CHAPTER VI
Murdoch's Treatment of Youth and Adolescence

Iris Murdoch's interest in the moral problems of man has led her to explore the philosophies, literature and literary values of the present day. In her early essays Murdoch discusses the picture of man in the modern world, and in her later essays she goes on to relate these philosophical ideas to the novel form. Her treatment is dominated by philosophical and moral problems as she is primarily concerned with the knowledge that an individual can have of himself, others and reality.

In her essays Iris Murdoch takes up different thinkers, discusses their works and analyses their main features. In "The Existentialist Hero", one of her earliest essays¹, she takes up Simon de Beauvoir's novel She Came to Stay, finds its characters, Pierre, Francoise and Xaviere "Something new in the immoralist line. They are not uneasy rebels against the social code, nor are they exactly oblivious of it. They are detached from it and they make their own morality as they go along."² Iris Murdoch relates the novel with the Existentialist writer's rejection of accepted social mores, leading to his alienation from the world.

She takes up the political and moral theories of Sartre and finds the world of Existential thinkers to be extremely

² EH. 523.
trans. She says, that the existentialist hero does present
an interesting and touching symbol of the plight of modern man.
But this plight, according to her, consists in the vision of a
thoroughly intelligible world, bereft of mystery, magic, terror
and the enticing mystery of the unknown. In her opinion, "This
fact alone, that there is no mystery, would falsify the claim to
be true pictures of the situation of man." ³

Iris Murdoch admires the ability of the nineteenth
century novelist to create independent characters and relate them
to the world around them. She praises Tolstoy, George Eliot,
Jane Austen, and Dickens in this respect, and finds Shakespeare
'the greatest creator of character'. ⁴ Her whole approach to
literary creations and norms follows logically from her deep
concern with the question of man's relation with others and the
world around him. In her view, great art creates an increased,
and a more realistic awareness of the existence of others; and
she calls those art-forms great, that picture most faithfully the
human being in all his particularity. It is only in great art
that one gets the picture of the particularity of man, and this
concept has a right to exist. It is not seen in the modern works
of literature, for the modern man lacks the assumptions that are

³EH. 523-524.
⁴SBR. 247-271.
basic to such a concept. The moral values of an age are related to the concept of man, and these two are reflected in the literature of an age. George Orwell expressed fears regarding the future of the novel in the face of totalitarian political beliefs in the '30s. In the past literature had effectively portrayed the complex interplay of various emotional and moral considerations in man, as well as his close involvement with his society.

Talking of nineteenth century novelists, Iris Murdoch states her own admiration for them because as she finds that "there is in these novels a plurality of real persons more or less naturalistically presented in a large social scene and representing mutually independent centres of significance which are those of real individuals." She admires George Eliot for she "displays that God-like capacity for so respecting her characters as to make them exist as free and separate beings." Iris Murdoch accepts the assumption of F.R. Leavis in The Great Tradition that the English novel, and the novel form in general, was realistic in inspiration and intention. This emphasis on realism and concern with values was a reaction to the

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5 IW. 47-48.
6 SBR. 247-271.
7 SBR. 247-271.
personalized, temperamental character the novel had taken in the hands of Stream of Consciousness write-s. It has been one of the major schools in literary criticism as well as creation.

In making these statements, Iris Murdoch associates herself with the realistic concept of the novel, in which character and moral meanings that emerge through the interrelation of the individual and others are the fundamental concern of the novel.

The insistence on character and his relations to the reality around him, have a special relevance in view of Iris Murdoch's concern with philosophical problems. Art for her is neither consolation nor fantasy. It is concerned with reality. It can lead to spiritual experience as it enhances one's understanding of the reality of oneself and of others. In her novel, The Black Prince, she presents the views of the novelist, Bradley Pearson, regarding art to be as follows:

"All art deals with the absurd and aims at the simple, good art speaks truth, indeed as truth perhaps the only truth." 8

Art deals with the most fundamental human concerns. Until it concerns itself with the vital issues of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others, art cannot be seriously considered.

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8: Iris Murdoch, The Black Prince 11. Subsequently cited as BP.
Art is not concerned with the surface reality for that would confine art to sensuous details, leaving out the important human concerns. Bradley Pearson in the novel says "Art is a vain and hollow show, a toy of gross illusion unless it points beyond itself and moves ever whither it points."  

It is in the modern writers' inability to deal with the whole human being and with the moral problems that Iris Murdoch finds modern literature inadequate. This, as she points out, is the consequence of the changed concept of man and his relation with others.

Once Iris Murdoch's theory of art is understood, one can see why she is dissatisfied with most of modern literature. When she looks at the literature of the last hundred years she finds this change of sensibility in modern writers as a sort of sense of disintegration of personality. "Novelists," she says, "seem to find it harder to create 'characters' now, and I suppose this is a symptom of a general malaise about the nature of persons."  

