CHAPTER FOUR

Narrative Technique:

Modern criticism, through its exacting scrutiny of literary text, has demonstrated with finality that in art beauty and truth are indivisible and one. The Keatsian overtones of these terms are mitigated and an old dilemma solved if for beauty we substitute form, and for truth, content. We may, without risk of loss, narrow them even more, and speak of technique and subject matter. Modern criticism has shown us that to speak of content as such is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; and that it is only when we speak of the achieved content the form, the work of art as a work of art, that we speak as critics. The difference between content, or experience, and achieved content, or art, is technique.

When we speak of technique, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject of conveying its meaning, and, finally of evaluating it. It follows that certain technique are sharper tools than others. It will discover more; that the writer capable of the most exacting technical scrutiny of his subject matter will produced works with the most
satisfying content, works with thickness and resonance work which reverberate, works with maximum meaning.

The novel is read as though its content has some value in itself, as though the subject matter of fiction has greater or lesser value in itself, and as though technique were not a primary but a supplementary element, capable perhaps of not unattractive embellishments upon the surface of the subject, but hardly of its essence. Technique is thought of in blunter terms than those, which one associates with poetry, as such relatively obvious matters as the arrangement of events to create, plot; or within plot, of suspense and climax; or as the means of revealing character motivation, relationship, and development. Technique is the point of view, but point of view as some nearly arbitrary device for the heightening of dramatic interest through the narrowing or broadening of perspective upon the material, rather than as a means toward the positive definition of theme. As for the resources of language, these somehow, we almost never think of as a part of the techniques of fiction-Language as used to create a certain texture and tone which in themselves state and define themes and meanings; or language, the counters of our ordinary speech, as forced, through conscious manipulation, into all those larger meanings which our ordinary speech almost never intends. Technique in fiction, all this is a way of saying, we somehow continue to regard as merely a means to organizing material which is "given" rather than as the means of exploring and defining the values in an area of experience which, for the first time then, are being given.
Technique in fiction is of course, all those obvious form of it which are usually taken to be the whole of it, and many others; it may be thought in various respects particularly: the language, plot construction settings, characterization, narration and way of delineating thematic definition. Technique is really what T.S. Eliot means by "Convention" : any selection, structure or distortion, any form or rhythm imposed upon the world of action; by means of which it should be added; our apprehension of the world of action is enriched or renewed. In this sense, everything is technique which is not the lump of experience itself, and one cannot properly say that a writer has not technique, or that he eschews techniques, for being a writer, he cannot do so. We can speak of good & bad technique of adequate and inadequate of technique, which serves the novel's purpose, or diserves.

The employment of techniques in the fiction of Iris Murdoch, mean, self-conscious writing and still-born characters. The novels of Iris Murdoch convey: a rigorously delimited subject matter, a formalized neatness and a conscious gentility. The novels of Murdoch represent, an attempt to capture the feelings that border and merge with the unconscious and the currents of sensation passing between characters. It may be called the effort to bring into some kind of focus the heterogeneous complexity of ideas, feelings and impressions in individual mind. Iris Murdoch has been credited in her own way, with the mastery of tone, with creating a unity of feeling and mood by sustaining the emotional vibrations at appropriate degrees of intensity, through each of her novels. This preoccupation is necessary to the novelist.
who would give us either the feel of a given situation or the tone of her society. The techniques of Murdoch's fiction, at once greedy and fastidious achieve as its subject matter not some singleness, some topic or thesis, but the whole of the modern consciousness. It discovers the complexity of the modern spirit, the difficulty of personal morality, and the fact of evil. Her techniques are also seen as the 'manipulation' of subject matter, to arouse within it vitality in accordance with its singular kind, in the matter of style. Her style at its best is the product of a worthwhile mind and sensibility expressing itself in terms appropriate to a given subject and that style, when appropriate, is a part of meaning.

The technique of employing questing heroes represents in the most obvious sense that she does not write as a woman. Unlike so many of her sister novelists, Doris Lessing and Margaret Drabble for example, she has not apparently been concerned to explore what Elaine Showalter has called the "wild zone" of female experience, that area where women's experience does not overlap with men's. In the novels of Murdoch the fictionalised masculine perspective is apparent everywhere. She is a female writer who likes wearing male masks. The distinctive feature of the male narrator is the aspect of her novel, which should be explored at the outset. Elizabeth Dipple in her important and illuminating study of the novels, Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit says:

One more technical issue is worth brief mention: the frequent present of a male first person narrator, and
the absence of a corresponding female voice. It is unprofitable to conjecture why Murdoch does it (because all the first person narration takes place through corrupted male psyches, is this a veiled indication that men are more likely to be debased than women?), especially since she has said she is more comfortable there, and that seems to be that, since this study does not aspire to a psychoanalysis of the author.

