CHAPTER FIVE

Character Portrayal

Murdoch's whole vast oeuvre can be thought of as an ongoing metaphor of life. She never stopped meditating on creativity or what it means to be a true artist inevitably for a philosopher, on what it means to be human. From her first novel, the characters of writer and visual artist measure their rival claims to true creativity, i.e. to originality and to effectiveness. In Under the Net, the hero is a writer (at first to translator and ultimately a writer of philosophy but hardly more than a copier of others' ideas, a scribe). But the hero's hero is a true artist who first produces fireworks, later films and throughout and most importantly, original ideas. In The Sandcastle, the heroine is a portrait painter who, if she has not yet outstripped her famous dead painter father is visibly more creative, as well as successful, than her school teacher lover.

Murdoch in her novels wanted to create a wonderful magical way by representing real characters, real independent people who would grow and be remembered as real individuals. She urgently felt herself wanting to write as Shakespearean novel, to have an ability to create free people wandering round in an open-air atmosphere. The novels of Murdoch may be called different rolling cameras that present vivid and realistic description of
contemporary Londoners, sometimes under the covering of mythical structure. The sheer tangibility of the details, the observation and above all the immensely impressive delineation of characters make her novel remarkable. We are presented with a group of characters knit together, and also isolated, by family ties, sexual attraction or both. They are for the most part admirably realized, existing in the round and convincing at the realistic level.

Murdoch considers that the novel must be 'a fit house for free characters to live in'. Murdoch makes ordinary people take chances and watches their action with deliberate amusement. Her character portrayal is brightly done but rather heavily based on existential notions and necessity, and represents consciousness and unconsciousness. The way Murdoch manipulates her characters has been thought very inventive. Her characters are represented with erotic obsession and driven by them into grotesque action as in the case of Bradley Pearson in *The Black Prince* and Charles Arrowby in *The Sea The Sea*. Murdoch deals with careful and compassionate characterization there is an extraordinary and complex variety of characters that has been elaborated throughout her work. Murdoch is concerned with moral issues and dilemmas and these tend to recur in different guises from one book to the next, therefore, it is natural that the characters who wrestle with them tend to bear a family resemblance. It cannot be assumed that in all her novels the portrayal is similar but filled with different shades of human nature.
Murdoch carefully outlines her notions about the human psyche, she argues that human beings are 'naturally selfish', that they are egocentric, machine-life energy system driven by forces incomprehensible to them.\(^2\) This egocentric consciousness is inclined even doomed to falsify harsh realities through series of obsessional fantasies which Murdoch defines as a 'proliferation of blinding self-centered aims and images'. She states we are "transient mortal creatures subject to necessity and chance"\(^3\). The construction of characters is the highest priority in the novels of Murdoch, she portrays various types of characters with their oddities and peculiarities.

Murdoch finds it difficult to create separate character that is different from her. To understand why this kind of creation is difficult for Murdoch it has to be noticed that what she admires about the nineteenth century novel is its portrayal of the individual as part of society, that is as having a public and a private self. The nineteenth century novels are replete with these two aspects, and where one predominates over the other, some reason is implicitly or explicitly offered. For example, the novels of Jane Austen represent the private and the domestic domination that is presented as a function of the kind of individual portrayed. In her novels middle and upper middle class women in predominantly rural or small town settings would have led an essentially private life centering on at home. The lives of these women coincides with the reader's notion of what their lives might have been like. Therefore, there is a congruity between the author's representation and the reader's expectations.
In comparison to the nineteenth century portrayals the atmosphere of Murdoch's novels seem rather different. The assimilation of the private and the public, which govern the nineteenth century novel into a single overlapping one, finds only a very limited expression in Murdoch's novels. Murdoch has accomplished with this development by shutting out the public arena in favour of private sceneries. The novels of Murdoch centers on the urban professional middle class in contemporary Britain, much of whose time is, of course, spent working or doing work-related activities. The male characters of Iris Murdoch are often civil servants, doing office jobs, schoolmasters, priests or psychiatrists. These jobs are concerned with intensiveness and demand more than a nine-to-five attendance, but if we encounter these characters in their place of work (as in the case of Mor in The Sandcastle, particularly in The Nice and the Good and in A Word Child) we get only a very limited sense of their professional selves. What these characters do or think in relation to their work is for the most part simply not represented. The relations of these characters to others, even at work, are virtually all the level of the private, and all tend to be of a rather similar degree of intensity.

This may be called a function of Murdoch's ideal of writing a novel, which centres on 'peripheral characters', which is scattered in its representation of characters. This is the main difference between Murdoch's writing and the nineteenth century novels that she admires it as realism is for her associated with a moral perceptual, 'inner' stance, and because this is
what she wants to convey in her fiction. Therefore, she largely ignores the public and professional selves of her characters, which are so vital in creating the illusion ‘rounded characters’, of the individual in society, in the nineteenth century novel.

There are two developments associated with this difference have gone hand in hand in Murdoch’s novels in some of her earlier novels Murdoch still transcends class boundaries that can be seen in the depiction of servants in *The Italian Girl* and *The Time of the Angels*, dressmakers in *The Flight from The Enchanter* and shopkeepers in *Under The Net*. Murdoch also raises specific party political issues; this is particularly the case in *Under The Net*, which investigates a similar political scene, the left in the first decade after World War II. These novels represent the possibility of the development and improvement of the central characters such as the case with Jake in *Under the Net* as well as Edmund in *The Italian Girl* and Martin in *A Severed Head*. This technique finds its structural expression in a drive towards ‘happy endings’, resolution and closure and it may be said that in some respects Murdoch is closer here to her ideal of the nineteenth century novel than in her later work.