This is of great importance for her since she holds the view that finally our judgement of the greatest novelist is based upon the quality of their awareness of others, "and that

9BP. 392.

for the novelist this is at the highest level the most crucial test.\textsuperscript{11} Edwin Muir also expresses a similar opinion. Man, he says in the religious context of the past could be seen as a whole human being whereas today he is seen as a more simplified, organized being, who can be seen in terms of will, or instinct. The modern writers, novelists particularly, fail in this test because of the creation of a romantic concept of human personality. Murdoch clearly states in "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" "with the dominance of what I have called neurotic Romantic literature the real individual has tended to disappear from the novel, and his place has been taken by the symbolic individual, who is the literary work itself."\textsuperscript{12}

Let us discuss some of her novels to see how Iris Murdoch has tackled or penetrated into the various problems of the real individual and her concern with adolescence. Certainly, her interest in human beings is not confined to husband and wife misunderstandings, to the mistresses owned by husbands, to the homosexuals, to the lone good and idealistic people who become Buddhists, to the failed artist and painter, in some books to failures all round, like Edgar Demarney in \textit{The Sacred and Profane Love Machine} who, despite being head of an Oxford College, Fellow

\textsuperscript{11} SBR. 247-271.

\textsuperscript{12} SBR. 247-271.
of the Royal Academy, and a world famous classicist, feels he is a failure. But Murdoch has a deep interest in and an understanding of children and teenagers also.

Annette Cockeyne is a cosmopolitan ragamuffin speaking four languages in *The Flight from the Enchanter*. Annette whose parents are forever abroad on diplomatic missions runs away from a boarding-school — just to experience life, to see what life is. The sixteen-year-old who can be seen swinging on the chandelier thinks of herself as a grown-up as most teenagers do.

Elizabeth Dipple in *Work For the Spirit* says, "With both major and minor characters there are serious problems .... Murdoch's rather minor creations like Calvin Blick and Annette Cockeyne work nicely on the ideology of the novel, but irritatingly distract from the reader's engagement." Well, adolescents usually distract — not Calvin, but Annette does. Sometimes she acts in such an irritating manner, that we feel she has been spoilt and want to slap her. Annette is a silly school-girl with a collection of precious stones which the Polish brothers Jan and Stephan covet. The novel opens with silly Annette Cockeyne's rejection of Dante's image of the Minotaur from Canto XII of the Inferno. This creature of the labyrinth bounded to and fro in pain and frustration, Dante was saying,

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13 WS. 137.
like a bull that has received the death blow. "Annette naively sees the whole thing as God's fault and as very cruel and unpleasant, then dashes forward into the maze which she calls the School of Life. Her unconsciousness and ignorance are not very interesting, nor do they ever become so, but the allusion to the Minotaur with its suggestion of labyrinth and its present, hellish, physical fury serve as a good introduction to the characters who thread their way through tortured lives and the peculiar physical brutalities of civilized London. What they seek is elusive and in its various expressions pointless."\(^{14}\)

And it is Annette who first points out this ineffectiveness and cruelty to us. Annette is rich and flirtatious and according to Dipple one of a series of Murdoch's "uninteresting caricatures of the still adolescent girl."\(^{15}\) with Felicity in The Sandcastle and Barbara in The Nice and the Good, Miranda in An Unofficial Rose, Flora in The Italian girl who always and destructively loves the most powerful male. Annette is in love with Mischa Fox, or at least thinks she is. Dressed like a sea-green mermaid in a cocktail costume devised by the absent Nina, young Annette therefore, takes part in a cat-fight which is appallingly destructive, with Rosa, who she supposes to be her

\(^{14}\) WS. 139.

\(^{15}\) WS. 141.
deadly enemy. Murdoch represents Annette in *The Flight from the Enchanter* as, "the unicorn virgin in process of becoming the siren. This state of becoming puts her into an adversary position to Rosa, the siren, who may become the wise woman. Young Annette and Rosa fight savagely over Mischa at the party after the fish-bowl has been broken and somehow the frantic writhing and death of the fish open them to their own violence and confusion." The ugly, sex-centred brawling of the two women destroy any image of the holy or God-like.

There are comic scenes involving young Annette one is when Mischa Fox expounds the myth of the unicorn virgin to John Rainsborough knowing that Annette is locked half-undressed in the China closet, listening. Then again Annette's subsequent misery and comic failure at suicide — all indicative of a difficult adolescent who thinks she is a woman who is to be loved and who can enchant anyone she wishes.

Then came a quiet and small novel, *The Sandcastle* after the bizarre and energetic *The Flight from the Enchanter*. At the centre of the novel is an adulterous but unconsummated love affair between the school master Bill Mor and the young, very young painter Rain Carter, with Bill's wife Nan, playing the villain — Rain is a childish girl, with a childish appeal which

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16 *WS.* 141.
causes the vulnerable old Demoyte, (whose painting she has been asked to do,) to fall in love with her. Demoyte, knowing his case is hopeless, being like a father figure to Rain, encourages the affair between Mor and Rain. Mor, trapped in an unhappy, loveless marriage with destructive Nan, succumbs to Rain's gentle, sweet, childlike innocence. But he does not appreciate the lying situations Rain puts him into and is often offended by Rain's emotionally retarded childhood. Rain is like a fresh dream in Mor's life which up to then was so full of boredom. Around him are characters like his friend Tim Burke, Nan his wife and his children Don and Felicity and his several colleagues who provide him the reality ultimately defeat the false fantasy. Mor's own child Felicity plays by an English sea in Devon, 'not building fantasy sandcastles, but indulging in black magical rites hoping to destroy Rain's power over her father.'