The study of Murdoch's narrator should not involve a psychological study of the author, what is in question here is a rhetorical strategy; her novels pose their own questions and do not need to be explained with reference to some supposedly more authoritative text.

Murdoch's curious preference for the male narrator is interestingly illuminated by a passage from her philosophical work *The Sovereignty of Good*. Murdoch in this work implicitly links the subjection to illusion, fantasy, the state of entrapment in the dreaming ego (which Plato calls *eikasia* and symbolises in the flickering, shadowy firelight of the cave), with the gift of articulateness, the ability to manipulate language in order to have power over other people. Murdoch's attitude to language partakes of her attitude to art in general: if art can all too easily degenerate into false patterns lying consolations, then this must be true to language. Goodness (the generously
disinterested awareness of the world outside the self) then becomes linked with silence and, even more revealing, with femaleness.

Goodness appears to be both rare and hard to picture. It is perhaps most convincingly met with in simple people – inarticulate, unselfish mothers of large families – but these cases are also the least illuminating.³

The chosen protagonist of Iris Murdoch is most directly opposed to the simple inarticulate mother of a large family. Such protagonist has been shown as a childless male professional who is indeed articulate to the point of constantly speaking – who has power, or we may say glamour. Such glamour is concerned, not always convincingly, by the sexual spell he wields over the various women who surround him. He is always indulged in love with words and is often concerned with language as an instrument of power. He is bestowed with artistic or intellectual gifts; he may be a theatre director (Charles Arrowby in The Sea, the Sea), a novelist (Jake Donaghue in Under the Net and Bradley Pearson in the Black Prince), or a well-known philosopher (Rozanov, the central power wielder though notably not the narrator in The Philosopher’s Pupil). However, such talents of the protagonist are always in some measure frustrated, for example in The Sea, the Sea, Charles Arrowby realizes that power over others involves guilt and therefore, he attempts to escape from his theatrical past. In the same way Jake, the hero of Under the Net and Bradley Pearson are for different reasons ‘blocked’
and John Robert Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, has come, it seems to the limits of philosophy; Martin Lynch Gibbon (*A Severed Head*) and Hilary Burde (*A Word Child*), The highly cultivated men have failed to pursue their true enthusiasms (history, languages), taking up instead Jobs, which palely reflect and even parody their creative and intellectual needs. These protagonists are concerned with their sense of failure to some degree of deeper self-examination and represent on attempt to break some of the false patterns, which have commanded their lives. Deborah Johnson comments on the questing heroes of Murdoch:

> The status of the quester is from the start very much open to question and more challengingly, so is the nature of his quest. All Iris Murdoch's word children are unreliable narrators, flawed reflectors of the fictional worlds they inhabit.³

Being a woman writer Murdoch is always conscious of what she is doing and what would be its effect. Some particular reflections, which she provides to her hero/as notably, Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, the Sea* may be compare to Jacobean in their intense hatred, their habit of generalizing of out 'women'. Hero's arguments with the female character particularly in the matter of love, shows that the narrators are forever drawing upon misogynist generalizations in order to gain point, for example, what Hilary does with Tomy in *A Word Child*, it can not be say that Murdoch's women don't generalise about 'men'; they sometimes do, but such generalizations are
somewhat rare and impotent than the overall dominance of the male narrator. The male lover continually expresses his sense of superiority through his sheer powers of articulation, his marked tendency to cap and better or simply to interrupt the statements of his 'mistress'. The novels of Murdoch are clearly preoccupied by the unequal power relationships, which exist between men and women. Often she shows two inequalities reinforces each other as they do in *A Word Child* when Hilary's crude sexual bullying of the beautiful and mysterious half-Indian girl, 'Biscuit', turns into an obliquely racist bullying.

According to Murdoch all human beings men and women alike, as subject to *eikasia* and particularly to that form of *eikasia*, which renders other, people invisible. It is much more likely to be a woman than a man who exclaims in exasperation, as Georgie does to Martin in *A Severed Head*, 'you've got to See me' (SH, p.105). It is clear that Murdoch's male narrators fail to 'see' as they talk too much and always seem to engross in their own realm of volubility. It suggests that the connection between the male hero, articulateness, power and the quest are presented with a considerable degree of deliberate irony on Murdoch's part.