In her later novels Murdoch’s focus is particularly on social networks that are exclusively middle class and it can be seen from *The Nice and the Good* *(1900)* onwards. These novels are concerned with Murdoch’s great gifts as a realistic novelist, these novels portray analysing conscious thought in her character as well as unconscious impulses and emotional states. The
characters of Murdoch think what they think and how intensely they habitually think affects what they do, which is what we find in life more often than in novels. For example Ducane's attempts at moral self-control and self-analysis, the degree to which he is confused by his own sexual mechanism and the degree to which he can control it, are written in an excellent realistic pattern. Elizabeth Dipple states about the characterization of Murdoch:

    Her primary tools are a devastating accuracy in the
detail of human character and an enormous allusive
frame, which pushes the reader toward a willingness
to see how large her intentions are. 7

Murdoch's strongest area of experiment in fiction writing lies in her brilliant depiction of characters. She is a writer of enormous content with complete consistency of ideas and thoughts. Characters of Murdoch may be called world-immanent beings, they are people who, inspite of an inclination towards ideal and knowledge, are forced to concentrate on ordinary action in a realistic world where puzzlement reigns. Murdoch considers the transcendent easily deceptive it distracts human beings from realizing the truth, the truth that can be achieved without tricks or game playing or magic and that is well delineated by realism. The characters of Murdoch are not concerned with transcendence and their seeking of an ideal end is always brutally collided, but they are not familiar with virtue or holiness and the best way of describing this is through the Platonic idea of the Good. This kind of
religious apprehension can be seen at the core of Murdoch work and removes it from simple realism into a more serious realm. Murdoch seems to refuse the manifestations of the divine, nevertheless operates ironically within a limited idea of a universe where the idea of the good with the idea of selflessness is seen as the basic human access to spirituality.

Murdoch's free thinking about her characters means that they all—except for a few real demons—are shown having some hold on good and some access to truth. All of Murdoch's characters convey at least momentarily a tendency towards the luminous; the notion of how a 'good' character is represented in her novels becomes very important. Murdoch's loyalty to the accuracy of reality shows that her novels are populated by the generally imperfect, egotistic and even demonic characters of contemporary middle class world. Good characters do occur – a whole range of them – and they can be perceived to achieve access to what her fictional world conveys.

Murdoch's well known novel *The Nice and the Good* has the basis of an argument, an important central distinction: the nice are not the good, although the love of comfortable social relationships and transparent moral lethargy tend to make reader choose the simple way of equating the two. John Ducane has been placed at the centre of the novel's action, can not be recognized as a character of the good — that is, a character who can be visualized as under the tight, even appalling, moral discipline which is essential in Murdoch's subtly worked frame. Ducane is nice and learns a great deal, but it is harder to discover what can be seen of the good. The novel too
portrays a minor, off-centre character, uncle Theo, whose formal impact on
the novel's complex design is negligible. His function is a vital signpost, rather
than as an exemplar or successful portrayal of, the good. Theo's compelling
strength in the novel comes from the complementarily of his depressed
Jewish refugee friend, Willy Kost, and his powers are generally absorbed by
his guilt over his past and his seeking for redemption. Theo is a superbly
designed eccentric – ageing, smelly, shuffling in the background of the scene
where characters' lives are represented. Even he is ignored by the major
characters, the nice Mary Clothier, who shares with John Ducane the illusion
that one should actively interfere to help others, tries and fails to penetrate to
the heart of his life, his trouble and his past. She in fact provides the central
insight into his behaviour. She puzzles by his neutral involvement and
invisibility in the crowded scene of the Dorset household. She is confused
between two opinions: one, that is his animal placidity deprives him of
energy, like a spider in the corner; the other: more unnerving theory
according to which uncle Theo's invisibility was something more like an
achievement, or perhaps a curse. At these times Mary apprehended his
laziness, and his relaxation not exactly as despair but as something on the
other side of despair of which she did not know the name . . . .

There was no mask. It was simply that the ensemble
of Uncle Theo's particular pointlessness could take for
her the jump into a new gestalt, which showed him to
her as a man who, had been through the inferno and
had by the experience been deprived of his will (NG, p.87).

The reflection of illusion and the stepping away from the ego-satisfaction of success, and the projected refusal to suffer easily with comfortable people in Dorset, are element of good character. Though Theo is a minor character but he surely achieves more weight, he is the only character who knows what good is. To differentiate the nice from the good demands the harshness that Theo's progress illustrates such strict definition of the good and its rules. The possibility of a good character not just one with bending towards the good must appear far-fetched. Therefore in producing such characters Murdoch represents a particular sense of the infinite unattainability of good that is not an easy job therefore. Murdoch's sense the idea of infinite unattainability of good must be modified and seen as a person of the good means a person who goes as far as possible towards an unseable aim.