Rain had said, "I can recall, as a child, seeing pictures in English children's books of boys and girls playing on the sand and making sandcastles — and I tried to play on my sand. But a Mediterranean beach is not a place for playing on. It is dirty and very dry. The tides never wash the sand or make it firm. When I tried to make a sandcastle, the sand would just run away between my fingers. It was too dry to hold together.

17. WS. 143.
And even if I poured sea water over it, the sun would dry it up at once."  

Rain Carter, as Mor suddenly saw her kneeling on a table at a far corner of Demoyte's drawing-room, was "a very short youthful-looking girl, with buoyishly cut dark hair and darkly rosy cheeks, wearing a black cotton blouse, an elaborately flowered red skirt and a necklace of large red beads;" "He thought, 'how very small she is, and how like a child.' ... 'Her eyes were dark brown and fugitive, her nose rather broad and tilted. A not unpleasant face.'" 

Demoyte said, "And so you might be, my dear, a flower, a bird, an antelope." Then again Demoyte says to Mor, "Am I to be summed up by a slip of a girl?" 

Whether Miss Carter is a teenager or in her twenties, really does not matter. What appeals to us readers is the way in which Iris Murdoch has thought of children, or young girls and

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18: SC. 73.
20: SC. 27.
21: SC. 28.
22: SC. 29.
boys who behave in a child-like, innocent manner. When necessary, Rain talks like an adult.

"I have the impression, for instance," said Miss Carter, 'that Mr. Demoyte is deliberately trying to deceive me about certain things. Since I arrived I am quite sure that he has been wearing clothes that he does not usually wear. I think this not only because of the smell of mothballs but because of the way the clothes look on him." 23 Then later, "I agree with much of what you say," said Miss Carter, speaking quickly before Bledyard could interrupt her. 'Our paintings are a judgement upon ourselves. I know in what way, and now deplorably, my own paintings show what I am .....' 24

Often Rain refers to the time when she was nineteen ...
'I was in love when I was nineteen with a young man in Paris, also a painter' she sighed ... "'My father did not like him. He went away in the end .....' 25

Looking at a portrait of a young girl with long black plaits, leaning over the keyboard of a piano at an exhibition off Bond Street, Mor asked Rain, "'Who is that?' 'Me', said Rain. 'Did your father paint it?' 'No, I did.'

23·SC. 47.
24·SC. 77.
25·SC. 178.
'But you were a child then!', said Mor.

'Not so young as I look,' said Rain. 'I was nineteen. It's not very good, I'm afraid.'

We get an inkling of Miss Carter's age when she asks Mor about his children.

'I have a daughter', said Mor 'about fourteen. Her name is Felicity'. It gave him pain, somehow, to speak of his children to Miss Carter. She must be, he reckoned no more than eight years older than Donald.'

She was about twenty-four years old, but 'She was slim enough; but all the same, she looked in those garments (close-fitting black trousers, narrow at the ankles, a vivid blue shirt, blue canvas shoes, and no other adornments). Mor thought, rather like a school-child dressed to impersonate a Paris street boy.'

Apart from Rain Carter, who looks like a child, and is as innocent as a child, there are many teenagers in The Sandcastle. The story revolves round a school teacher - William Mor, his family (his wife Nan, his son Donald in the sixth form, his daughter Felicity, fourteen) and of course the school children.
who are at regular intervals shown in conversation — either with their friends or with their teachers. Importance has been given to the friendship between Donald and Jimmy Carde. "Jimmy Carde was one of Mor's enemies. He was also the bosom friend of Mor's son Donald. Mor never felt at ease with Carde." Carde was one of Mer's enemies. He was also the bosom friend of Mor's son Donald. Mor never felt at ease with Carde. Again "Carde sat quietly looking at the poem. He was a good performer, and he was in no hurry. Carde was efficient, and Mor respected efficiency."

But Carde, who "Spoke in a casual and superior way, scarcely opening his mouth, as if it were a concession on his part to support these absurd proceedings at all." told Don, "I saw your dad showing her round ... He didn't look as if he was fed up either I wonder if Demoyte has made a pass at her yet? ... Felicity at that moment, felt extreme dislike for Jimmy Carde."