The novels of Iris Murdoch trace the journey of a male hero into a comic version of Thebes, where he either remain caught for good in the toils of erotic (self) deception (as Edmund in *The Italian Girl* and Martin in *A severed Head*) or he manages to survive the process and move towards version of colonus – "The world transfigured, found" as Bradley puts it at the end of *The Black Prince* (BP, p.391). It is a state not bound by the
protagonist's normal and narrow ego-consciousness, and the destruction of some of his most cherished illusions enlarged his vision.

The love plots of Iris Murdoch often constitute as a series of unveilings, of the discovery of erotic substitutions. There is a repeated question in The Sea, the Sea, uttered by Charles, 'who is one's first love?' finds its echo throughout Murdoch's fiction. Peter J. Conradi in The Saint and The Artist has drawn attention to the repetition of Oedipal family situations: Sibling rivalry in Under the Net, The Flight from the Enchanter, A Severed Head, Bruno's Dream, A Fairly Honourable Defeat, An Accidental Man, The Time of the Angels; mother-daughter rivalry in An Unofficial Rose, The Black Prince; father-daughter incest in The Time of the Angels; brother-sister incest in A Severed Head, The Bell and The Red and the Green. If incest does not appear literally in the plot it can figure metaphorically, for example, in The Good Apprentice, Edward's quest for deliverance from his despair leads him to find his natural father, who appears as an ambiguous love object:

of course Jesse was his father. But he was, as if now filled up to the brim, so much more: a master, a precious king, a divine lover, a strange mysterious infinitely beloved object, the prize of a religious search, a jewel in a cave. (GA, p.296)
area for Mor in his bittersweet romance with her. Rain is seen primarily as object, her colorful clothes in particular emphasizing her desirableness as female image, she is implicitly reinstated as female subject by the terms of her own Oedipal family romance.

The Freudian tensions are characteristically diffused by comedy particularly in the handling of Oedipal situation. This may be seen throughout the playfully Freudian novel A Severed Head. The dream that Martin has at the beginning of chapter 21 (pp.137-8) is a pointer to the Oedipal logic of Martin's progress. The dream is constructed with an almost mechanical lucidity therefore it conveys Martin's hidden castration complex. Martin's dream is concerned with his sister whom the reader sees implicitly but unmistakably to resemble Honor Klein. This figure of Martin's sister/Honor leads to a second condensed figure that represents both Martin's father and Honor.

The Freudianism concept regarding the dream is illustrating the suave psychoanalyst Palmer's theories concerning the 'mechanical' nature of the psyche. It also points to the underlying family drama in which Martin is caught and continues re-enacting with erotic substitutions. Honor has been represented as the object of Martin's quest. She is a sort of taboo-object, sister in the royal incestuous brother-sister pair. Honor has been delineated as highly articulate and well qualified to explain her status as taboo-object to Martin. The inter connected events in the plot show that Honor is rather better
than Martin at getting what she wants and it hints that she herself might function as a more shrewd female version of the questing hero.

In the novels of Iris Murdoch the preference for the use of male narrators, claims to write like a man. Feminist such as Luce Irigaray sees role-playing as central to the female subverting of male discourse. 'Mimetism' an acting out of role-playing within the text allows the woman writer the better to know and hence expose what she mimics.

Murdoch exposes the lack of self-knowledge, the weaknesses of her male narrators through their own words. Her versatile use of different discourses allows her to cross gender boundaries, thus gaining access to the male psyche as well as the female. She conveys what moral preoccupation they share as much as the psychological fantasies that separate. Murdoch encapsulates intellectuality and emotion, mind and body, philosophy and poetry. She examines these traditional divisions in western culture through her male narrators and her own authorial voice.

The male narrators of Murdoch often fail to 'see' as they talk too much, like Charles in *The Sea, the Sea*. Such word children are unreliable narrators, artistically gifted but frustrated by their misuse of their gifts. Fantasizing is associated with the gift of articulacy a danger in her novels, which results in the occasional purpose passage. She tried to make the protagonists realize
how much they have to learn, how much they play roles. They achieve a plurality of vision as they learn. Charles self congratulatory journal provides a commentary on his egotism, which circumstances force him to face, Murdoch subverts male models of behaviour by showing the hero having revised his assumptions about women, about personal power, about maleness and femaleness, Murdoch’s questing male hero is treated ironically, but when he is frustrated, it is not so much as he is male, but for living too much in illusion.