Murdoch is able to project what could be said a character of the good of the highest order-one whose mind is not disjunct from selfishly unconscious of his surroundings, whose knowledge and humility lead him into areas of human development rare in post modern civilization. Their high moral constitution makes them, generally, fairly minor rather than gloriously heroic. In this case it should be remember that the highest human state a priori notion of a saint - is not infect attainable as such a person would be invisible and unconcerned by the perfection of his undertructive selflessness. In all
Murdoch's novels, there is only one person who is identified as a saint by a genuinely trustworthy reporter: the Priest Brendan Craddock in *Henry and Cato* calls his mother one. She is described as almost invisible—but she is not delineated as a character like human beings. She is to reader and Cato alike, truly invisible, mythical and may be called an object like God himself.

There are so many characters that fall in the category of the character of the good, for instance Bledyrd in *The Sandcastle*, Tallis Browne in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Brendan Craddock in *Henry and Cato* and Jame Arrowby in *The Sea, the Sea*. Bledyrd is a schoolmaster in Murdoch's third novel *The Sandcastle*, who lives a life under the unconsoling, unrewarding and strict discipline of a religion that has been called Pious Angical Christianity. Bledyrd is a dutiful and loving character who is attached to the community and participates faithfully in the all human rituals of school church service. He does his job carefully although he has neither power nor enthusiasm in the classroom and is considered a comic butt by the boys. One of the most significant aspects of his character appears when he challenges Mor when he realizes the willful, destructive pattern of the Rain-Mor affair. In this case he shows his sharpness and objective of the truth-teller, without thinking for his own reputation in Mar's eyes. He delineates his criticism in Christian terms as bearing witness may be seen another striver towards the good, Edgar Demarnay in *The Sacred and Profane Love machine*. Bledyrd may be said, a powerful vehicle for some of Murdoch's central truths regarding the rapacious egotistical energy of modern man's selfish will to be
'free what has happiness got to do with it? You do not know even remotely what it would be like to set aside all consideration of your own satisfaction . . . . . . The gifts of the spirit do not appeal to the imagination . . . . . . . But real freedom is a total absence of concern about yourself . . . . . you will prevent her from being a great painter' (TS, p. 217).

Bredyard has been portrayed as a comic and humble man, whose most serious comments seems hilarious because of his stammering word repetitions. His colleagues admire him as a man; he is a man of minor reputation as a painter, although he appears no longer to indulge this talent. Rain had particularly looked forward to meeting him; he is not wrong in criticizing Rain's portrait of Demoyte for sacrificing the fundamental truth and spirit of her subject to form and decoration. Though Bleydard is a minor character but his presence transforms the novel.

In the series of minor and powerless characters Tallis Browne plays a larger role in A Fairly Honourable Defeat. The novel is a fairly obvious allegory of Christ, Satan and the human soul in which Tallis plays Christ to Julius King's powerful Satan and Morgan's horrible human soul. This kind of allegorical idea need not be central, and it is not essential to understand the novel in these terms. Tallis seems to be Murdoch's irresolution about whether knowledge is necessary to develop the human soul or whether a good character has his goodness unconsciously an inherited factor. Tallis can be
placed in a secondary category, together with Hugo Belfounder in Under The Net and Ann Peronett in An Unofficial Rose. These two important characters, like those in the primary group convey the kind of good that human personality can at its best clearly show but their unawareness forms them static. These characters do not represent passionate feelings, unobvious achievement and informative tension. They appear the characters that spontaneously perceive and accept the muddle of the world; they do not have the ability to describe their experience in the analytic of sometimes-platonic way, which is considered at the heart of Murdoch’s writing. They are admirable characters and exist in the darkness of Murdoch’s world. They provide other characters as well as the reader a background against which to set their own observations and knowledge. These characters strain towards the good and this act illustrates the active nature of the search for reality.

Tallis is a character that muddles unpretentiously along, accurately and unromantically describes and devastates the self. Like Bledyrd he neither indulge in abstract talk, nor he use the material of his profession (he is a lecturer in the social sciences and a charitable social worker and could easily bring these into theoretical focus) to expand his consciousness of what is true of life in the world. He is familiar with the stage that he appears exhausted from carrying with him the burden of all knowledge. He realizes that he cannot get back to the innocence that formerly existed between him and Morgan, which he considers some workable past. He is aware of the pain of a world gone stale, corruption of bourgeois life, the thought of the fearful hindrances
of those he tries to help through his myriad hopeless organizations and the sad lives of the Pakistani immigrants who room in his decrepit house.

One of the most important aspects of Tallis's knowledge are that it lacks precise articulation and it engenders no major attempt to change the status others or the circumstances conceived. Tallis is delineated as having 'lost touch as far as Peter is concerned', as Hilda puts it brutally: "The scales have fallen people get over Tallis. I'm sure Morgan has" (FHD, p.15). In any relationship Tallis is shown as a man of an unglamorous presence, and called by Leonard stupid. At the end of the book, Tallis can be seen pointlessly labouring, finds no reward, writes undemanding, newsy letters to Hilda in California and carries on with his bleak life. Tallis's real power and fascination can be felt in his dealings with evil that is shown in a few dramatic scenes of the novel. The first instance occurs in a Chinese restaurant where a defenseless black man is being worked over by a gang of brutal white thugs. There is a situation in the book when Simon tries to interfere, Axel Scolds at this Tallis steps forward to slap the leader with tremendous force and breaks the spell of violence and puts an abrupt stop to the evil being shown.