Murdoch writes so naturally, as if she herself was an understanding, school teacher in Mor's school, St. Bride's. Critics like Elizabeth Dipple, have said, "The name Rain, obviously symbolic in relationship to the dryness of Mor's life, comes straight out of women's fiction, as indeed does her whole

29. SC. 38.
30. SC. 39.
31. SC. 38.
32. SC. 133.
character."³³ "The plot is quite simple and the number of characters limited. At its centre is an adulturous but unconsommated love affair between the school master Bill Mor and the painter, Rain Carter, with Bill's wife Nan, playing the villain. The character of Rain, on the make and recalcitrantly childish, constitutes the novel's central failure, although the depiction of the demon child, Felicity comes in a close second."³⁴

Rain and Felicity stand in a peculiar paralleled relationship. Both afflicted by childhood, they play their arts of enchantment: Rain through sex, Felicity through magical enactments which she partially shares with her maturing brother, Don. The object of both Felicity and Rain is the possession of Mor, and the final sentences of the novel herald Felicity's triumph: "It was all right. It was all right."³⁵

If we find the basic character of Rain to be irritating, the problem concerning Felicity is very peculiar too. Murdoch was perhaps experimenting with the basic stuff of a traditional romantic novel and then chose to embellish it with hints of the supernatural. Felicity's parents, who are not happily married, soothe their frequent quarrels with the memory

³³WS. 143.
³⁴WS. 142.
³⁵SC. 313.
of their golden retriever, but the dog's ghost exists for Felicity, as her perpetual real companion. Felicity also projects a spirit of various manifestations whom she calls Angus. She and her brother Don have a magic pact game, called tears of blood, which they play on finding out about the secret connection between their father and Rain. Felicity's voodoo on the seashore may be touching, but the demonism is somehow all too serious, too powerfully designed. Like Miranda, in An Unofficial Rose, there is something unreal, overtly adult and vicious about her. Like Miranda, she has much more power than the woman she wishes to defeat. Felicity's imaginary Angus has been given fictional flesh, by Murdoch. The wordless gypsy of the novel who appears to Felicity as, she believes, a manifestation of Angus, also appears with his Tarot Cards to Rain and Mor in the woods, and he leans eerily and terrifyingly on Mor's doorknob during the one night that Rain stays, chastely over. His physical presence makes the issue stranger and more important than just the projection of a childish psyche.

Mor is finally defeated by his children, not only Felicity but also Don. Don's near fatal tower climb and subsequent determination to become a jeweller like his idol, Tim Burke, break Mor's dreams about his son's career. The story ends with Mor, having been manipulated by his wife Nan, renouncing not only Rain but the school as well, and then he plans to embark on a career in politics. Mor remains chained to an unromantic world where Nan, although slightly changed, will nag as before, and Don
and Felicity will remain alien. Mor's suffering and defeat are well handled by Murdoch. He is a good husband and a good father. For a while he becomes involved with the young painter, Rain Carter and participates in her childishness. Around him the strength of the other characters, his wife Nan, his friend Tim Burke, his children Don and Felicity and his several colleagues provide him an adequately real setting which ultimately defeats the false fantasy, symbolized by the Sandcastle, of a dry Mediterranean life with Rain.

That Mor loved his son Don can be felt in the horrifying tower-climbing scene, Prewett said to Mor, "'Bill, I'm afraid it's your son and young Carde'. 'I know', said Mor ... He realized that he was shaking all over with violent tremors. 'Has anyone sent for the fire-brigade?' he asked ...".

Again later, "The body of Donald, breathing and unbroken lay somewhere near him. He stretched out a hand and touched his son's leg. People were leaning over them both ...".

About Felicity, Mor's daughter ... Felicity was a difficult teenager who resented Rain's relationship with her father, as we have earlier noted. Towards the end of this novel

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36. SC. 254.
37. SC. 267.
we find, 'Then he saw Felicity, who was coming flying down the hill on her bicycle. 'Oh Daddy', cried Felicity, 'I'm so glad I found you!' She clung on to him.

'Did you say Don had come back?' said Mor.

'Yes', said Felicity ... 'he came very late last night to Tim Burke's house', 'Well, thank God for that', said Mor."38

Again — "'Do you think Don could work with Tim Burke now?', said Felicity ....

'We'll see about that, dar ing', said Mor ...

'Daddy', said Felicity, 'When we go to London do you think we could have another dog?' Mor was very near to tears 'Yes,' he said, 'I expect we might have a dog when we go to London, if you'd like that'.39

After reaching home sometime later, Mor went up to Don's bedroom to have a long-awaited discussion with him.

"Felicity was sitting by herself on the stairs, half-way up ... Everything was all right now ... Her eyes were filled with tears and soon they were streaming down her face. She gave a little sob into her handkerchief. Everything was all right now. It was all right. It was all right."40

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38. SC. 310.
39. SC. 311.
40. SC. 313.
A novel which ends with an adolescent's tears (though happy and relieved ones) and begins with a father wanting to lunch with his teen-aged daughter ...

