Chapter-3

A SEVERED HEAD TO THE RED AND
THE GREEN

This chapter takes into consideration the five novels of Murdoch which were written between 1961 to 1965. The rationale behind the bunching together of these novels is Murdoch's preoccupation with marriage-rather problematic marriage, extramarital relations and love affairs. The novels under consideration are: A Severed Head (1961), An Unofficial Rose (1962), The Unicorn (1963), The Italian Girl (1964) and The Red and the Green (1965). In these novels, Murdoch has accorded the theme of marriage a unique centrality that characterises this romantic phase. Extramarital relations and love-affairs are closely allied to her concern with marriage because they bring out the fact of truth and the degree of freedom within marriage. Earlier, Murdoch had touched upon this issue in the novels such as The Flight from the Enchanter and The Bell

The three year gap between the writing of The Bell (1958) and A Severed Head was punctuated by her literary and philosophical essays. When A Severed Head was published in 1961 it marked some sort of change in which Murdoch seemed to have shifted her ground to
look at the moral compulsions that loving entails. This novel, together with the other four novels of this period represents a romantic phase concerned not only with the philosophic concepts of truth and love which had informed the earlier novels but also and particularly with the responsibilities, impositions and ties of marriage. However, *The Red and the Green* departs from the group in one respect for it deals, besides marriage, with the theme of religious vocation. Murdoch’s concern with marriage is proportionately conditioned by her equal focus on the themes of religion and conventional morality.

In *A Severed Head*, the field of action is largely restricted to a narrow band of the wealthy bourgeoisie, and a languorously decadent atmosphere is often characterised by richly described, decorated interiors, much heavy drinking, lachrymosity, suffering and fatigue. In addition to marriage, darker themes sounded for the first time in *A Severed Head* include the beginnings of an interest in clothes on the verge of fetish, and abortion as a feature off-stage or in the past of certain characters. Martin Lynch-Gibbon is central character and the narrator of the novel. He is an urbane Anglo-Irish married to Antonia who is five years older than him. His complacently successful marriage and concealed adulterous relationships are threatened and destroyed by the narrated events. The characters surrounding Martin, in a process which recurs frequently in Murdoch’s fiction, begin to assert their independence in a way which affects not just Martin’s present and future but also view of the past. His wife Antonia falls in love with her American psychoanalyst Palmer

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Anderson, for whom Martin too confesses to a mildly obsessive interest.

Marriage for Martin is a dark bond because even after his wife has left him, he cannot feel he is free. On the contrary he sees himself as in bondage; a bond of this kind [i.e. marriage] is deeper and stronger than wanting or not wanting. Wherever I am in the world and whenever I am I shall always be Antonia.\(^2\)

Murdoch projects, here, aborted marriage which is damaged by infidelity and extramarital affairs. The lies and deceits are underlined in A Severed Head by the settings. This novel, unlike The Unicorn is set in the heart of London, its characters suffer from acutely claustrophobic surroundings. The plot moves from one closed room to another, scarcely any event taking place elsewhere. In such a surrounding, family ties have broken and every person is running after his or her own pursuit of happiness. Their relationships are hardly governed by any code of conventional morality and they feel as well as act free in the choice of their lovers. This inevitably results in change of loyalties, followed by lies, deceits and illusions.

Of all the characters in A Severed Head, Georgie is, perhaps, the most peculiar. Her changing relationships show how casualness in human relations leads one nowhere. Martin tells about Georgie, There was no one of her possessions which she would not, at the drop of a hat, have given away and not missed.\(^3\) Though she is Martin’s mistress, she

\(^3\) Iris Murdoch, A Severed Head, p. 8.
does not hesitate to tell him, ‘I don’t want to know what you do when you’re not with me. It’s better not to feed the imagination. I prefer to think that when you aren’t here you don’t exist. This means she is either extremely selfish or insensitive to what others think or do. And precisely because of such a temperament she does not bother about Martin’s affairs with others. For her, human relationships are not valuable enough to merit any consideration. She thinks that no one is essential to anyone. For this reason, she easily shifts her affection from Martin to Alexander and from Alexander to Palmer. Martin’s love with Georgie is also casual. He is indifferent to her existence when she is pregnant and has almost no feeling even when she had undergone an abortion. Their love fails to offer any fulfillment to either of the partners for Martin has made no commitment in this relationship. Finally both of them are self-deluded. Martin-Georgie affair can exist until they have met others, and it is also kept a secret. The moment it is revealed, the contact between Martin and Georgie breaks, and she moves towards Alexander.

Martin’s relationship with the two women, Georgie his mistress and Antonia his wife, projects a view of marriage and extramarital love-affair. He almost adores Antonia but there is little emotional understanding between the two as married couple. Martin betrays his marriage because of his desire for Georgia who ‘was concerned neither with role nor status.’ Antonia wants to marry Palmer Anderson because she feels that her present marriage to Martin is ‘at a stand still’ Yet neither

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*Ibid*, p. 11.
Martin nor Antonia can let go of their marriage and give themselves wholly and unconditionally to another partner. Both feel in some way that they are in bondage to tradition; they want to keep what they already have and simply add another layer of relationship. Antonia appears to believe that she and Palmer can hold on to Martin and look after him, despite the separation. Martin himself submits to this at first and, in a desperate effort to hide his own guilt and to put his wife entirely in the wrong, still tries to conceal his clandestine affair with Georgie, even after his marriage has broken down. The failure of normal husband-wife relationship makes Martin and Antonia to have extramarital sexual pursuits and marriage vows lose their meaning for them.

The novel begins with Martin’s bold assertion that he is deceiving his wife and as the story progresses it is clear that he is also deceiving Georgie though he is hardly aware of it. The most deceived, however, turns out to be Martin himself: he is doubly deceived by Antonia who leaves him in turn for Palmer and then for Alexander; he is doubly deceived by Georgie who leaves him in turn for Alexander and then for Palmer; he is doubly deceived by both Alexander and Palmer, each of whom takes from him in turn both his wife and mistress.

The novel is essentially a comedy, however, and is to end happily; the very neatness of these infidelities, which allow the two women with whom Martin has been involved to find new partners who have been deeply involved in the plot. This leaves the way open for the two remaining characters - Martin and Honor-to come together. Honor
Klein is the principal protagonist of the novel, a Cambridge anthropologist. She is locked into an enigmatic relationship with Palmer Anderson as she happens to be his half-sister. It is an incestuous relationship but the fact of incest between the two is not so important as Martin’s discovery of it after his bizarre break-in at Honor’s house in the middle of the night, that changes the course of events. His inadvertent voyeurism serves as a catalyst. In discovering his wife’s seducer in the act of incest with his own sister, Martin is able to recognize Palmer’s weakness. For the first time in the novel, he believes he is able to influence events. He is wrong, of course, alliances re-form without his intervention and the incestuous tie has already been broken by 'the enchantment of untruth in which Palmer and Antonia are enveloped.