This act shows that Tallis alone can cut through evil, and even more powerfully later when Julius comes to him to reveal his big game to destroy the smooth fabric of Hilda and Rupert marriage and insult Morgan. Tallis at once considers its evil and force Julius into a phone box to explain the game to Hilda. Tallis speed and his instant comprehension of how to begin to manage the situation are very positive and powerful that the devastating
outcome is almost averted. Therefore, Tallis has a peculiar paradoxical combination of power, knowledge and refusal of analysis. The depiction of his character may be called a way of dealing with the Christ character. It is more fascinatingly a medium that deals with the problems of the transcendent thought of the good as depicted in a character that lives totally & without illusion in the perplexed surroundings of the world.

Brendan Craddock in *Henry and Cato* represents more a development of Bledyward than of Tallis. Brendan is a minor character in action of the novel and exists under the discipline of religion. Brendan is entirely consistent with the idea of the quest for the good. Brendan is cast as a foil against the spiritual flaws of Cato and almost unknown to most of the characters. He enters the story only through his attempts to help Cato and through his brief reminiscence of Henry's brother, the dead Alexander: "I wonder if he was drunk when he killed himself? He seemed to me a man filled with desperation" (HC, p.139). Brendan may be seen as the clearest and most sympathetically trustworthy character. Brendan's main function is to maintain Cato's spiritual state and help the reader visualize Cato as living not in hell, as his sister Colette thinks. Brendan represents a particular tradition, the history of spiritual darkness St. John of the cross's dark night of the soul not as a theological catchword but as a living and terrible reality.

Brendan is a wise man and respected as a theologian in his order. He has an authority, based on the respect he has earned in his group, that neither Bledyward nor Tallis has, and that uncle Theo could not think of. He is
an intellectual not in the slightest way unconscious, apparently without passionate, sentimental or selfish attachment to the world. He follows a strict discipline that has taken him very far indeed, and his insight is very impressive. He is portrayed as one of Cato’s early mentors in the priesthood, he informs Cato the exaltation of his religious vision and abstains from the delight of popular priesthood like ‘Charisma Forbes: the swinging priest’ (HC p.29). He is simple, always helpful, an attractive and relatively young man, his careful avoidance of enthusiastic effect is similar to somewhat of Bledyward’s obliviousness.

James Arrowby is one of the remarkable characters in Murdoch’s well-known novel The Sea, The Sea. James ‘partners’ Charles just as Tallis does Julius king or Anne does Gertrude in Nuns and Soldiers. James is a middle-aged orientalist and military man, used to discipline and interested in Buddhism. He has the qualities of selfless person, who is trying to discipline or purge or diminish himself. He is the new version of the man of faith, believing in goodness without religious guarantees, guilty and muddled, yet not without hope. James is the person who is most willing and able to standup to Charles and cut through his fantasies. He is also the most obviously disinterested partly in that he does not gain anything by intervening in Charles’ life. James is the one who spells out to Charles the nature of his undertaking in trying to ‘rescue’ Hartley:

“I won’t call it a fiction. Let us call it a dream of course we live in dreams, and even in a disciplined spiritual
life, in some ways especially there, it is hard to
distinguish dream from reality” (SS, p.335).

Charles subsequently finds that James’ “discussions” had helped me
to see certain things more clearly” (SS, p.338). James' intervention helps
Charles determines to release Hartley. It is James who rescues Charles from
the sea when he is about drown, it may be seen as a metaphor of James'
rescue of Charles from drowning in his ego. James articulations and
statements show his thoughtful nature as well as the selflessness of his
personality. He describes Charles' obsession with Hartley by analogy to
religion:

the worshipper endows the worshipped object with
power, real power not imaginary power, that is the
sense of the Ortogical proof .... But this power is
dreadful stuff. Our lusts and attachments compose
our God. And when one attachment is cast off another
arrives by way of consolation (SS, p.445).

Therefore, James conveys the notion of detachment he thinks
attachment as a manufacturer of illusions, that becomes a hindrance to the
reality. James is not a saint, he is a man who tries to move beyond
attachment but susceptible to failures. The story of his failure to keep a
Tibetan servant of his alive through raising his own ‘bodily warmth by mental
concentration’ (SS, p.446) verifies to that. His death suggests that he has
moved beyond selfish attachment. James tells Charles on his final visit: "you know that some Buddhists believe that any earthly attachment, if it persists until death, ties you to the wheel and prevents you from attaining liberation" (SS, p.446). James' last visit was his attempt to break his bond with Charles, and James' death, as reported by his Indian Physician, was the expression of James having achieved a state of non-attachment.

Murdoch possesses the ability to create good character as well as nice, ordinary and decent people; she forces the reader to distinguish between the nice and comfortable and the good nearly impotent. It does not mean that she always created good characters, but her dexterity is seen in the productivity of bad characters too. She wanted to represent the realistic aspect of life therefore it is essential to portray all the elements of human nature. Dipple says.