"'Shall we wait for Felicity?' asked Mor. 'No, of course not,' said Nan, 'She always sulks when she comes home'..."41 shows a deep understanding of, and an affection for young people. Their innermost desires and crazy thoughts, their sulky natures, then their change of moods ... a change for the better a desire to come closer to the parents has been handled adroitly and intelligently in The Sandcastle, which critics have often termed as one of Murdoch's weaker books. Dipple has been disturbed by three elements of The Sandcastle — popular romance, a religious examination of what Murdoch feels is good, and the Fey introduction of the super natural. She is glad that Murdoch dropped the genre.

J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan, is often referred to in Iris Murdoch's novels. Many characters in Murdoch's novels are interested in this play and the Peter Pan statue in Kensington Gardens is often a focus. We see that in A Word Child J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan serves as a mirror reflecting the essential character of Hilary Burde in A Word Child.42

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41 sc. 7.
42 ws. 216.
A staging of *Peter Pan* is planned in Hilary's office as the Christmas Pantomime. There is much talk in this novel about both the casting and the symbolic meaning of the play.

"Don't you like *Peter Pan*, Hilary?" says Laura Imiatt, on a Thursday night at dinner ... Hilary had dinner regularly every Thursday with Freddy and Laura Imiatt. Laura wrote intellectual women's page journalism about 'The Young'.

"The young are so selfless and brave compared with us" Laura said, ... They take such big decisions and they don't worry about money and status and they aren't afraid to live in the present. They put their whole lives at risk for the sake of ideas and experience."

'More fools they,' 'I'm sure you were fearfully anxious and careful when you were young, Hilary'.

'I thought about nothing but my exams.' Here Laura asks Hilary to tell her something about his childhood but Hilary refuses.

Iris Murdoch's interest in children, youth, adolescents is markedly shown here through conversations of various characters.

43. WC. 10.

44. WC. 9.
Hilary asks, "'Why not a Christian interpretation, Peter as Christ Child?' when Clifford Larr says, 'Will you favour a Freudian interpretation?'" meaning, of 'Peter Pan', which Larr thinks of as a great ambiguous work of art.

In A Word Child we have a conversation on Tuesday between Arthur and Hilary. It centres around the play Peter Pan. Hilary and Arthur, both in a rather snobbish stage of drunkenness were discussing life.

Arthur said "'Life isn't a play. It isn't even a pantomime' Hilary, 'No Never - Never - Land.' 'Certainly no Never - Never Land', said Arthur:

'So you don't see Peter Pan as reality breaking in?'

'No', said Arthur, 'On the contrary, what is real is the Darling's home life, Hook is just a fantasy of Mr. Darling,'

'What is Peter then?'

'Peter is - Peter is - Oh I don't know - spirit gone wrong, just turning up as an unnerving visitor who can't really help and can't get in either.'

Then later Hilary says,
"I think Smee is the real hero, Hook envies Smee. So Hook can be saved."

Arthur, 'I think Nana is the real hero.'

'Nana is the most conventional character in the whole thing. Now Smee —'

'You must remember that Smee serves Hook',

'You must remember that Nana is only a dog.'

'Exactly', said Arthur, 'There's nothing bogus about Nana. Nana doesn't talk. Even Mr. Darling fails, he wants to be Hook.

'What about Wendy, does she fail?', 'Yes, Wendy is the human soul' seeking the truth. She ends up with a compromise.'

'Living half in an unreal world?'

'Yes, like most of us do. It's a defeat but a fairly honourable one. That's the best we can hope for. I suppose. Now Nana. She's the truth of the Darling home, its best part, its reality. Nana fears Peter, she's the only one who really recognizes Peter.'

'I can't think why you idolize the Darling home life. It seems to me to be pretty dreary.'

'Oh no — what could be better a home with — children and —'.

47. WC. 88.
The discussion of Peter Pan, a fairy-tale play, mainly of interest to children, and the interest shown in the children of the Darling's home shows Iris Murdoch's keen perception of adolescents and her study of people who discuss the child characters of Peter Pan. Somehow we get the feeling that Arthur, a simple, common sort of person loves a home with children in it. But Hilary thinks of the Darling's home life as dreary — he is an intellectual, but certainly not a normal character as such.

Hilary's interpretation of the fey boy as reality, as opposed to Arthur's view of him as crazy and destructive, offers an interesting clue to Hilary's views of many things. Himself a bad boy from the beginning, given to violence and constantly feeling lonely and excluded from ordinary society, Hilary's energy, like Peter Pan's, grows into a misplaced spirituality which remains destructive because it cannot be absorbed in ordinary life. Arthur does not argue for either Peter Pan or Smee as the hero, but for the dog Nana, who is representing the conventional ideas of duty and who instantly recognizes the threat Peter Pan imposes. "Arthur posits a centre which ultimately he and Crystal will produce through their marriage ... a centre where the ordinariness of family life lived simply and realistically can produce the happier possibility of a real childhood for their children." 48

48 WS. 216.
This novel, *A Word Child*, is much dominated by ideas of childhood. Although this novel shows the reference to the past suicide of the Jopling Child, Tristram, as an entry in the catalogue of the frustrations of bearing and being children, which so dominate this tale, it is important to note that atleast one positive note is sounded by Murdoch ... Arthur and Crystal's marriage will, we are assured, produce children ... by adoption, should nature fail.