As a teacher of anthropology at Cambridge, Honor Klein has a propensity for myth and fable. On the other hand, Martin is a historian, and has written a book Sir Eye Coote and the Campaign of Wardewash. His discovery of Honor’s incestuous relationship with Palmer compels him to try seriously to understand Honor’s point of view by studying anthropology. Subsequently he is able to open up unexpected channels of communication with Honor. But she proceeds with understandable caution, estimating Martin’s violent protestations of love for her in the light of his treatment of her pupil Georgie. In this, she has a primitive quality which Georgie recognises at the outset. She broods over the action, constantly demanding that Martin should face up to the truth.
You cannot cheat the dark gods, Mr. Lynch Gibbon everything in life has to be paid for, and love too has to be paid for.\textsuperscript{5}

Furthermore, Honor warns when Martin demands her love. ... I am a terrible object of fascination for you. I am a severed head such as primitive tribes and old alchemists used to use, anointing it with oil and putting a morsel of gold upon its tongue to make it utter prophecies. And who knows but that long acquaintance with a severed head might not lead to a strange knowledge. For such knowledge one would have paid enough. But that is remote from love and remote from ordinary life. As real people we do not exist for each other.\textsuperscript{6}

The prophecies she utters suggest no future for love between her and Martin. Still Martin feels that he should hold on to her for she had, effectively, given him hope; and she was no fool. His terrible fascination for Honor brings terrible revelations and disastrous consequences in its wake. This fascination makes non-sense of all previously held notions about his own social and sexual being. He resorts to violence and hits Honor thrice and she takes the scene heroically. And the scene reverses the situation, jolting Martin into shocked realisation that Honor does not exist only in relation to his dreams, as free and alone, as waiting in her still slumbering consciousness for me, reserved, separated, sacred.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, p. 170.
At the end of the novel, Martin realizes that he is not only going to sleep with Honor Klein, the Don of Cambridge University, but also with a woman who can play with sword. The real beauty of Honor-Martin relationship is that she is not promising anything. What elevates Honor as an individual is the fact that she makes others face reality. She invariably stresses that we should realize what is real and should base our relationships on the ground of reality. Here three men and three women enact three aspects of the same problem by coming to terms with reality. Antonia and Alexander flee to the past, Palmer and Georgie to the future, and Martin and Honor plant themselves firmly in the present.

One may now see Martin stripped of pretensions, with all the false roles behind him. From a position outside himself he looks upon his role as a husband, his role as betrayer of his marriage, his role as cuckold and recognizes that they were only parts he was playing. Martin is, in fact, disillusioned because he thinks that he understands everybody, but what he feels, he knows about other people, is his own fantasy. Towards the end of the novel he is brought from illusion to reality. His ideas of other people turn out to be myths which are shattered through the interaction of characters and time. Then he comes to realize the ‘otherness’ of other people. His complications are finally resolved and he looks to the hope of coming with Honor ‘through the dream and out into the waking world.’

In An Unofficial Rose, Murdoch deals with marriage and another aspect of extramarital relationship. Here we come across such affairs which are timeless and where age is no hurdle. The protagonists
are ready to do anything to get a companion of their choice. The novel also brings out how some slips in married life, though forgotten or controlled or suppressed, soon gain extraordinary strength and vivacity after the loss of marriage - partner. The basic plot of the novel is fairly conventional and could be seen as a replay of the earlier novel but with a different resolution.

Like Bill Mor in *The Sandcastle*, the protagonist, Randall is a middle-aged man, tired of bonds which chain him to a wife he has ceased to love and into a marriage which has lost its novelty. Also like Mo he falls in love with a younger woman and determines to leave his wife. The plots diverge; however, as Ann, Randall's long suffering wife, refuses to fight for him, refuses to acknowledge his defection and finally refuses to divorce him, believing that he will come back to her.

Interestingly, the plot of *An Unofficial Rose* is complicated by the involvement of three generations of the same family. Hugh Peronett, Randall’s father, had undergone a similar love crisis in his younger years but had refused to break up his marriage. The emphasis is upon the cyclic nature of life, in which Hugh, almost unwillingly though, conspires to allow his son Randall to fulfill his romantic aspiration which Hugh himself as a young man had allowed to escape him. Randall is quick to seize the moment and the money and leave with Lindsay Rimmer for Rome, where he enjoys waking ecstasy but at night suffers disturbed dreams in which he returns again and again to his marital home only to find that the presence of his wife eludes him. From his Italian love-nest,
Randall looks back with an emotion almost like regret at his ‘unofficial rose’, Ann, his deserted wife, at home in England.

However, the infidelity in marriage is represented not only through Randall’s love-affair with Lindsay, it also finds expression in the relationship between Ann and Felix Meacham. Though both of them have real love for each other, they are just short of accepting it.

Their love does not materialise as Ann’s conventional view of the bonds of marriage prevents her from proceeding further in this venture. It also faces intervention of the third generation of the family. The teenage Miranda is presented throughout as a difficult child and her ‘puppy love’ for Felix adds to her problems. While she appears to condone her father’s infidelities, she rigorously and subversively - opposes love between her mother and Felix. The climax of her opposition comes when she throws herself to the ground from the top of a tree. From this moment on, Miranda takes control of the situation and both Ann and Felix find their wills dominated by her. Finding her hopes of love dwindling, Ann approaches Douglas Swann, the local rector, for advice but instead of giving her any solace, he rules out all hopes of her love meeting fulfillment. On his part, Swann is also in love with Ann and he clearly posits the Church’s view of her marriage:

The marriage bond is an indissoluble mystical union of souls. Who knows what good your love may not do him [i.e. Randall], even if
This sad betrayal of truth and love has at first an unexpected effect upon Ann, for she interprets Douglas’s words as implying that the Church expects her to hold on to Randall, despite his wish to be free of her. She sees this ‘as vindictive, revengeful, something to do with death’ and for a short while she sees giving Randall his freedom as a necessary act - an act which would give her freedom too. When she broaches the idea of her divorce and remarriage to Felix, however, her hopes are thwarted by Miranda’s cunning.

Another significant aspect of the novel is Ann’s relationship with her daughter. Ann has been totally blind to her daughter’s love towards Felix. And it is due to this unrecognised love that Miranda forces her mother to refuse to marry Felix. Ann comes to know about this from the torn photographs and letters of Felix and the newspaper cuttings which Miranda has unconsciously thrown in the bonfire. She can now work out details. She feels no resentment and is infinitely sorry for her daughter. She blames herself for being insensitive and blind to the affection of her daughter. Meanwhile, Miranda takes advantage of Ann’s uncertainty and reticence. ‘What are you nervous about?’ She asks her, ‘you’re making me nervous’9 Ann is completely manipulated by her daughter’s calculated move and when Felix comes to claim her, she rejects him. The novel ends in final separation for Ann and Felix. They are forced to accept their loss and reshape their lives.