The austerity of this primary group of good characters is almost hidden behind the crowded forefront of Murdoch's novels that forefront which so frequently dazzles, impresses and engages the reader. The inclination of this difficult, stringent austerity to fight through for a place on the stage only gradually impresses the reader; often it confuses his ability to discriminate, to sort out the various pleasures and pains, to see the rigours of the serious task Murdoch sets for her audience. The surface of the books thus
tends towards an unnerving duality of ironic comedic entertainment on the one hand, and the dark, stringent possibility of an unnamable good on the other; and much authorial energy is rather puzzlingly devoted to deflecting attention from such a rare, hard earned, disciplined knowledge of good. In this disjunction, Murdoch is evidently combating the contradictions inherent in literary realism even as she serves the various mastering ideas she perceives essential.8

It is apparent that in Murdoch work there is no real artist and no real saint; and the attention towards saintliness is generally more expressive than that towards art. Jake Danaghue, (Under the Net), Randall Peronett (An Unofficial Rose) and Julius King (A Fairly Honourable Defeat) have been considered bad artists and increasingly demonic. The three 'religious' figures – Hugo Belfounder (Under the Net), Ann Peronett (An Unofficial Rose) and Tallis Brown (A Fairly Honourable Defeat), through refusing form and organisation altogether represents Murdoch's characters of the good with varying degrees of literary success. Such kind of intervention of good and bad character is pervaded throughout her literary career. In her novels when an artist figure appears he is seen at best in the process of learning, as Jake in Under the Net Bradley Pearson in The Black Prince and Charles Arrowby in The Sea, the Sea. Sometimes this artist is caught in his own egotism as in
the case of Miles Greensleave in *Bruno's Dream*, sometime he tries to deny it and giving up on his work as Muriel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels* and Barney Drumm in *The Red and The Green*. The characters who are concerned with the good do not seem to aspire to art and therefore concentrated on other things, for example Hugo in *Under the Net* and Brendan Craddock in *Henry and Cato*, or appear shapeless as Tallis and Ann and, with great annoyance Kathleen Drumm in *The Red and The Green*. Murdoch's dichotomy of the saint versus the artist is clearly visible in her fiction but it is quite apparent that her use of characters that aspire to these types is very careful and subtle in delineation. The path to the good (means sainthood) is concerned with absolute attention to detail, self-denial, and detachment from worldliness and, realization of the fact that these are no end in sight, no reward, nothing to be achieved. The path to the creative truth (means becoming an artist) similarly needs much efforts and is concerned with the same goal: discipline, self-denial and failure.

In an interview with Micheal O' Bellamy Murdoch points out "people persist in being artists against every possible discouragement and disappointment". For instance in *The Black Prince*, Arnold Baffin explains:

'I am always defeated, always. Every book is the wreck of a perfect idea ...... An alternative would be to do what you (Bradley Pearson) do. Finish nothing, publish nothing, nourish a continual grudge against the world, and live with an unrealized idea of
perfection which makes you feel superior to those
who try and fail' (BP, p.139)

Murdoch considers that egocentricity and self-indulgence are the barriers which tempt so many writers and which are overcome only by stern commitment to the truth. The term 'truth' according to Murdoch is penetrating into a region beyond generalized historical and social accuracy. Truth like the concept of the good is double in focus: one hand, it requires great attention (what she calls 'Love') to all details of every aspect; on the other, it conveys the platonic truth she partially portrays in *The Black Prince* as the dark creative Eros whose relation to the absolute is not clear but real. The serious artist propagates the disciplined activity and his creative Eros connects to the ethical demands of truth telling. Bradley Pearson says:

Most artist, through sheer idleness, weariness, inability to attend, drift again, and again and again from the one stage straight into the other, inspite of good reductions and the hope with which each new work begins. This is of course a moral problem, since all art is the struggle to be, in a particular sort of way, virtuous (BP, p.154).

Through the final ironies of *The Black Prince* Murdoch comments on the nature of the artist. Bradley is a neurotic egotist and Arnold Baffin is lazy and inattentive both fail as artists as they are lacking the virtuous other
centered discipline that are required. The process of the novel teaches Bradley the agony and final pleasure achieved through the loss of self and loving attention to the world. It makes him deeply realized that all fictional structure must be rooted in the experienced real world.

Murdoch is different from the traditional novelistic expectations, her straining and shifting of conventional expectations are further stressed by major characters who are not only un-heroic, but also adamantly fixed and unchangeable (for instance, Austin Gibson Grey in *An Accidental Man*, Bradley Pearson in *The Black Prince*, Blaise Cavender in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, Henry in *Henry and Cato*, Charles Arrowby in *The Sea the Sea*). The result of this mode can be a kind of frustration, and agony, and a kind of deflection from a viable centre. Therefore, Murdoch's basic decisions about realism have been propagated through the central issues. There are so many characters who are shown finally to be rather awful and hence unsatisfactory or are ruined by their often sympathetically self concentrated actions. In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Julius king who is considered the lago figure says to Tallis that Rupert, who struggled unsuccessfully to be good, died of vanity. Like Othello, he actually died of evil, Julius's assertion is in a sense correct, but it is also true that Rupert is an almost admirable and striving character until he falls into a trap rigged by Tallis. Through these characters Murdoch conveys a deep human truth that anyone can be destroyed partly, even largely, through his own weakness that is claimed by Murdoch as part of the real world.
Murdoch's characters of the good represent an insight into what Murdoch understands by moral activity. Hugo Belfounder (*Under The Net*) is an example of goodness; his spontaneous refusal to believe that he theorizes and his natural attention to the very small details of the world convey some moral importance. In the same way Ann's (*An Unofficial Rose*) inability to express her will and her playing profound role as a mother and a wife that make her a sacrificial victim for her husband Randall and daughter Miranda, represent the moral aspect of her character.