Murdoch has tried to show Crystals' connection with Wendy — Crystal is a wonderful and magical image to four men, — for Hilary, she is part of himself. Oned in love to him: for Clifford Larr she is the image of the virgin and chaste woman in a world of whoredom: to Gunnar, She is a simple, generous, loving woman; for Arthur, she is the symbol of family life. Like Wendy who plays the mother to the various lost and abandoned boys and eventually grows up and marries and is thus alienated from the Never-Never-Land of the Peter Pan fantasy; Crystal's marriage to Arthur is a sure sign of an entrance into the ordinary world of family life and causes her to lose Hilary — who is a version of Peter Pan.

Hilary thinks that Peter Pan's Never-Never-Land and the promises of Christianity are all false and misleading. He says that his exposure to evangelical Christianity in his orphanage years was powerful but meaningless. He had been a violent boy in his childhood. In his boyhood badness, he kicked apart flower
gardens, tried to burn down the orphanage, attacked Aunt Bill. Crystal says, "You always said we were babes in the wood", and Hilary thinks, "How lost, in What a Wood". Then they talked a lot about the old days, about the caravan and Aunt Bill and about Christmas times when they were children.

In A Word Child, there is one chapter "Thursday" wholly on the orphans Crystal and Hilary Burde, their childhood with Aunt Bill and life at the orphanage for Hilary. How vividly and pathetically this description of an unwholesome and unhappy childhood is presented by Murdoch. It is as if she knew Hilary and Crystal and as if she had been moved when she witnessed their plight. Hilary says, "Immense tracts of my childhood are inaccessible to memory, and I cannot remember any incident from those first years." "Aunt Bill kept Crystal with her in the caravan, but me she fairly soon (I do not know exactly how soon) despatched to the orphanage. I had, with my first self-consciousness, an awareness of myself as 'bad', a bad boy, one who had to be sent away."
Murdoch describes an 'angry' adult who was brimming with anger and hatred, who hated the universe, because he detested Aunt Bill and shed tears of joy when he heard of her death. Hilary was a lonely child. Murdoch has used expressions which none can excel, to show Hilary's hatred, anger, loneliness as a delinquent.

"The bottomless bitter misery of childhood: how little even now it is understood. Probably no adult misery can be compared with a child's despair."  

"At fourteen I had been a small though muscular imp. At sixteen I was a six-foot adolescent."  

"I made no real friends. I was touchy and solitary and afraid of making mistakes and well aware that I was a big tough healthy chap devoid of ease and physical charm. I could not get on with girls and scarcely attempted to."  

The reader finds it amazing and amusing too, how Murdoch just loses herself in the adolescent years of Hilary Burde's unhappy, frustrated life, and emerges as if she herself was Crystal his sister, or someone very close to him.

53. WC. 19.  
54. WC. 23.  
55. WC. 24.
Murdoch allows Hilary and Crystal, two orphans, to survive in a world which has proved so cruel to them. But in *An Accidental Man*, where Murdoch has involved realist attention to contemporary bourgeois society and has described that mediocre society comically, but accurately, 'These characters' imaginations are interestingly representative of contemporary western culture,' two real children die — one, the Monkley child, Rosalind, killed by Austin Gibson Grey (an accidental man himself) in the crash in Matthew's car; the other, Henrietta Sayce, a fugitive but charming peripheral figure from the huge cast of characters. Austin was slightly drunk when the car crashed. He is blackmailed by the girl's stepfather, Norman Monkley, until a mixture of physical assault on Austin's part and further accident, reduces Norman Monkley to a state of mental vegetation. Henrietta Sayce, the delinquent girl, falls to her death from some scaffolding. The *Accidental Man* is "a Vietnam Novel, set against a foul world of political muddle, cruelty and moral chaos." At the end of the novel, the reader is somehow dismayed by all the maddening action, and jolted and shaken up by its savagery. It seems that all such action in this novel is meaningless and there is foul perversion of cocktail gossip. The reader feels that every character has failed or compromised and

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56. *WS.* 207-208.

there is no possibility of any character to even approach the disciplines of what is good.