The novels of Iris Murdoch have been considered a real achievement of entertainment and impersonation. The term impersonation is a clear pointer to what Iris Murdoch is doing in all these novels; She is creating personae, masks. Her first novel Under the Net notably expresses her preoccupation with the theatre, with theatrical imagery, with the springs of shrewd contrived illusions. In Under the Net the most important mask is Jake himself whom Murdoch is impersonating.

Jake is the hero of a comedy, which works to dissolve false personae and set assumption to represent the perceptions of gender differences. These differences have been codified & presented in particular ways at particular times, it also show how people continually exploit and break these codes in search of love and power. Therefore, characters and actions are conveyed in comic sense, and they subordinate to setting and situation. The encounter of Jake with Anna in the ‘props’ room of her Mime Theatre, is delineated the richly chaotic theatrical bric-a-brac, shown as a remarkable passage and determines the entire course of the following scene:
It was like a vast toyshop that had been hit by a bomb. In my first glance I noticed a French horn, a rocking-horse, a set of red-striped tin-trumpets, some Chinese silk robes, a couple of rifles, paisley shawls, teddy bears, glass balls, tangles of necklaces and other jewellery, a convex mirror, a stuffed snake, countless toy animals, and a number of tin trunks out of which multi-coloured costumes trailed, Exquisite and expensive plaything lay enlaced with the gimcrack contents of Christmas crackers, I sat down on the nearest seat, which happened to be the back of the rocking-horse, and surveyed the scene. (UN, p.39)

_Under the Net_ is an example of a good humour critique of a male questing hero, having the element of modernist and post modernist fiction and solipsistic intensity, which accompanies his sense of his quest. At the end of the novel Jake has found his real quest, his 'path' but does not seem to celebrate it in a grand and self-justifying gesture. He confuses and puzzles over the workings of genetics as he contemplates a mixed litter of newborn kittens. Throughout the novel Jake has been seen in the process of continually revising and questioning his assumptions about maleness, femaleness, sexual glamour, personal and political power. The femaleness of Murdoch is registered in this playful exposure of stereotyped models of
human behaviour and in the space, which she carefully maintains between herself and her male narrator.

Murdoch's next novel *A Severed Head* too employs a male narrator with an exquisite dexterity. The novel opens in a 'prolonged and successful masquerade' with the involvement of the unfaithful husband and lover, Martin Lynch Gibbon. Unlike *Under the Net*, the novel draws attention to the bottomless chasm, which lurks behind apparently civilized behaviour. Such false pretence is punctuated by moments of emotional and physical violence. Martin's violence is released at three crucial moments in the narrative, once against Georgie, once against Honor and finally against Palmer, Martin takes some hard knocks than the brilliant ability of Jake to improvise and to wriggle out of tight corners.

Martin, at the beginning of his narrative seems confident and secure, he resembles an urbane comedy of manners' hero in his way of continually asserting opinions as fact: "*In almost every marriage there is a selfish and an unselfish partner. A pattern is set up and soon becomes inflexible, of one person always making the demands and one person always giving way*" (SH, p.14). Martin addresses his audience in the way as an audience of fellowmen; he describes its complicity; he conveys without stating directly that his listeners are associated in much the same series of deceptions and self-deceptions as he is: *I had of course, misled Georgie about the success of my marriage. What married man who keeps a mistress does not so mislead her*? (SH, p.14). Martin is clearly playing to the gallery but the security of his stance
is soon undermined by the sets of unnerving disclosure, which leads him to his obsession with Honor Klein. It also leads him to the wittily improbable conclusion in which Honor decides to take her chance with him.

*A Severed Head* is concerned with subtle ironies, which do not take its sources simply from the time-honoured use of first person narration to convey a limitation of awareness. There is also a complex, specifically female perspective at work and Murdoch realizes subtleties of effect which were unintended even in this apparently most contrived of novels. Georgie has been shown as an important figure, which remains in an important respect unknown to Martin, as he admits: 'what vast wound that catastrophe had perhaps made in Georgie’s proud and upright spirit I did not know' (SH, p.13). The ironic juxtaposition and gaps in Martin's narrative represents the use of Murdoch's female presence in great acquisitiveness.