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Ann-Randall relationship is an explicit comment on the prospects of a happy marriage. Ann exemplifies goodness and Murdoch has successfully shown how a good person can be exploited by cunning people. Ann’s husband takes undue advantage of her unsuspecting attitude. He intentionally picks up things to quarrel with her. He is always after some pretext to blame her and to make her feel guilty. He shouts in the house not because he suspects anything between Douglas and Ann, but because he wants an excuse to leave Ann. He always looks at her as the negative spirit incarnate and wants to get rid of her. For him, sacrament of marriage has no meaning. He flirts with Nancy Bowshot, the wife of the gardener, makes his father sell the painting, the Tintoretto, to get money to go with Lindsay, the secretary of Emma Sands. But Ann’s reaction is not a usual one marked by jealousy and anger against her husband. She interprets the whole affair differently when she talks to Douglas:

My love just exasperates Randall .... But he will come back, for hundreds of reasons of habit and convenience. Thank God, marriages don’t depend upon love! She naively hopes that her husband would come back but Randall does not return. Ann has failed to understand her husband and gets rejected by him. Later he pities the rejected Ann, but still sees her ‘structureless’ and ‘negative’. Randall’s memory constantly haunts her when he elopes with Lindsay. She prefers to go on waiting endlessly for Randall. Ann tells Felix Meacham that when husbands leave their wives, these things are never unjust. In fact, the trouble with Ann is

10 Ibid, p. 128.
that she cannot find fault with others. She considers herself to be at fault for the treacherous behaviour of her husband. In her commitment to marital bond she ignores the truth. For her marriage is permanent, an indissoluble mystic union of souls. This establishes her as a true Christian.

On the scale of importance, Ann’s relationship with Felix comes next to her relationship with her husband. Felix is a handsome military officer in love with Ann. Randall’s affair with Lindsay gives him a hope. He has waited for his chance of getting Ann, as the ruin of her marriage has been expected any moment. Felix is all too set to fill the gap in Randall’s absence. Ann’s Christian view of marriage stands as a hurdle in shifting her loyalty to Felix. She thinks that she is capable of defying authority but defying her own conscience is difficult. The tragedy with Ann is that she is in love with Felix but is unable to do anything to give him happiness or to receive any happiness from him. The fact is that the idea of happiness has been absent from her life for a long time. She dismisses the idea of freedom offered to her by Randall’s request for divorce, because she is excessively touched by her daughter Miranda’s cry, ‘I don’t want to be a step daughter.’ As a wife and mother, Ann is self-sacrificing and she is more concerned about Randall and Miranda than about her own marriage with Felix. In Ann-Felix relationship, it is the convention that triumphs.11

Murdoch’s next novel The Unicorn (1963) represents a

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11 Morjouria Ryan, ‘Iris Murdoch: An Unofficial Rose, Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 5:3 (1962-63) p. 120.
significant development in her handling of the closed Gothic novel - the novel of form, myth and socio-religious philosophy rather than that of character. Like An Unofficial Rose, this novel has the theme of a broken marriage and its negative consequences. Closely allied to the central theme of marriage are extramarital love, incest, homosexuality, sexual perversion, guilt and spirituality. All these concerns are present in a Gothic setting and fairy tale framework which lend an aura of surprise and suspense to the narrative.

Hannah Grean Smith is the central figure of the novel. She might justifiably be called the titular heroine/protagonist. The Unicorn is the story of Hannah’s adultery (betrayal of marital trust), sin guilt, expiation and search for redemption which results in frustration. Seven years before the story begins Hannah, married to Peter, had fallen in love with Pip Lejour and tried to kill her husband by pushing him over a cliff. She had, however, only managed to cripple him in some obscure and unrevealed way, and he had subsequently emigrated to New York, and has been absent for seven years. She takes upon herself the suffering of isolation - a voluntary imprisonment. A woman of extremely good looks, she has the strength to undergo the terror of isolation for seven years with a stoical repose and a capacity to live in the present. Hannah is projected as the enchanting and spellbound centre who attracts the devotion of, among others, the Platonic philosopher Max Lejour and his household, of Effingham Cooper, Marian Taylor, and of Denis Nolam. Much of the energy of the novel is devoted to analyse whether Hannah is enchantress or enchanted. She has bewitched a number of persons.
The Gaze Castle where Hannah has deliberately held herself in captivity is virtually a place that fully evokes a Gothic atmosphere. It is full of ambiguity, darkness and possibilities of corruption and evil. Gerald Scottow is the devil-figure who takes care of the castle. Jamesie Evercreech has been kept sexually and emotionally enslaved by Gerald ever since he tried unsuccessfully to rescue Hannah. Jamesie’s older sister Violet, a somewhat sketched in figure of doom is also there. The nearest house in the vicinity is Riders, owned by the Lejours: Max, the elderly scholarly father, his son Pip and daughter Alice.

The title of *The Unicorn* draws attention to a central symbol whose attributes are not given as much as bestowed upon it by the characters. Murdoch considers that the particular success of this novel lies in the way in which Hannah transcends the myth of the Christ-like suffering creature. However, the novel presents her as an ordinary sinful human being inspite of her identification with Christ. Her spiritual discipline collapses on the announcement of Peter’s return after seven years, and her attempt at self-purification through self-imposed restriction ends up in sexual union with Gerald Scottow her captive. The loss of innocence, this time, overrides her resilience and she murders Scottow. Later, she herself commits suicide by drowning. Ironically, her destiny is marked not by spiritual transcendence but by murder and defeat and the futility of Hannah’s spiritual quest, thus, becomes a corollary to the primary concern of the novel- infidelity in marriage. In the gothic setting of the novel, spirituality, sex and power are throughout richly confused. In an interview with W.K. Rose, Murdoch pointed out that:
The novel is about the ambiguity of such relations as love and sex, when they get mixed up with notions of redemption and religion. In other words, the novel is about the ambiguity of the spiritual world itself. Hannah knows that an immense strength is required to attain spirituality as its path is beset with uncertainties, failure and despair. And Hannah’s failure to be a Christ Unicorn is a testimony, no doubt. The Unicorn also contains ‘the recurring Murdochian theme of the struggle of love against the many guises of evil in everyday life.”

Although Marian is the principal consciousness of the novel, she is not the main protagonist; like Rain in The Sandcastle or Dora in The Bell, she is the outsider, the catalyst who changes and finally destroys life at the Gaze. Assisting her in this task is Effingham Cooper, also an outsider and the other character through whose consciousness the reader sees the events as they pass. Both Marian and Effie have to learn of the past piecemeal and as they learn of Hannah’s imprisonment - through Jamesie and Denis and Pip - the story gathers itself into a recognisable shape. The surface story, though bizarre in its dimensions, seems to aid and complement the mythological story beneath it.