The Sacred and Profane Love Machine at first glance centres on the double loves of Blaise Gavender, who is caught between two women, Emily McHugh and his wife Harriet. Blaise represents the external structure of the work while Monty dominates its internal rhythmic patterns. This novel is richly supplied with dualities — sets of characters. The idea of doubling goes far beyond Harriet—Emily, Blaise—Monty to include two sons, David and Luca; the two products of Montague Small’s imagination, Milo Fane and Magnus Bowles; Monty’s two love-hate-objects, the dead Sophie and Edgar Demarnay and the two other women Pinn and Kiki St. Loy. There are dream sequences with moral, religious and symbolism. David dreams of a pattern involving fish. Harriet, who has been called Mrs. Placid, by Emily, lived a life of calm happiness. Her only anxiety was concerned with wishing her son David was not going through adolescent withdrawal, and then her opening dream seems to be an intuitive dream of an illuminated child’s face. Harriet lives a life of Sainthood in which her urge to love and to forgive and be selfless is aptly demonstrated. She learns of Blaise’s double life, a revelation of major dimensions in her life — but she intends to forgive. Blaise whose duplicity and debased sexuality have entered a corrupt animal-like phase. The Sacred and Profane Love Machine, refers not only to Blaise, who longed for an innocent sexual self and thus married the chaste Harriet and then
his descent to Emily's hell, to the underworld so to say, shows his inner life, a coarse, self-indulgent life which he obviously craves — but also refers to his son David, whose touching innocence will gradually through time, become identical to his father's coarse guilt. This novel's pessimism is so negative. The reader feels that the coarser, morally debased characters should have met their death at the end, but it is Harriet who dies. There is no consolation for the reader.

David, a character who has been portrayed as good, is sexually initiated by Pinn, after Pinn takes him through heavy underbush to a point where he feasts his eyes on seven bathing nymphs — girls from the special school where Pinn teaches. Kiki St. Loy is a student there and to David, she is Diana. He watches the bathing nymphs and then in Hood House, goes to bed with Pinn. Murdoch lets the reader experience a bitterness, a sense of frustration. Couldn't David have remained an innocent, sexually inexperienced adolescent? Did he have to be taught and initiated by the mysterious Pinn?

What a marvellous description Murdoch has given us of a mother - adolescent son - relationship.

"Every mother has to endure it. The marvellous intimacy could not last. He had withdrawn first from Blaise. Now from her."

58: SPLM. 9.
"He was so tall now and often so stern, and yet inside this dignified angel there was surely the same awkward small boy. He had odd mannerisms, new ones, secret ones."

"David, in his new grown-upness had already a sort of authority..."

"Women where not yet David's problem apart from his mother of course..."

"He looked at his thinness and his straightness and his cleanliness. He was a solitary being, he thought, a loner, always would be, sometime soon he would be a man."

This adolescent innocent boy is so different from Kiki St. Loy. We get introduced to Kiki through a conversation between Emily and Pinn...

"'What did you do with Kiki last night?' said Emily, 'You were bloody late.'

'We drank.'

'Where?'

'At the pub. Then in her car. We drove out into the country.'
'So She climbed in again?'
'Yes.'
'That school's a laugh.'
'Well, she's eighteen, or pretends to be.'
'God, I wish I was eighteen again.'

Then there is Blaise gazing at Kiki St Loy in his car.

"It was Kiki St Loy, in a sky-blue jersey and surrounded by an great deal of wet hair. She smiled at him and that pure seventeen-year-old smile had even then for him a power to console." 64

Now let's see how Murdoch has tackled Luca.

There is a mysterious touch when Luca is first introduced, in the opening line of the novel ... "The boy was there again this evening, and the dogs were not barking." 65 There are many questions which come to our mind — Who is the boy? Why is he there? Why does he come again and again? Why were the dogs silent?

Infact David asks himself the same question as he thinks — "...he had seen the shadowy boy before, two days ago,

63 'SPLM. 93-94.
64 'SPLM. 254.
65 'SPLM. 1.
scarcely more clearly, at about this time. A small figure, a small boy, eight or nine years old perhaps. Why did none of the dogs bark? "Harriet Gavender had also seen the boy, only in her case it was the first sighting. She too had noticed the silence of the dogs." "Surely there was nothing to be afraid of in an inquisitive trespassing child." Yet Harriet was afraid. The previous night she had dreamt of a radiant child's face, the face only, suspended there and looking at her.

"How stupid I am, she thought. It's just a boy, it's nothing at all."

We learn of Luca's connection to Emily McHugh. Pinn, who was her lodger, was "much better at dealing with Luca than Emily was." "The bed-wetting phase was over at last, thank God. He had been named Luke, but the name had somehow become Italianized."

As Luca grew older, he withdrew from his mother. He hardly spoke to her.
"He played outside by himself, and sometimes simply vanished for long periods." 72

We learn that Luca is the illegitimate child of Blaise as Emily tells him to go to see Luca's form master at school. She says: "It's no good my going. They'll pull their socks up if they see the child's got a real father who wears a tie and can speak English". However Blaise kept putting this off. "Luca's all right, we'd be told if he wasn't." 73

Blaise and Emily "had not wished for, dreamt of or anticipated children." 74

Blaise's relation with his second son had never been a happy one.

"Blaise saw sometimes in those very dark round eyes suspicion, hostility perhaps some kind of knowledge." 75

Luca, the illegitimate son has been portrayed so intelligently, as a deep, quiet, introvert, playing by himself, going off wandering for long hours, drawing a house with big windows, a woman in a long dress, lots of dogs, a boy in

72. SPLM. 51.
73. SPLM. 51.
74. SPLM. 62.
75. SPLM. 66.
trousers, a man — it was a picture of Blaise’s family home — a home which Luca had viewed surreptitiously.