In the series of dexterous narrative technique, *The Italian Girl* is the shortest and the most obviously 'patterned' of Murdoch's novels. The novel constitutes an interesting Murdocian paradigm and represents a kind of Freudian dream narrative in which, often without a moment's warning the characters are transformed by the violence of their passions into metaphorical monsters. *Elizabeth Dipple* describes its problematic function as 'an unintentional parody of its author's usual amusement and expertise in plot turns'. The novel conveys the tendency of self-parody in the detail of writing and in the microcosmic workings of the style. The following dialogue between the narrator, Edmund, and Isabel is a clear representation of such tendency:
You are raving,' I said. 'Otto could so easily find out, and—I know. I feel like a ship moving steadily towards an iceberg. But I can no other. Don't you see I'm in extremis? The only question is, when Otto finds out, will he kill David or me or both. (IG, p.110).

The handling of the male narrator Edmund is at the heart of the novel. Dipple is right in her view; 'that this is an early novella, reconstructed and published out of sequence', this would help account for the dissatisfaction and undeveloped nature of Edmund as Persona. The plot is an implicit critique of Edmund; the tone is unquestioning and uncertain, particularly in the scenes where Edmund confronts Isabel and Flora. Murdoch represents the whole details of Edmund's visual perception, the hollowness of its narrator, which is ultimately the self-absenting of the female author.

Murdoch's The Black Prince is a complete contrast to The Italian Girl, the novel is a complex and brilliant exploration of the relationship between the author and her male narration. The acting out or role-playing within the text is embedded in the actual structure of the novel. To state briefly, the main narrative, Bradley Pearson's story, The Black Prince: A Celebration of Love, is framed by two main forewords one by the 'editor', P. Loxias, and one by Bradley Pearson himself. The novel is consist of the six postscripts one by Bradley Pearson again, 'four by dramatic personae' and one by P. Loxias. The narrative technique in the novel has been presented in an excellent way and is itself interrupted by the narrator's reflections as he pauses to address his
friend and fellow-prisoner, P. Loxias, the recipient of his story. Therefore, an important and revealing gap has been delineated between Bradley, the character in the story and Bradley the narrator. Bradley the narrator, who is writing in the prison, has been shown is a position of much greater maturity and self knowledge; the narrator has now undergone what he proclaims as the purgation, the exorcism of guilt which has brought about by his trial and unjust sentence to life imprisonment. The whole narrative appears an implicit commentary by the author who stands behind her narrator. The commentary emerges through the silences, omissions and ironic doubling and coincidences in the given story.

The novel deals explicitly with the limits of articulation, speech, theory, language itself, and traces the painful tension between the author's own need for communication and her simultaneous need for self-concealment. Such tension has been expressed by Murdoch early on in the novel through the eloquent reflections of her personae, Bradley:

*Men truly manifest themselves in the long pattern of their acts, and not in any nutshell of self theory. This is supremely true of the artist, who appears, however much he might imagine that he hides, in the revealed extension of his work. And so I too am here exhibited whose pitiful instinct is alas still for a concealment quite at odds with my trade* (BP, p.12)
*The Black Prince* represents a conflict emerges between the public male voice and the private female silence that surrounds the text, or work of art. It becomes clear at the end of Bradley’s narrative, when, he comes back full circle to the question of the necessary limitations of the work of art. At the beginning of Bradley’s narrative, his thinking about silence was as the necessary control of speech: ‘I hate, in any context, an intemperate flux of words. Contrary to what is modishly thought, the negative is stronger than the positive and its master’ (BP, p.18).

Silence meant for Bradley a fastidious refusal to commit the self, to accept the necessary imperfection, which comes of trying at all. Bradley edgy relationship with his friend and rival, the prolific novelist Arnold Baffin, is a long exploration of this fastidiousness. Silence may be seen here in terms of Bradley’s own characteristic sexual metaphors, a, kind of virile satisfaction, placed in opposition to ‘the intemperate flux of words’. Finally Bradley realises that silence is the necessary endpoint of the achieved work of art and commitment what cannot be said controlling.