Significantly, the themes of the novel, like those of Tennyson’s ‘The Lady of Shallot’ are of loss and desire, of appearance and reality, of love and truth. Like the Lady in the poem, Hannah appears to be enchanted and to have a curse upon her if she attempts to leave the prison.

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Reminiscent of *Wuthering Heights*, ‘The Lady of Shallot’ and Mme. de Lafayette’s *La Princess de Cleves*, this story is about the self imposed exile and imprisonment of people at Gaze Castle who weave themselves into a web of enchantment designed in part by Hannah Crean-Smith and by Gerald Scottow, her demonic master-caretaker.\(^{14}\) In her chosen place, she lives in a world of shadows, for the people around her no longer seem to have reality in relation to her. The number seven carries a special significance in the novel: it is Murdoch's seventh novel and is written in seven parts, the first two parts have seven chapters each and the seven-year cycle of events it recounts. It is thus in part itself a magical object.\(^{15}\)

Hannah is undoubtedly the unicorn of the title. The presence of unhealthy closed love destroys not only her marriage but also her life alongwith others at the Gaze Castle. What is more, the marriage of Hannah and Peter who are first cousins, hints at incest. Homosexual inclinations are revealed in the relationships between Peter, Scottow and Jamesie. Balancing this is Violet Evercreech, a vamp with lesbian drives who makes advances to Marian. The mythical unicorn, that Hannah stands for, is mentioned in the medieval bestiaries and appears to have been a sad conundrum for hunters. Though a valuable piece of game, it could not easily be captured alive. The medieval legend portrayed it as a ferocious animal, which valued purity and innocence and had a curious affinity for maidens; only a virgin could catch this animal, for it would come to lay its head on her lap. According to the legend, the virgin

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 67.

betrayed him when it fell asleep crouched beside her. It was captured and kept in an enclosed garden whose jailor was Satan.\textsuperscript{16}

The traditional association of the unicorn is therefore with Christ, who came to the world to redeem sin but was imprisoned in the sinful human flesh thus inflicting great suffering on himself. The unicorn of the title is a leading symbol of Christ in medieval bestiaries, and the book abounds in other symbolic beasts, ranging from the mad hares in chapter 10, the half-wild donkeys, and Denis’s fish, all of them also symbols of Christ. Denis, clerk and keeper of the fish, brings Hannah snakes, toads, hedgehogs, nice beasts and all symbols of the demonological.

In fact, the point about the unicorn symbol is that it is empty. No unicorn appears, Hannah fits her role imperfectly, and the title of the book invites us to ponder the role of imagination in helping to create the world in which reason ‘sees’. Despite the inadequacy of the title one may take in Hannah as a person who, once having failed in her marriage vows, tries to consummate her marriage with religion and spirituality. As her choice is a conscious one, she takes on herself the onerous task of expiation for herself as well as for others. She believes that her suffering may invest her with a power so that those who gaze at her may be purified. The author herself intended Hannah to be such a Christ-figure, a ‘saviour who would expiate the sins of those about her through suffering.’\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} George Whiteside, ‘The Novels of Iris Murdoch’. Critique 7, Spring 1964, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{17} Ruth Heyd, ‘An Interview with Iris Murdoch’, University of Windsor Review, 1965, xxx, p. 73.
Hannah takes upon herself the suffering of isolation as expiation out of her feeling of guilt, of betrayal and adultery. Suffering ennobles and purifies; it helps one to kill the self. But suffering has its own enchantment, its own consolation. And consolation is a dangerous idea, it transforms love into a false emotion. Hannah’s attempt at self-purification turns out to be a false attempt because her realm is that of purgatory and not of true ‘unselfing’ warranted by love. Ironically, the drama of self-purification through captivity and isolation ends in sado-masochism. Her choice of penitential virtue achieves nothing. She is locked within the closed system of unregenerate energies, which expressed, repressed, displaced or sublimated, still persist or retain the vestige of past life. Hence, self-mortification disguises self-deception and rapacious ego.

Obviously, then, Hannah suffers not only from her own obsession with the guilt of broken marriage and the spiritual life but also from the obsessions the other characters transfer to her. In her, the passive suffering, like that of Ann in An Unofficial Rose, becomes a kind of myth woven by Hannah herself in conjunction with others. She becomes the spell-bound charismatic centre, a kind of talisman or a magical symbol for all those who cluster around her. She is reduced to an object of contemplation as the others attempt to solve the enigma of her self-imposed exile and suffering. The unicorn symbol exists only in the fantasy of those who find a vacuum in the world, whose real substance they cannot see properly. The entire novel turns on this act of interpretation. Hannah is seen variously as a ‘goddess’, an ‘angel’, an
‘enchanted princess’ and even as a ‘witch’, ‘sorceress’, ‘vampire’, ‘circe’ or a ‘scapegoat’. To Max Lejour, she is either an ordinary guilty person or a ‘spiritual Penelope’ waiting faithfully for her husband’s return. A.S. Byatt has equated her relationships with others and the prohibitions she is surrounded by, to the primitive systems of taboo in kingship.18 Endorsing Freudian interpretations of it, she explains that a ruler is segregated in order to make him inaccessible and to protect him from dangers. In this way the people are prevented from coming into contact with his magical powers. The Gaze Castle reflects the state of affairs in a primitive society and Hannah is a kind of suffering ruler surrounded by restrictions and worshippers. Although her status is open to question, still the fact remains that she is a kind of power-figure who has awakened the veneration and fantasies of those who cluster around her.

Hannah’s gradual withdrawal from the limits of the domain to the grounds of her house and finally to her own room is a manifestation of an increasing self involvement. She now realises that what she has taken for the contemplation of Good is self-contemplation only. She knows that she has fed on the gaze of others. She admits to Marian:

It was your belief in the significance of my suffering that kept me going. Ah, how much I needed you all! I have batten upon you like a secret vampire, I have even batten on Max Lejour. I needed my audience; I lived in your gaze like a false God. But it is the punishment of a false God to become unreal. I have become unreal. You made me

unreal by thinking about me so much. You have made me into an object of contemplation. Just like this landscape. I have made it unreal by endlessly looking at it instead of entering it.¹⁹

What adds to Hannah’s predicament further is her in capacity to love other human beings. Max Lejour refers to it:

Hannah was like the rest of us. She loved what was not there, what was absent. This can be dangerous. Only she did not dare to love what was present too. Perhaps it would have been better if she had. She could not really love the people she saw, she could not afford to, it would have made the limitations of her life more painful... she simply avoided it.²⁰ What Hannah needed was love. There is an indirect appeal for it when she tells Marian, ‘I think ... that one ought to cry out more for love, to ask for it. It’s odd how afraid people are of the word. Yet we all need love. Even God needs love. I suppose that’s why he created us.’²¹