David of course took the news of Luca with characteristic disgust at his father’s foul behaviour.

"I feel it’s all so vulgar - and everything’s sort of spoilt forever." 76

Again, David who “in his youthful fastidious chastity was outraged and ashamed” 77 said to his mother.

"Tell him to get rid of these people somehow. He can give them an annuity or something can’t he? I will not have these people in my life." 78

In Henry and Cato Murdoch has dealt with the problems of and causes of the neurotic and delinquent child. Henry is neurotic and untrustworthy. For no reason at all, Henry told others, he hated his elder, kinder brother, Sandy. Perhaps unconsciously the hatred arose from a feeling of being neglected by his mother, Gerda. Gerda’s and everyone else’s favourite was Sandy or Alexander.

Gerda tells Henry after Sandy’s accidental death on his Yatch, “I couldn’t deal with both you and him. Sandy was all

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76 SPLM. 133.
77 SPLM. 132.
78 SPLM. 133.
right ... You were demanding then, you were terribly hostile. A child's hostility can hurt too. I couldn't reach you. I had my own fight, and my own tears ..."79

Later when Collette marries Henry, he thinks, : "I ought not to have married ... I shall have to play the role of a happy husband and the loving son and one day I suppose God help me, the responsible father forever and ever now ..."80

Soon after that Collette says:
"I think I'm pregnant."
"Oh no! Oh God!"81 Henry exclaims.

The incident of Beautiful Joe, a young boy of seventeen involving Cato, a homosexual priest, also shows Murdoch's insight into adolescent behaviour and their reactions to various characters like, Cato, or Collette.

"Beautiful Joe caught Cato's attention early on as a picturesque and interesting phenomenon ..."82

"Cato had never for a second thought of himself as a

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79. Iris Murdoch, Henry and Cato 301-302. Subsequently cited as HC.
80. HC. 360.
81. HC. 361.
82. HC. 40.
homosexual. He had felt no strong emotions about other boys at school.\textsuperscript{83}

"Of course he loved Joe ... How terribly he loved Joe only dawned upon him gradually. Visiting Brendan he said, 'I think I've fallen in love with one of those boys...'.\textsuperscript{84}

"Of course, these thoughts were mad, as he recognized when he next talked to Joe, seeing now no demon, but the confused silly vulnerable boy, the boy who depended on him and needed him, the boy whom only he could reach.\textsuperscript{85}

We find that Michael Meade in \textit{The Bell}, and Cato in \textit{Henry and Cato} are both priests in love with young youthful, adolescent boys. "In both novels Murdoch explores the labyrinth of sexuality and spirituality whose subtle interactions are so confusing and often so damaging. Her choice of homosexuality in both books is interesting in that it is the mode of sexuality which has been questioned and largely disapproved of in the Christian tradition, and about which much guilt can accumulate."\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{83}HC. 40.
\textsuperscript{84}HC. 42.
\textsuperscript{85}HC. 43.
\textsuperscript{86}WS. 243.
In both novels, there is a saintly character who comments on the problem of homosexuality. James Tayer Pace in *The Bell* disapproves of homosexuality simply and outrightly. He is deeply shocked when young Toby Gash goes and confesses his slight flirtation with Michael, the adult priest. In *Henry and Cato*, Brendan Craddock, the Roman Catholic priest, "quickly perceives the nature of the relationship between his fellow priest, Cato, and the clever delinquent boy called Beautiful Joe ... he does not assume that Cato's homosexual longings are blameworthy or unusual." 87

In *The Bell*, Nick Fawley, committed suicide. As a school boy of fourteen, he had confessed to and terminated a passionate homosexual relationship with Michael Meade, who was then teaching at his school. Murdoc in *Henry and Cato* names the second part of the novel, 'The Great Teacher' — and the teacher is death. In the novel *Henry and Cato*, the youth Beautiful Joe is killed unknowingly by Cato when he attacks Collette with a knife and tries to overpower her. Nick Fawley in *The Bell* shoots himself. In *An Accidental Man*, a delinquent little girl, existing only in letter-writing sequences, — Henrietta Sayce — falls to her death, towards the end of the novel, from some scaffolding.

87 *WS. 244.*
In *The Sea, The Sea*, Hartley's adopted son Titus, who had been missing for two years, reappears. He visits Charles, who fails to warn him of the dangers of the sea, and Titus is drowned.

Iris Murdoch has given serious thought to understanding modern characters and the problems facing them. In her fiction, she has thought deeply about the practice and power of love and its place in the pursuit of goodness. These issues express the dilemmas and the questions with which Murdoch continued to struggle in her novels of 1960s and 1970s.

Murdoch's novels attempt to portray the truth of human life, its complexity and unpredictability. Thus her novels deal with the contingent, man's moral development and emotional maturity. Her novels centre around the emotion of love, through which she measures the emotional maturity of a character. There is truth and deep insight as she depicts the youth and adolescent and deals with these characters in a realistic manner.