The portrayal of Hugo is the more successful attempt, his buoyancy and the fact that he stimulates creativity in the two other most important characters in the novel Jake and Anna, convey the reliability that only the tiny handful of Murdoch's good characters possess. The reliability of Hugo has nothing to do with consoling sentiments but with an action forward in a consistent direction towards the accuracy that is essential for the concept of reality. Anna loves him and her love can be seen as the symbolic longing for the plaintive human soul for the unattainable good. Jake sees Hugo as a force against which to pit his own abstract intelligence in a quasi-platonic dialogue, which is polished, and published in a book form under the title *The Silencer*.

Ann Perronett consistently handled as one of Murdoch's characters of the good. She laments on her painful failure, and when she comes to know how the fiendish child Miranda manipulated the whole scene she was literally shocked. She is a lady of manifold decency, she is kind to Penn, shows courtesy to Emma, and is somehow pallid in interest and faded like her once
blazing hair. She is poised against a demonic character her husband Randall. She is portrayed as a character of unconscious good without real will or self-supported structure:

Ann had never really had the conception of doing what she wanted. The idea of doing what she ought, early and deeply implanted in her soul, and sedulously ever since cultivated, had by now almost removed from her the possibility, even as something Prima Facie, of a pure self regarding movement of will. She felt at the moment, the lack of this strong complicated machinery (UR, p.290).

Ann is the only good character in Murdoch's fiction that is shown so much at the center. She is a character of dominant relationship with a wide range of other characters. There are many characters of the middle range that densely and fascinatingly occupy the center stage of Murdoch's fiction. They spin out the action through the expression of their wills and fantasies and closely related to the idea of the good. Such characters may be called the spiritual strivers who manage goodness to a limited degree. The characters who fall in this category are Pattie O’Driscoll in The Time of the Angels, Peter Seward in The Flight from the Enchanter, Danis Nolan in The Unicorn, Edgar Demarnay in The Sacred and Profane Love Machine, and Crystal Burde and Arthur Fisher in A Word Child. There are also some characters who are not the strivers, but terribly blinded by their preoccupation
with the self, fumble towards good, for instances Carel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels*, Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and Austin Gibson Grey in *An Accidental Man*.

Murdoch’s some characters seem to talk about the loss of religious culture as they over and over again face the death-of-God syndrome. These characters frequently blame their failures and frustrations on the withdrawal of the idea of a personal God who evidently used to look after things, from the surface of behaviour to the deep level of being. In *An Accidental Man* Dorina Gibson Grey’s brief thought illustrates the centreless longing for the function of Christian God, when she feels lonely and freshly rejected by Ludwig.

'It only there were some recourse, somewhere I could go to get out of the mess and nightmare of may failed life, somewhere where I could rest and drop the burden of my sin, as I used to imagine when I prayed when I was a child. Is there any prayer or place of gaze still left which is not a mere enchantment? There should be such, even now, even without God, some gesture, which would bring automatic world changing wisdom and peace* (AAM, p.309).

Carel Fisher of *The Time of the Angels* is one of Murdoch’s unforgettable characters; he talks about contemporary state of unknowing and somehow confident theorizing in a vocabulary both old and new. He is
represented as a rector and appears to lack ordinary human identity; to begin with he is just a voice and whenever he is present is person is obscure. Carel is identified with darkness; he is a mysterious and sinister figure who, though he is the central character, of the novel is extremely elusive. Carel's problem, as a minister of the church, is that he does not believe in the existence of God. He can be compared to a number of Priestly figures that appear in later novels and who have lost their faith; unlike Carel, however, most of them continue to struggle with the concept of goodness. In should be noted how father Bernard the Catholic priest in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, in conversation with the philosopher Rozanov, refer to the problem of 'our age out interregnum, our interim, our time of the angels' and asked why he talked of angels, he explains 'spirit without God' (TA, p.188).

Murdoch highly conscious good characters have had no illusion at all about truth and familiar to that to be authentically good is to be good for nothing, with no hope of reward and possess no ego. Carel on the other hand leads astray which conveys his argument:

*We do not know the truth because as I told you it is something that cannot be endured. People will endlessly conceal from themselves that good is only good if one is good for nothing. The concept is empty. This has been said of the concept of God. It is even truer of the concept of Good. It would be a consolation, it would be a beatitude, to think that with*
the death of God the era of the true spirit begins,
while all that went before was a fake (TA, p.187).

Therefore, Carel is a character that demonically and madly steps into
the role of God, having an ironic childishness build about him a puerile
microcosm of the Christian God's large, formal cosmos.

One of Murdoch's characteristics is a realistic novelist is a talent for
analysing conscious thoughts in her characters as well as unconscious
impulses and emotional states. The realism of Murdoch permits her to play
game, but not any longer to over control the character. Her novels convey an
overwhelming sense of a world subject to chance with characters having the
feeling of shock and distress. The women character in Murdoch's fiction as
embody all that is contingent, messy, boundless, infinitely particular and
unpredictable in life. Woman has been shown as the incarnation of the
disturbing mysteries of life. Murdoch's novels convey a moral vision centred
on selflessness, detachment and attention to others as the basis for moral
progress. Women are tending to view moral dilemmas in terms of the
obligation of care and responsibility they feel within relationship. The key
terms of Murdoch's philosophy, such as 'attention' and self 'effacement' mirror
the female moral attitude. It constitutes an attempt to elevate to a universal
principle of moral conduct that is basically the female position and experience
in western culture. This is not to say that Murdoch sees herself as feminist on
the contrary she does not on the surface identity with women. She does not
offer an overtly woman-centered program for change that inscribes women
into the culture they are part of Murdoch does not occupy feminist position but she can be identified in terms of how, as woman and writer, she is situated in society.