Murdoch with great dexterity deals the difficult and embarrassing subject matter of *The Black Prince*, which has been mediated through the male narration. Murdoch is able to deal very intelligently the suffering and turmoil that often underlie artistic and erotic experience by separating herself from her narrator. She also deals with the darker horrors of war, hunger and disease, which touch human consciousness. She reflects on this:
That this world is a place of horror must affect every serious artist and thinker, darkening his reflection, ruining his system, sometimes actually driving him mad. Any seriousness avoids this fact at its peril, and the great ones who have seemed to neglect it have done so only in appearance (BP, p. 348)

Through the voice of Bradley Murdoch very sensitively dramatizes the human difficulty in adequately contemplating and responding to this violence and suffering, particularly where it concerns the lives of other people. The occurrence of these dark reflections of Bradley is associated with the suicide of Priscilla. Here the novelist with Bradley's generalised misery associates the waste of Priscilla's life. He continually feels the reality of it slipping away even as he contemplating the matter.

*The Black Prince* is an example of rhythmic style and incantation of Bradley's pen by the anonymity of his own personality. Bradley slides into a mode of poetic generalization, which is also a form of self-dramatization. As life goes on Priscilla dies and the random details of her wretchedness fade again out of sight. Then the life of Bradley leads to the cruel, ironic twist at the novel's centre. Now, Bradley's utter absorption in his love for Julian leads to his total relinquishment of his sister, and so to her death. At this time Bradley is forced to change a good deal of the persona, which has used to explore the disturbing connections between art and Eros. At the beginning of his narrative Bradley is almost restrained and cold. He expresses his fear of women, which
is linked, to his distaste for powerful sentiments and for their physical
gestures. This is one of the misogynist generalizations, which are the hallmark
of Murdoch's unfriendly heroes.

Murdoch's next novel *The Sea, the Sea*, provides less complex but
logical version of the male narrator. *The Sea, the Sea* represents the
medium, which is evidently suited to the personality of the narrator. The
memoir, Charles Arrowby (the protagonist of the novel) writes, conveys a
double tendency towards self-justification and self-congratulation (the self
conscious selection of 'beauties' in the recording of intense moment of
aesthetic perception). It is the right form of narcissism son, which Charles
showed in his memoir. Charles settles into his solitary seaside existence after
his power-ridden life as a celebrated theatre director, and he feels that he is
enjoying himself. The writing of Charles draws attention to his obsessive
grudge against the past. The following passage presents the paragraph-break
it marks an expressive pause, and the examining of a thought process:

*It is evening. The Sea is golden, speckled with white
points of light, lapping with a sort of mechanical self-
satisfaction under a pale green sky, huge it is, how
empty, this great space for which I have been longing
all my life* (SS, p. 15).
There is logical contradiction between the first reflection and the second conveys his half-conscious sense of guilt: 'The end of life is rightly thought of as a period of meditation. Will I be sorry that I did not begin it sooner?' (SS, p.2).

As a brilliant artist Murdoch has well caught the twistings and probings of the restless intellect in Charles style. One of the contemplative moment of the narrator of The Black Prince conveys 'the mean and servile if onlys' of a peevish spirit’ (BP, p.349) which can cloud our experience of suffering; Charles represents the comic version of those 'if onlys' which cloud the experience of joy. The bewildering twists and turns of the narrative show that Charles gradually releases from his obsessive horror of the events. By the end of the book he is able to delineate his most painful experience, his affair with the domineering actress Clement, which ends with her terrible death. Now, the disappearance of eerie gaps and silences in his narrative can be realized, by a roundabout and unexpected route he achieves something of the innocence that he set out to gain.

The Philosopher’s Pupil is one of Murdoch’s most elusive of novels. The narrator of the novel is not the hero nor even, as he himself informs the reader, one of the significant actors in the drama. He assures, that he is a ‘discreet and self-effacing narrator’ (PP, p.23), and is familiar to some extent a number of the dramatis personae and lives is their town to which he refers as 'N's town or Ennistone. N has been called by George as 'that impotent voyear' (PP, p.489), a phrase which parodies N's presentation of his own role and indeed that of all 'detached' narrator: 'I am an observer, a student of human
nature a moralist a man; and will allow myself here and there the discreet luxury of moralizing' (PP, p.23). N conveys only the most teasing and brief appearances it is too difficult to know how far to trust him. In the case of other narrators as heroes there is a process of education through experience and they acquire an ethical perspective in which they can visualize their past selves. N emerges through his style of writing, using pointlessly verbose expression, and archaic sentence which slightly ostentatious. Therefore, he needs continually to interpret, order, and reconcile, to impose meaning. He is one of Murdoch's 'incurable metaphysicians' like Jake in *Under the Net*, and most profoundly seen as a scapegoat for the novelist herself.