To an extent, Hannah is herself responsible for having been denied love by allowing herself to selfishly occupy the role of the absent God for others. She is denied love by her husband because of her infidelity in marriage-adultery which deprives her of both her husband and her lover. At Gaze Castle, the others do not love her enough. They merely gaze at her uninvolved. For her, suffering does not prove an end in itself, it fails to make for her loss and pain in marriage and love. Murdoch has strongly criticised such false suffering:

²¹ Ibid, p. 53.
Plato does not say that philosophy is the study of suffering, he says that it is the study of death and these ideas are totally dissimilar. That moral improvement involves suffering is usually true; but the suffering is the by-product of new orientation and not in any sense an end in itself.\textsuperscript{22}

There are only three characters in \textit{The Unicorn} - Max Lejour, Marian and Effingham Cooper-who may be called virtuous for they hold a sane view and are least enchanted by Hannah’s false spirituality and suffering. We are afforded the first peep-an insight rather-into the Gaze Castle and its strange events with its religious aura in weird surroundings through Marian Taylor. With her progressive views and common sense freshness, Marian is hired as a governess, a companion to Hannah. Her stay at the Gaze Castle is partly her own education in the true nature of ‘reality’.\textsuperscript{23} Earlier, she had been a school teacher and was in love with Geoffrey. She arrives at Gaze, after a disappointing love affair with Geoffrey only to find some respite there. The ‘maid’ Marian, as Scottow addresses her, becomes the Unicorn girl desiring to trap the unicorn. With the help of Effingham, she plans to rescue Hannah from the Satanic hold of Gerald Scottow and to lead her into the quotidian ordinary world. But her intercession fails in its objective. It not only entangles Hannah in a further complication of events but also culminates in Marian’s loss of innocence. She inherits a sense of guilt by releasing Hannah from her room to her death. By enabling Hannah to take this last decision, Marian

attains her own selfhood. Having survived the debacle, Marian abjures the magic created by Hannah’s myth of spiritual life and returns to the comforting banalities of mundane everyday life. She is ready to dance without any sorrow at her ex-lover’s wedding in London.

Effingham, like Marian, an outsider in the world of Gaze, had, however, been a regular visitor to the Riders. With all his enlightened opinions and faith in his clear-sightedness, he still has an idealistic, romantic concept of Hannah. In fact, he is in love with Hannah. He is a courtly lover devoted to the chaste service of the lady. Likewise, in his imagination he suffers from the pangs of unrequited love. But he is himself enslaved and paralysed, like Martin Lynch Gibbon in The Severed Head, by his inability to treat women as anything other than mother-figures or inferiors. Effingham’s relationships with Hannah and Marian, like Martin’s with Antonia and Georgie, are an outcome of the same psychological problem. He, like the others, loves not the real Hannah but a dream-figure, a myth, or a form superimposed on her as long as she is chaste and untouched. Her acceptance of Gerald Scottow as a lover crumbles the entire structure of Effingham’s emotions for her. It breaks the enchantment of courtly love, releasing him to discover the meaning of real love and life.

It is when he is imprisoned and immobilised in a bog that the premonition of death offers a valuable insight to him. At this rare moment, he is awakened to his own insignificance and the need for ‘unselfmg’: ‘Since he was mortal he was nothing and since he was
nothing all that was not himself was filled to the brim with being and it was from this that the light streamed. This then was love to look and look until one exists no more, this was the love which was the same as death. He looked, and knew with clarity which was one with the increasing light, that with the death of the self the world becomes quite automatically the object of a perfect love.\textsuperscript{24}

Both Marian Taylor and Effingham, who enter this strange world of romance and spirituality, are the secular envoys from the real, normal and ordinary world. Everything that happens at the Gaze is distilled through their sensibilities. They embody the liberal, romantic outlook of the modern world, especially its moral and emotional inadequacies. They are both intelligent, egoistical hedonists with easy-going utilitarian views on happiness, and thus fail either to understand or appreciate suffering in Hannah’s case. Perhaps, better than these two is the gentle Denis Nolan who works as the auditor of accounts in the Gaze Castle. To some extent, he is more clear-sighted and less deluded than the others. His love for Hannah is based on a more sympathetic conception of personal sanctity. Though he also looks at her through certain Christian preconceptions, he is by far the only character who is more in contact with the real world. A keen lover of wild life, he protects the gold fish from the herons. His topographical knowledge of the entire area around Gaze is brought into use when he saves Effingham from drowning in the bog. He survives the flood that kills Hannah and crosses the bog which almost drowns Effingham. According to Murdochian standards, this

\textsuperscript{24} Iris Murdoch, The Unicorn, p. 167.
shows a fair amount of moral competence.

Like the others, he professes his love for Hannah. He has a Christian and feudal view of her suffering. Out of respect for her feelings, Denis is unwilling to help others in freeing her. He forewarns Marian against her attempts to intercede. Denis emerges at the end of the novel as the ‘pure being’, the good ‘who only suffers and does not attempt to pass the suffering on’. He kills Peter to free Hannah (who had already committed suicide), thus becoming an heir to her suffering. He also frees Marian, Jamesie and others from their bonds of guilt. This lone sufferer disappears into the unknown carrying a plastic bag of gold fish and accompanied by Tadg, his dog. His sympathy with Hannah redeems him as a human being.

In *The Unicorn*, Murdoch has created characters who believe in superstition and retain the religious feelings of the middle ages. Hannah did not go with Pip Lejour even after the harsh treatment of her husband because she was married to him (Peter) in a church, and she felt, for it all, guilt and sorrow. The novel is also full of secrets and love complications which are shown to have the potential of tragedy. What underscores this point is the violent multiple deaths which bring the plot to a close. Scottow is shot by Hannah; Peter is deliberately drowned by Dennis, Hannah and her ex-lover Pip kill themselves. But the life continues. The Gaze Castle, which Peter Conradi has called 'a brothel of mixed motives - an erotic prison masquerading as a place of religious retreat' is finally

Murdoch’s next novel The Italian Girl was published in 1964. Its action also takes place in a Gothic setting. The novel starts with Edmund Narraway, another outsider figure, returning to his family home, where his brother Otto and sister-in-law Isabel have remained, for the funeral of their mother Lydia. Edmund plans to leave after the funeral but fails to do so. In The Italian Girl one of the most over-plotted novels, Otto Narraway is referred to as ‘gothic’, ‘primitive’, ‘gross’. Even the titles of certain chapters like The Magic Brothel, ‘Elsa Fire Dance’ and ‘Edmund in the Enchanted Wood’, add to the gothic element. Elsa’s stay works like the stay of a ghost. Edmund narrates his dream and his past as well. However, he sketches in his own past lightly but gives sufficient hints to indicate that he had left the family home out of unhappiness. He has lived a monastic life as an engraver. He expresses surprise when asked by Maggie Magistretti, the Italian girl, whether he has ever been to Rome: ‘It seemed odd that she should not know. And yet why should she?’