The representation of women in the fiction of Murdoch (particularly in her more recent writings) reveal her dissociation from the feminine and her lack of interest in ‘female issues’ Murdoch's earlier novels portray powerful unconventional women like Honor Klein in *A Severed Head* or Emma Sands in *An Unofficial Rose*. In her latter novels, however, women who are presented as leading independent lives are portrayed fairly unsympathetically, for example Elspeth Macram and May Baltram in *The Good Apprentice*. The behaviour of Murdoch's women is not based on their own choice, but it is due to some unfortunate resentful experience that has turned them into sour acrimonious beings. There are other type of single woman from Georgie Hands of *A Severed Head* to Diana of *The Philosopher's Pupil* is the 'kept' woman the mistress of a married man.

Murdoch's unfriendliness to 'liberated' women has become more apparent in her recent fiction. Elspeth Macram in *Good Apprentice* is delineated as a writer of 'Women's Lib Journalism' (GA, p.216). In her well-known novel *The Philosopher's Pupil* we can see a few young women ineffectively playing at being a women's support group. Particularly, there is no real suggestion of female bonding in Murdoch's novels, not between mother and daughters and not between friends. On the contrary *The Book and the Brotherhood*, represents the failures of such bonding of female
support. In this novel Lily in ruins Tamar who approaches her for women-to- 
women advice by telling her to have an abortion which Tamar late comes to 
regret. Violet, the mother of Tamar, an illegitimate child herself and full of 
indignation and bitterness, does all she can to destroys her daughter's 
happiness. Female bonding that is based on equality and support, thought its 
potential existence is recognized cannot be seen in the novels of Murdoch. 
The bonding may exist where the women is involved with a specific 
relationship. This kind of bonding is represented by May, Ilona, and Bettina 
Baltram of *The Good Apprentice* as well as in the portrayal of Rose and 
Jean in *The Book and the Brotherhood*. This bonding is always concerned 
with weakness rather than strength – and no wonder – perhaps, if it exists 
exclusively as a response formation and as one related to man. In the novels 
of Murdoch women do not bond from a position of strength. Honor Klein in *A 
Severed Head* and Stella in *A Philosopher's Pupil* do not have obvious 
female friends – rather they form allegiance with various men.

In should be noticed in this context that Murdoch's dissociation from the 
feminine in her writing finds its perhaps most interesting expression in her 
depiction of mother – child relationships. Particularly in the lives of Murdoch's 
fictional adults the mother as an important figure is mostly absent. The 
depiction of the mother shows her either as a domineering figure (as Gerald's 
memory of his mother in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, (p. 56-61) set 
against a gentle but ineffectual and betraying father or as an angel figure all 
sweetness and light (for example, Will's or Danby's memory of their mothers.
in Bruno's Dream). In the memories of these, characters mothers are represented as something of the past, concerned with their childhood. In the cases where mother exists in the character lives into adulthood their relationship to their children both male and female seems problematic and unsatisfactory. They are shown not good mothers for example, Alex (Philosopher's Pupil) or Violet (The Book & Brotherhood) or May or Midge (The Good Apprentice). Murdoch in her novels does not consider satisfactory relationship between mothers and children particularly as the stage when the children have become completely grown up and a part of real life. There are only fantasy relations to the mothers, filtered through the memory of her characters and provide a positive image of a good mother as in the case of Charles Arrowby in The Sea, the Sea.

Murdoch's greatest contribution in the novels lies in the field of characterization. She portrays the characters who are free from the prejudices of their authors, and she strives to create unique individuals who 'seem realistic and vivid', and who are not 'mere extensions of her own emotional and philosophical bias'¹⁰. Murdoch is criticized for developing a male point of view in her novels, particularly through first person male narrator. There is several interrelated factors account for the predominance of male voices in her fiction: first Murdoch's aesthetics, mainly her ideas about the novel and characterization, preclude her consciously writing 'as a woman'; second, she writes in a realistic tradition, portraying human beings as they are, and does not believe that the novel is the proper place for the social commentary; third
she does not recognize gender distinctions and insists that people are 'at a higher level 'androgynous''¹¹. Her characterization of women and attention to male voice represent the social position of women, a condition, which has been often expressed as a matter of concern.

There are numerous androgynous characters in her novels; this conveys her belief that on a spiritual level gender difference ceases to exist. For instance, at Caen she remarked, "I so much want to say that there isn't any difference between us! But at a higher level – a more spiritual level – I think the difference vanishes"¹². Therefore, Murdoch androgynous characters represent her belief that:

most people are androgynous; there is certainly no difference in terms of mental make up. There are fewer women in public life, men are better educated; but there are not different kinds of mind ¹³.

Therefore several of Murdoch's characters by their name and behaviour can be taken as either masculine or feminine. For example, Lindsey Rimer of An Unofficial Rose has a dual role she acts both as secretary-companion – love interest for Emma Sands and as lover for Randall-Peronett. Bradley Pearson in The Black Price has an affair with sprite – like Julian Baffin Belling only after she dresses up as Hamet. In The Time of the Angel Elizabeth. Fisher is shown in appearance of a page. She smokes cigars and wears shirts trousers, and the 'male version' of a surgical
corset (TA, p.47). In The Message to the Planet, Alfred Ludens surprises by the sex and age of Irena Vallar's when he stumbles upon her during the night, he takes her for a child of ten or twelve, 'more probably a boy' and later describes her as 'the mysterious boy' (MP, p.84). The Philosopher's Pupil also represents such character, Emmanaul (Emma) Scarlett-Taylor, the Irish counter – tenor, who displays transvestite tendencies and has bisexual emotional attachments and attraction.