The narration of 'N' can not be compare to the wiser Murdochian narrator's awareness of the treacherous, slippery nature of language in a sense of that point which the narrator of *The Black Prince* has increasingly view. The interesting aspect of *The Philosopher Pupil* is that Murdoch explicitly draws attention to the dialogue between her own off stage presence as female author and her male narrator who speaks front of stage.

There can be no question about Murdoch's tremendous narrative vigour and inventiveness, all the novels from *Under the Net* to *Jackson's Dilemma* have a compelling power at the simplest level the reader wants to know what happens next. She possesses great skill and accuracy in delineating precise actions. The reader is not allowed a passive consumption of the text but is activated; her or his authority as an arbiter of narrative situation is invoked and then destabilized. Such destabilization of authority is
also effected through the use of multiple narrative, limited viewpoints such as that of a first person narrator or a third person narrator who participates in the events of the story. Her third person narrator may be called, omniscient, familiar from the fiction of mid-eighteenth and nineteenth century (e.g. Henry Fielding, Eliza Haywood, Jane Austen, George Eliot). The third person narrator maintains a dialogue with the reader over the head of her or his characters as in *The Unicorn, The Italian Girl*.

He is comfortable in the assumption that she and the reader share a sense of reality and values which transcend the individual, has become an impossibility in an age in which reality is no longer regarded as "a given whole".1

The device of male narration in Murdoch's novels is remarkable. It causes the reader to look afresh at what it means to 'write as a women. She proves that she possesses narrative talent and capacity to invent situations, twist of plots and violent actions. Through her narrative techniques she represents a control over the text, which leaves the reader nothing to do but decipher her intentions and her intellectual vigour.

In the novels of Murdoch the articulate hero sets out in his imaginary quest that silent heroine too often languishes in the prison-house of the Murdochian plot. The novel's, which do not employ a dramatized narrator, rely instead on a blend of omniscient and third person centre of consciousness narration. Murdoch in her novels employs a dramatized narrator; on the
whole, more satisfying as literary texts than are the others, which are sometimes marred by passages of unpersuasive omniscient narration. These passages show Murdoch's habitual though intermittent uncertainty about how far to collude with or to detach herself from the perspective of her characters. Sympathy and irony tug in opposite directions, and a curious vagueness or self-absenting results can be seen in *The Italian Girl*.

The impersonal narrator in *An Unofficial Rose* describes Ann Peronett's brief and uncharacteristic revolt against her fairly unhappy marriage. 'Ann felt within herself the blissful stir of a selfish will. She welcomed it as a mother might welcome the first moment of her unborn child' (UR, p. 282). The concluding simile here poses a problem. It is both over-obvious and curiously irrelevant an Ann is a mother and furthermore she happens at this moment to be getting the worst of a conversation with her daughter Miranda. The problem seems to arise where the author wishes to convey inarticulate or half articulate emotional states, which she characteristically seeks to convey through the consciousness of the women in her novels. The gulf between men and her women is well shown in her many descriptions of falling being in love.

The recent novels of Murdoch represent her altered narrative strategies what Johnson has pointed out as the problem with first-person male narrators and their tendency to decanter the female point of view. Recognizing that the problem with first-person male narrators is also related to strong plot lines, Murdoch has said:
The danger with a very strong plot and a few very strong characters is that other characters, perhaps haven't got any space in which to develop themselves. I think there's more detail in general in the later novels. They are longer novels, and there is more opportunity for descriptions of all kinds. And I think there more realistic. The characters are better and I think this is the main thing, to be able to invent characters who have a life of their own, who seem to exist.¹³

The earlier novels of Murdoch primarily represent the women voice but undercutting the reliability of the narrator. Her later novels, although they continue to have obsessive male characters, also move close to what Murdoch describes as her ideal novel:

My ideal novel – I mean, the novel which I would like to write and haven't yet written – would not be written in first person, because I'd rather write a novel which is scattered, with many different centres. I've often thought that the best way to write a novel would be to invent the story, and then to remove the hero and heroine and write about the peripheral people—because one wants to extend one's sympathy and divide one's interests.¹⁴
One important result of this decentering strategy is that it follows for more narration through the consciousness of her women characters. An examination of the women in Murdoch's two latest novels, *The Book and the Brotherhood* and *The Message to the Planet*, will exhibit the effectiveness of this new strategy in more fully representing the female voice.