The world of the novel’s other characters is gradually revealed to Edmund, chiefly through sexual revelations involving the demon children David and Elsa, in ways which underline the emotional limitations both of Edmund himself and of these characters. He can seemingly only meet them one by one. The early chapters constitute in effect a series of disjointed interviews in which Edmund moves from one static encounter to another. There are many linking passages involving his

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running or chasing a character to the next encounter. It is obvious then that Murdoch has lent a dramatic touch to the events in the novel. Murdoch’s critics are unanimous in their agreement that the rendering of this novel into a dramatic form, undertaken in collaboration with James Saunders, is more successful. Richard Todd says, This is the slightest of Murdoch’s novels and was received the least favourably.\textsuperscript{27} Hilda Spear also considers it as ‘probably the least successful of Murdoch’s novels’.\textsuperscript{28}

Spear argues that this lack of success is mainly because the mythical and realistic elements are insufficiently fused, with the consequence that Edmund Narraway, the first-person narrator, is unconvincing. It seems a little surprising that Spear who focused on the dramatic element in Murdoch’s novels should brush \textit{The Italian Girl} aside when the novel is overfilled with dramatic elements throughout. Notwithstanding the critical neglect, the novel merits an analysis as it repeats some themes from a \textit{A Severed Head}, with a focus on Oedipus Complex.

The action of \textit{The Italian Girl} takes place in a Gothic setting. It starts with Edmund Narraway coming home to attend the funeral of his mother, Lydia Narraway. On arrival at midnight, he finds the house locked from inside and in complete darkness. He is let in by David Levkin, a Russian Jew, and an apprentice of his elder brother, Otto Narraway. His dead mother lying alone in the poorly lit room reminds one of the dead bodies kept in dungeons in the Gothic novels. The persons

\textsuperscript{27} Richard Todd, Iris Murdoch. London: Methuen, 1984, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{28} Hilda Spear, Iris Murdoch, London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn. 2007, p. 50.
living in this isolated house behave differently. Otto is carrying on a sexual liaison with David’s sister Elsa. On the other hand, Otto’s wife Isabel and his daughter Flora have developed sexual relations with David. Both have become pregnant by him. Whereas, the daughter undergoes abortion, the mother feels proud of carrying David’s child and leaving her own husband. When David’s relations with the mother and the daughter are revealed to Otto, he orders David and Elsa to leave immediately. Elsa in her frenzy performs a fire dance, burning the house as well as getting burnt. The novel ends, with Flora promising to look after Otto, David going back to Leningrad, Isabel going to Scotland, and Edmund and the Italian Girl Maggie, the servant, who becomes suddenly rich through Lydia's will, leaving for Rome.

Admittedly, The Italian Girl is an unusual novel with its gothic setting. A number of references and scenes in the novel corroborate this fact. For instance, Flora is referred to as Alice in Wonderland reminding us of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll. Edmund’s dream recounted by himself in the novel recalls the horror movies.

A large dusky woman was holding a girl upon her knee. The figures were mysteriously intertwined, the wide draped knees seeming now to belong to one, now to the other. Powerful arms reached out towards me and I shrank away.29

Further, Edmund describes what he saw after the dream when the moon was down. Then something appeared on the lawn.

Something bright and coloured appeared in the middle of the grayness. I stared at the apparition with fascination and cold fright .... The coloured thing reappeared and I realised now that it was the light of an electric torch shining upon the grass. Beside it I gradually discerned a shadowy figure of a woman.... I heard the sigh again, born clearly on the damp, silent air, a little higher, a little louder, ‘Aaah’ .... Who was standing there alone and lamenting in front of the dark house like a little figure in a dreadful picture.30

Through such scenes Murdoch creates an unusual world and norms of this world would be different from the norms of our day-to-day world. David tells about Elsa, ‘Yes, she goes often at night. She thinks that she is a ghost, to haunt the house.’31 In fact, Elsa’s stay works like the stay of a ghost. It is during her stay that all the terrible things happen in the novel. It is her death which finally brings all the characters out of their self-absorption and makes them entirely different human beings.

Apart from Elsa, Otto is another peculiar and weird character in the novel. He is referred to as ‘Gothic’, ‘primitive’, ‘gross’. His wife, Isabel remarks about Otto, ‘Otto is the sort of man who will pee into a wash basin even if there is a lavatory beside him.’32 This shows Otto's perverted nature. But his mother Lydia Narraway remains at the centre of the novel, whether alive or dead. She seems to govern the lives of all the characters. While describing life in the house, Isabel says to Edmund,

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30 Ibid, p. 56.
31 Ibid, p. 65.
32 Ibid, p. 34.
Maggie and I are like the people in Dostoevsky who starved together in the hut for too long. We can do nothing for each other. Anyway, Lydia took over Maggie as she took over Flora, She took everything. Lydia dominated not only the living persons’ lives, but also that of dead John Narraway, her husband. If he had not met her, he would have been a monk.

Otto, Isabel and Edmund are imprisoned in their own minds. They have been destroying themselves and each other to spite Lydia. They have become ‘monkey men’ and ‘spider women’. Isabel says, Otto and I are specialised destroyers of each other. Lydia’s departure makes no difference to that. During her life, Lydia dictated the terms in the house and almost everyone has directly felt her control and influence. With Otto and Edmund, she was the cause of mother fixation which brings into play their perverted natures. Otto thinks that his sexual liaison with Elsa is perfect and she has provided him with the greatest happiness. Even Lydia lying on death-bed makes it different. On being questioned whether it was painful to deceive Lydia when she got very ill, Otto remarks, not just that. I deceived everyone cheerfully at the start. No, it was deeper. I could not go on making love when Lydia was dying. I felt I wanted to disown my body. It was dreadful sort of physical torment. Again when Edmund asks Maggie to help Flora, she says she has lost power to help and adds, ‘Acts have their consequences. Your mother set us all at odds.’ Thus, even Maggie has not escaped Lydia’s influence. She changes her life from

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33 Ibid, p. 32.
34 Ibid, p. 74.
a poor servant to a rich lady by willing all her property to Maggie.

Murdoch makes Lydia mould the destiny of everybody in the novel. The remarks of different characters about Lydia make her a weird character, having a supernatural power. In a way, her power seems to have set the sexual perversion in her family in motion only because they revolted against her authority in a self-destructive manner. Murdoch paints some scenes of sexual perversion in *The Italian Girl*. After Otto’s confession about his relationship with Elsa, Edmund goes to talk to Isabel, his sister-in-law. On being asked what Isabel would like him to do for her, she tells him to cut threads from her dress. Edmund describes the scene:

> Feeling an idiot, I knelt down awkwardly and began snipping and pulling at the white threads at the hem of the dress.... It was difficult not to see more.... As I rose I realised at once that something odd had happened. Isabel, like a nymph in a legend, was metamorphosed, changed. Then I saw that she had undone the linen dress all the way down to the waist and was displaying to me two pink round bare breasts. She stood quite still looking up at me with a sort of dazed ferocious expression, with vague yearning eyes, her mouth drooping open. I looked at the breasts....