It is apparent in Murdoch's novels that there is no distinction between the genders and she wants to write about things without considering the matter whether that is male of female, many critics have questioned her frequent use of a male narrator. Murdoch herself responds that she describes the world, and "we live in a male world". As she wants to delineate human conditions, she must do so as a male "you'd better be male," she says "because a male represents ordinary human beings, unfortunately as things stand at the moment, whereas a woman as always a woman!". Her response is she says, a comment on the social position of women: "Unfortunately it's still a man's world. A man doesn't have to explain what it's like to be a man but a woman has to explain what it is like to be a woman... if you portray an intellectual woman, part of her role in the book is to be an intellectual woman, but an intellectual man can just be a man". Therefore identifies more with men than with women and she has no problem in representing man's outlook on the world.
Murdoch considers selflessness an important criterion for goodness; she has acknowledged the difficulty in creating a good character who also exhibits strength. The male character who represent goodness, such as Bledyward (The Sandcastle) Brendan Craddock (Henry and Cato) and Tallis Browne (A Fairly Honourable Defeat) have minor roles or are unable to express their goodness. Indeed such men can be seen as having the so-called ‘female virtues of humility and interest in others’ [17]. Women who display qualities associated with the good such as Ann Peronett (An Unofficial Rose) Anee Cavidge (Nuns and Soldiers) Harriet Gavender (The Sacred ad Profame Love Machine) and Franca Sheerwater (The Mesage to the Planet) also lack powerful determination and their behavior is therefore frustrating.

Murdoch’s inclination toward the balance of power between individuals comes to involve issues relating to gender. She often describes women in social situations that deny them equality. Hannah Crean Smith of The Unicorn becomes the love object of several courtly figures including Effingham coooper, Jamesie Evercreech, Denis Nolan and Pip Lejour. The Message to the Planet depicts both Alfred Ludens and Jack Sheerwater fall at Franca Sheerwater’s feet inviting her to do what she will with them. The novels portray equality in marriage in rare cases; there are a number of husbands like Martin Lynch-Gibbon in A Severed Head, who proclaims ‘in almost every marriage there is a selfish and unselfish partner’ (SH, p.18). Male characters often can be seen attracted or linked with women whom they
can control because of age or social difference. It can be seen in the case of Martin Lynch Gibbon with his older wife, Antonia, and his younger mistress, Georgie.

In the fiction of Iris Murdoch a great variety of characters can be seen Linda Kuehl, has argued that Murdoch's characters are personifications of a theory possessed of 'inexplicable motives and weird fantasies' which reduce them to "anomolous caricatures". Her fiction is populated by grotesques and indict her exaggeration or for harshness. However, it has been Murdoch's contention that 'real' people are 'more eccentric that anybody portrayed in novels', that people are indeed "terribly odd". Murdoch believes that people have secret dream lives and it is an evident feature of human psychology. Murdoch considers this secrecy is very interesting and thinks that the novelist is overcoming the secrecy and attempting to understand it she says in an interview: "Readers sometimes say to me that I portray odd characters; but the secret thought and obsessions and fantasies of the others would amaze one, only people don't tell them". 'Real' people are driven by fantasies and they have little control over them. Therefore they face contingency in their life, which results sometimes comic and sometimes horrific but often the grotesque in Murdoch fiction can be regarded as an ingredient of her realism.

The gallery of Murdoch's characters comes-from only the professional class and is largely composed of civil servants, university professors, the literary and the artistic, and this appears a narrow social range. Her novels also represents a plethora of waifs, refugees, magicians, mystics and
demonic personalities these characters often face bizarre events and often convey compulsively at a great length about those particular incidents. It is difficult to represent all of her characters in this project therefore very few characters have been discussed.

Murdoch's aesthetic moral concept is concerned with 'attention' a term she borrows in her theoretical work specifically from Simone Weil, she considered it as necessary to all serious art and to human life itself. The term attention is like Keat's negative capability, is the primary job of the artist, who must focus accurately on the characters and circumstances to be described. Murdoch is dexterous in focusing therefore she represents greet generosity to her characters. She is very good at creating characters the richness of her realism convinces the readers.
References


(3) Ibid, p.67

(4) Ibid, p.79

(5) Examples range from John Rainsborough in *The Flight from the Enchanter* to Octavio Gray in *The Nice and the Good*, Hilary in *A Word Child*.

(6) These character are concerned with servicing, caring, nurturing jobs and many of them centering on social interaction, such as Mor and Bledyrd in *The Sandcastle*, Cato in *Henry and Cato*, Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pubil*, and in Gavender *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*.


(8) Ibid. p.36
(9) Micheal O. Bellamy, 'An Interview with Iris Murdoch', *Contemporary Literature* 18, 1977, University of Wisconsin Press.

(10) Ruth Heyd, 'An Interview with Iris Murdoch' *University of Windsor Review* (Spring 1965) : p. 140.


(12) Ibid., 83


(15) Jean-Luis Chevalier, ed. *Rencontres avec Iris Murdoch* University of Caen, France 1978, p. 82.