*The Book and the Brotherhood*, represents a central character, Rose Courtland another example of the female as a victim. She is intelligent and educated, having "studied English Literature and French at Edinburgh", (BB. p. 13). Rose wastes any creative talents she might have waiting for a relationship with Gerald Hernshaw to develop, a wait that has lasted for thirty years: "her life always seemed so provisional, a waiting life, not settled like other people's" (BB. p. 227). Rose in many ways seems to understand problems of power and gender. Her observations about the relationship of her friend Jean Kowitz Cambus and David Crimmond accurately reflect such and understanding of the misuse of male power: "You are living inside an illusion. It's all so one sided, so unfair..... As far as I can see, you have no relationship now except with him, a sexual relation which is part of his life and all of yours!" (BB. p. 309). Rose is aware of her position, telling Gerald, "You've always taken me for granted, and I'll always be there to be find and useful" (BB. p.556). She does not act on her own vision; instead, she resigns herself to Gerald's direction. While her decision could be interpreted as an act of love, a sublimation of self, it reinforces the view readers have of women as sum missive.
In *The Message to the Planet* Murdoch represents an uneducated but strong-willed young girl Irina Vallar, who is nonetheless appears to be a helpless and sequestered Virgin, and is persuaded by a number of courtly lovers. Irina is a more complex character, her acquisition of power does not automatically render her separated from good, nor does it mean her vision is thereby clouded. She is perceptive, for example, she realizes that Alfred Ludens (one of her country lover of the novel) is more attached to her father than he is to her, and manipulates him into helping her take her father to a sanitarium. She also skillfully avoids a sexual liaison with Ludens and manages a disappearance and reunion with a former lover Irina, despite her responsibilities for her father, moves consistently from positions that disadvantage her to those that give her what she wants.

*The Message to the Planet* represents perhaps Murdoch's most interesting minor characters Maisie Tether. Her uniqueness may be explained in part by her resemblance to Murdoch. Like Murdoch, Maisie too is an only child, "I did well having the individual attention of those two superior beings," she says (MP. p. 267); she also has been educated in girls’ schools and like Murdoch trained in the classics. She too shares Murdoch's affinity for Japanese Culture. She also despises "female masochism" (MP. p. 268) and sees herself as a "natural therapist", and tells Franca "the best way to rid yourself of a bad useless craving is to open your heart to other people find new people to law" (MP. p. 322). Maisie is Murdoch's most assertive spokesman for the good. She avoids egotism and remains interesting despite
her goodness thus escaping the fate of so many of Murdoch’s good characters that become uninteresting to the reader.

The most important aspect of *The Message to the Planet* is its narration. The novel is narrated extensively through a female narrator, Franca Sheerwater who is also the most fully developed of the novel’s women. Involved in a triangle with her husband Jack, and his mistress. Her situation initially parallels that of Harriet Gavender in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* or Rachel Baffin in *The Black Prince*, both of whom are married to men who attempt to maintain ménages with the support of the victimized wives. Franca seems particularly doomed to the role of object. When Jack tells her that as an object her role is “to restore silence,” she seems to comply without resistance willing to be “for him, beneficently, life giving, a thing” (MP. p. 27). Her helplessness masks a struggle for survival that eventually leads her to experience feelings of rage and hatred, “even...fierce cruel fantasies” (MP. p. 141). Finally, these always hidden feelings become her “great deception,” and a source of power to her, a “cruel triumphant power by which she [holds] her husband trapped and blinded” (MP. p. 180), even as she contemplates his murder. However, as she *Cherishes, nourishes and develops her suffering* (MP. p. 141) she also succumbs to what in Murdoch’s view are the consolations of egoism. Instead of freedom, her “wicked vicious ill-intentioned lying to Jack” (MP. p. 153) causes her own entrapment: “As she entrapped him she was entrapping herself” (MP. p. 153). Her narration conveys her intense suffering that has
been accompanied by purification, a defeat of the self that in Murdoch’s view brings freedom and moves the individual closer to the good. The narration represents France’s struggles with the good that suggests her more highly developed state of spirituality. The narrative technique of this novel has proved that Murdoch does not think any difference between man & woman at a higher level or a more spiritual level.
References


(2) Elizabeth Dipple, Iris Murdoch : Work for the Spirit, London Methuen, 1982, p. 188.


(6) Ibid, p.84

(7) Ibid, p. 83


(10) Ibid, p.152