Further, when Edmund goes to his niece Flora to enquire about her after the abortion, he is shocked to learn that David had fathered her child, and wants to console her. He is humiliated by Flora whom he seems

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obscurely to desire. These two scenes have incestuous overtones in them. If in one it is the sister-in-law trying to enchant the brother-in-law by showing her breasts, in the other, it is uncle who is trying to subdue the niece. The sexual perversion of Lydia is revealed when Flora tells Edmund about Lydia-Maggie relationship - a lesbian affair: She had a horrible, horrible thing with Lydia. It was beastly and it made the whole house horrible. And just because she doesn’t attract men.’36

However, the picture of sexual perversion is not as distorted in The Italian Girl as it is in the Gothic novels like William Beckford’s Vathek. In The Italian Girl, the collapse of a rational and moral hierarchy of values is accompanied by a collapse of aesthetic and sensuous hierarchy. There is a coherent relationship between the sensuous and rational values. More than this, however, the mother-fixation has unhealthy consequences on Narraway brothers. Like Martin Lynch-Gibbon of a A Severed Head, Edmund suffers from an Oedipus Complex. In order to overcome this complex, the protagonist has to learn to accept the femininity of Maggie, the Italian servant girl. When Flora cuts off Maggie’s hair, one is reminded of Georgie’s cutting of her hair in A Severed Head. Murdoch again makes use of the Medusa story in this novel. When Murdoch refers to Maggie’s ‘severed hair’, we are reminded of the title A Severed Head. David Levkin, the Russian Jew, reminds us of Lusiewicz brothers in The Flight from the Enchanter Like them he preys on others. On the other hand, his sister Elsa is an uprooted and afflicted victim. Again there is a similarity between An Unofficial Rose and The

36 Ibid, p. 123.
Italian Girl, as both the novels begin with the death of a mother and in both the two lovers go off to Rome.

Despite the uncanny and weird world of The Italian Girl the protagonist Edmund finally achieves a kind of impersonal love for the other - Maggie. His only success lies in the attention he comes to give the Italian girl. Thus Edmund comes to terms with reality and his love for Maggie redeems him.

The Red and the Green (1965) is the last novel of Murdoch’s romantic phase. In several ways, the novel departs from the usual thematic focus in the novels of this period. Set in Ireland in the wake of Easter Uprising in 1916, it is a carefully researched historical romance. Murdoch explained that:

For that particular week [the week of the 1916 rebellion which the novel is about] I tried to get everything right - what day a particular article was published on, what day and how they changed the plan for the insurrection, and what the English were doing, what everybody was doing during that week.37

The Red and the Green is a historical novel. Within its historical framework, however, the novel has much in common with the other four novels discussed in this chapter. Notwithstanding the prominence of the Easter Rising, the thematic focus of the novel is on marriage, love, and family relationships. All these relationships are,

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however, coloured by patriotic zeal and religious inclinations. First of all, the title of the novel calls attention to its symbolic implications. The ‘Red’ and the ‘Green’ in the novel stand for the English and the Irish forces respectively. This view is fully supported by the song Cathal sings:

Sure it was for this Lord Edward died and Wolfe Tonne sunk serene, because they could not bear to leave the red above the green.\textsuperscript{38}

No doubt, the title acquires its significance as the opposition between the English and the Irish is shown in the novel in every aspect: historical, political, religious, temperamental and economic. It is against this backdrop that the novel is set.

All the characters in \textit{The Red and the Green} are Anglo-Irish and are closely related to one another. The action of the novel is restricted in time from Palk Sunday to Easter Monday, of April 1916, and in place of Dublin and its outskirts. Second-Lieutenant Andrew Chase-White recently commissioned in the distinguished regiment of King Edward’s Horse, comes along with his mother Hilda Chase-White to Dublin. The ‘family’ is a subject of great interest to British Hilda who says, ‘We Anglo-Irish families are so complex.’ This family for the purpose of the novel is a microcosmic representation of the human possibilities under the added pressure of historical and political movements. Within the microcosm of the family, the rich Irish members are generally shown as more passionate, alive and sensitive than the members on British side, who are capable of greater feeling and greater folly. Andrew and his

mother Hilda represent the English side whereas Pat Dumay, Cathal Dumay, Millie, Christopher Bellman, Barnabas Drum and Frances represent the Irish side. Among themselves, through their actions and reactions, these characters epitomise the forces and attitudes leading to the Easter Rising. As there are close ties and divisions between England and Ireland so there are close ties and divisions between the two sides of the family.

As a matter of fact, the family relationships here are fairly complicated in so far as the novel charts out several generations of the large, extended Anglo-Irish family. It has mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, cousins, aunts, uncles with its complications of intermarriage, its confused allegiances to Britain and Ireland. On the religious side also, the family has its shifting attachments to Protestantism and Catholicism. Nevertheless the very choice of such a family to people the historical event illustrates the dilemma of Ireland. The traditional compulsions which in earlier novels had centered on the commitments and responsibilities of marriage are here linked to nationalism and to religion though the sincerity of characters like Pat Dumay is less convincing.

Andrew Chase - White feels the pull between his mixed Irish and British affiliations. Moreover, his not quite formalised engagement to his cousin Frances is a part of a pattern of unfulfilled love entanglements that pervade the book. Millie Kennard is manifestly at the centre of these complications. Andrew Pat relationship, on the other hand, shows how
the political considerations affect the human relations. The temperamental
differences between their fathers also show the differences between the
British and Irish attitudes towards life. Andrew and his father pick their
way, like Britishers, cautiously behind, while Pat, like his father Brian
Dumay, has a robust way of life. Andrew is proud of his British army
uniform while his cousins Pat Dumay and Cathal Dumay hate him for
this. Pat is one of the Irish Volunteers who revolt for the independence of
Ireland. This explains that both of them never had any cordial
relationship. Whereas the former neither likes Ireland nor ever wants to
live there, the latter is proud of his country and is ready to sacrifice his
life for it. Andrew is unhappy because his mother has decided to live in
Ireland. For himself, he has decided ‘to remove Frances from it
completely as soon as this could be arranged.’

