's best novels grows more evident all the time, we no longer read them as realist social satire but appreciate their fantastic depiction of love and contingency. Through the character of Jackson Murdoch is able to portray a realistic picture of man who is intellectual as well as ordinary. Murdoch is dexterous in representing the perplexities and confusions in the life of human beings through the bizarre events in her novels, and Jackson's Dilemma is a fine example of this experiment.
References


(5) Ibid, p.75.


(7) D.W. Harding, 'The novels of Iris Murdoch', Oxford Magazine, 26 October 1961, p.34.

(8) The novel is loaded with references to doom, destiny, necessity and fate. Coupled with these are nemesis, fury, frenzy,
delusion, blindness and other forces often encountered in Greek tragedy and epic.


(13) An Important work on separation and individual is being done by Margaret Mahler (i.e.) – Margaret Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant, New York : Basic Book, 1975.