In their political views, Pat and Cathal are opposed to Andrew. This is
evident when Andrew pays his cousins a visit at their residence in
Blessington Street, Pat and Cathal simply feel bored of him. Andrew
condemns the war that is going in 1916. The Britishers are fighting the
Germans who are aiding the Irish revolutionaries. The English hate the
Germans, while the Irish people praise them. Andrew thinks that he is
doing a patriotic job by joining British army. The revolutionaries on the
reverse think that the Britishers are fighting an imperialist war. The result
of different political ideologies on human relationships is observed when
Andrew talking about his experiences in France remarks: ‘And at least
I’ve joined the army. I am not just sitting at home or playing at soldiers in

the back garden like some people.\textsuperscript{40} Cathal is so highly enraged at this that he overturns the table and his mother, Kathleen, has to reprimand him. It seems that the characters step out of their personal roles and assume public roles.

Among the characters, Millicent becomes the moral focus of the novel. She is a destructive force. She flirts with the menfolk of both generations, destroying first Barney Drumm’s vocation and then his marriage to her sister-in-law Kathleen. However, Barney- Millicent relationship reveals the impact of deep-rooted love. Barnabas Drumm is a failed priest, whose orders are denied to him. He allows Millie to enslave his affections to the extent of becoming her ‘creature’ and her fool, even when she casts him off. Though Millie constantly rejects him and though he feels inescapably bound by his Catholic marriage, he clings to the idea that he and Millie are also in some way bound to each other.

Barney Drumm, above all the characters, is torn between his passion and religious vocation, symbolically epitomising the muddle of Ireland. Born a Protestant and brought up in London, he converts to Catholicism and begins to train for priesthood. Corrupted by the ungodly Millie and thus unable to fulfill his religious calling, he links himself in marriage to the devout Catholic Kathleen, the widow of Millie’s brother Brian. He brings up Brian’s two revolutionary sons Pat and Cathal, by whom, despite his background and the mildness of his temperament, he is persuaded to throw in his lot with the Irish Volunteer Army. Infact, what

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p. 51.
redeems him as a human being is his honesty and love for Ireland. In his personal life he finds himself on the horns of a dilemma: he is drawn to Millie irresistibly and remains equally aware of his commitments and responsibilities of marriage. A possible reason for his attraction towards Millie may be his disillusionment after his marriage as he feels that his marriage has cheated him of a spiritual destiny. Barney puts his relationship with Millie and Kathleen in his Memoirs. Millie loved me because I was a blasphemer, Kathleen loved me because I was penitent.\textsuperscript{41}

Thus none of these two women has given him the genuine affection, he yearned for. His marriage to Kathleen no longer serves him as an emotional and physical anchor, and his failed marriage compels him to persist in his servitude to Millie only because he finds her love extreme. A touch from Millie re-establishes and confirms his servitude. He makes a passionate appeal to Millie not to reject his love and their secret, illicit sexual liaison goes on at Upper Mount Street. But this secret extramarital affair affects Barney’s life adversely. He starts neglecting his attendance at mass, shuns confessions and remains drunk most of the time. However, he is honest to his wife whom he tells everything about his affair with Millie. Kathleen resents all these things and feeling deprived of congenial husband-wife relationship, she draws inward and becomes more devout. She starts spending more of her time in charitable service to the poorer part of Dublin and neglecting her house. Barney considers Kathleen as the cause of his ruin. His Memoirs, in fact, is an imaginative prison for his wife, whom he attacks ruthlessly. The growing gap between Barney and

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 96-97.
Kathleen makes her totally indifferent towards herself; she is punishing herself to punish him. While making a confession to Kathleen about his affair with Millie he hoped ‘her tears, her bitter reproaches and then the great reconciliation.’ But nothing of sorts happens. He wants absolution from his wife and she fails to make any positive response. If Kathleen had co-operated with him, she could have effected a change of heart in him and thus put an end to his affair with Millie.

Marital bond is crucial to Barney but Millie is free. She lives at the physical level whereas Barney lives at emotional plane. His love for her is timeless whereas Millie used this affair for a temporary gratification of her senses. This is proved when she accepts Christopher Bellman’s offer of marriage. At the same time, however, she takes away Andrew’s virginity and lusts after Pat Dumay, Barney’s stepson. ‘Millie is essentially evil’, says Hilda Spear, and the suffering she inflicts is not merely emotional, for both Barney and Andrew, in their different ways, have their lives ruined by her.

It was possibly a mistake to use Millie Kinnard’s escapade as a central episode. But Millie becomes the cause of nobility and goodness in Barney in a limited sense, for she seems to him a means of escape and freedom, though illusory in essence. He also finds an illusory freedom in writing his memoir but it is a freedom based on fantasy; his Memoir serves as a justification for his life.

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42 Ibid, p. 198.
There had to be somewhere... where he was justified and [Kathleen] was judged. In real life she was all judge, even when she said nothing. In the Memoir everything was reversed and the unfairness of life was done away and that dreadful power was quenched.... What he wrote in the Memoir was not quite true, and that ‘not quite’ was the stuff of a most wicked lie.\textsuperscript{44}

In essence, Barney Drumm is aware of reality but he chooses to ignore it, preferring his own interpretation of life because that is less harrowing. Even after his Lenten decision to destroy the Memoir he makes excuses to himself until the moment that he agrees to fight on the side of the rebels. His alter ego of the Memoir then becomes superfluous and he tears it up.

If Millie is at one end of the moral spectrum and Barney indeterminately in the middle, Pat Dumay is at the other end. Loved by Millie, by Frances and by his cousin Andrew he is not corrupted by them. For him love is real; his love for his brother Cathal and his love for Ireland are weighed in the balance and only his own honour seems able to promote it towards Ireland. He alone of all the characters in the novel dies in the Uprising.

Thus it is the glamour of a revolutionary before which everybody bows. Though all the characters whom we meet before the Easter Rising except Frances, Kathleen and Millie are dead, yet the charm of the revolutionary spirit is not lost. At the time of revolution it is those

\textsuperscript{44} Iris Murdoch, The Red and the Green, p. 175.
who fight that steel the limelight. Later on these heroes are thought to have died for a noble and glorious cause: for justice and for freedom of their country. They become immortal.

However, the historical dimension of the novel serves, to some extent, to obscure its moral and philosophical aspects, particularly as the political issues are not presented in terms of black and white. At the same time, the historicity is muted and the novel proper ends before the climax of the battle takes place, thus emphasising that it is about people not events. The romantic note with which the novel ends - Frances confession that she was in love with Dumay (though she was an intended of Andrew) adds a slightly new perspective to the plot.

The foregoing discussion of the five novels reveals that they touch upon the concerns of marriage and love. A number of subsidiary themes like enchantment, magic and myth are subsumed into the larger framework of the major thematic preoccupations. These novels also enlarge the view of violence and the attendant evil, though the violence here is more moral than physical. Evil is present alongside the good in these novels, though the conflict between good and evil becomes more pronounced in the group of novels which expand these themes and are, therefore, examined in the chapter that follows.