THE USE OF ALLUSIONS
IN SOME NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

by

Winifred Entwistle

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of English
McGill University
Montreal

August 1974

ABSTRACT

THE USE OF ALLUSIONS IN

SOME NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

by

Winifred Entwistle

Department of English

Master of Arts

This research involves a detailed study of four novels of Iris Murdoch in the context of her own philosophical writing, criticism of her work and relevant background texts dealing with myth and legend.

Miss Murdoch is a philosopher, teacher and novelist currenfly developing a unique style as a form of literary entertainment, and she has become an intriguing problem for the critic. Since 1950, in addition to sixteen novels she has published many articles (based mainly on her own moral philosophy) which develop theories about modern fiction. These theories, along with a remarkably extensive background of material selected from literary classics, myths, legends and biographies, have been woven into her novels and have led to many surprising and complicated elements in her fiction. My thesis examines the relevance of this wide range of allusive material in her novels.

RÉSUMÉ

THE USE OF ALLUSIONS IN

SOME NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

by

Winifred Entwistle

Department of English

Master of Arts

Ces recherches entraînent une étude en détail de quatre romans d'Iris Murdoch dans le contexte de ses écrits philosophiques, de la critique de ses oeuvres et des textes qui se rapportent au mythe et aux origines légendaires.

Mlle. Murdoch est philosophe, professeur et romancière qui à l'heure actuelle développe un style unique en tant que divertissement littéraire ce qui l'a rendue problématique et intriguante pour le critique. Depuis 1950, en plus de seize romans, elle a publié beaucoup d'articles de revue (basés principalement sur sa philosophie morale) fournissant des théories à propos du roman moderne. Ces théories avec une quantité de sujets approfondis choisis de classiques littéraires, de mythes, de fables et de biographies se distinguent dans ses romans, les rendant surprenants et compliqués. Ma thèse examine la pertinence des allusions mythiques et légendaires dans ses romans.

CONTENTS

Introduction

> "Every year the critics revive the argument of whether her fiction is erratic ladies' magazine calibre or genuinely first-rate, whether she is a philosopher addicted to slightly old-fashioned narrative or an authentic intellectual novelist."[1]

The student of Iris Murdoch's work is aware of two facts. She is by profession a philosopher who has also written literary criticism. Since the publication of Under the Net in 1954, she has also written fifteen other widely reviewed novels. Of the latter Miss Murdoch herself feels that they would be lacking as works of fiction if they became simply media for the expression of her philosophic ideas. However, the philosophical allusions in her novels are inescapable and she is sometimes preoccupied with technical philosophical problems as in The Silencer, Jake's philosophical dialogue in Under the Net.

Alongside the philosophical allusions one finds a vast background of material drawn from classical antiquity, from ancient and modern legend and myth, and from a variety of literary and scientific disciplines. Iris Murdoch is clearly a writer of broad general culture in both a literary and an anthropological sense. Evidently, she is not simply concerned with narrow technical problems of philosophy. If, however, one conceives of a philosopher as a lover of wisdom, then Iris Murdoch by training a philosopher, by education richly cultured, and by choice a writer of fiction, is in pursuit of wisdom in her novels.

Speaking through the Editor's Foreward to The Black Prince, she observes: "What follows is in its essence as well as in its contour a love story. I mean that it is deeply as well as superficially so. Man's

creative struggle, his search for wisdom and truth is a love story."[2] Thus wisdom and truth are not only the by-products but the motive of the creator of tales. "What follows is sometimes ambiguous and sometimes tortuously told. Man's searchings and his strugglings are ambiguous and vowed to hidden ways."[3] Thus, allusion, a form of indirection, may prove the straightest path to wisdom and truth. In this Foreward, Iris Murdoch, in the person of the Editor, also hints that she herself is "a sort of impressario";[4] this suggests a concern for entertainment as well as instruction. And it is possible to enjoy the novels as tales well told without having access to either the philosophical or the other allusions she employs.

Hence, it is clear that the novels function at two levels; as works with a message intended to promote reflection upon the human condition; and as stories, often comic, intended to entertain. As she concludes in the Editor's Postscript to The Black Prince, "Art is Adventure Stories."[5] In having this dual purpose, Miss Murdoch bears comparison with writers of fables like Aesop; she has, in fact, been described as a modern fabulator.[6]

As she recognises in the passage quoted above, her tales are often "ambiguous and sometimes tortuously told" a consequence of man's quest for meaning being itself "ambiguous and vowed to hidden ways." The question which arises for many of her critics[7] is how far the tales are unnecessarily and self-consciously complicated for either her philosophical or narrative purposes.

This thesis is an attempt to throw some light on this problem

by examining how Miss Murdoch's use of allusion works towards this dual purpose of illuminating man's search for "wisdom and truth" within the framework of entertaining fiction. Four novels have been chosen for examination, Under the Net, The Flight from the Enchanter, A Severed Head, and The Unicorn. Her first novel, Under the Net closely followed publication of her philosophical examination of the work of Sartre. It is perhaps her most obviously philosophical novel, partly because it was written in the period when she was establishing herself as an academic philosopher. Moreover, as a first novel, it is a pointer to the genre she proposes to adopt as a writer of fiction. The Flight from the Enchanter, A Severed Head and The Unicorn were chosen because of the patently allusive nature of their titles. They also contain significant philosophical allusion. Taken together, the four constitute an approach to the use of allusion in the novels of Iris Murdoch.

Footnotes to Introduction

Robert Detweiler, "Iris Murdoch's 'The Unicorn,'" Religious Dimensions in Literature, ed. Lea A. Bedford (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), p. 5.

2 Iris Murdoch, The Black Prince (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. ix.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 365.

6 Robert Scholes, The Fabulators (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 11-15.

7 Annonymous, "Fable Mates," Times Literary Supplement 6 September, 1963, p. 669. Hereafter cited as "Fable Mates".

CHAPTER I

Under the Net

Under the Net, Iris Murdoch's first novel, concerns the adventures of Jake Donaghue and his two quests; one is for an understanding of his relationship with Hugo Belfounder, "The Silencer", the other is for Anna Quentin, a former ballad singer. Anna's recently acquired interest in mime along with the theory of silence in art—since singing like speech is "corrupt"[1]—echoes Hugo's philosophy that "The whole language is a machine for making falsehoods " (p.60). At the conclusion, Jake, who has been disappointed in both quests, has nevertheless discovered much more about art and reality. Life cannot be lived according to a rigid philosophical rule; his own limitations both as an artist and a person become clear to him. Miss Murdoch's quotation from Dryden's The Secular Masque before the title page of her novel:

> 'Tis well an Old Age is out,
> And time to begin anew,

is an apt commentary on Jake's career. After a series of misapprehensions and fantastic predicaments--often comic--he finally realises that he must make a fresh start in the business of living.

Iris Murdoch states: "In real life the fantastic and the ordinary, the plain and the symbolic, are often indissolubly joined together, and I think the best novels explore and exhibit life without disjoining them."[2] This assumption is apparent in all her novels; it is particularly true of The Unicorn with its allusions to mythical creatures and fairy tales, of A Severed Head with its Medusa associations, and of Under the Net with the Jake/Aeneas and Hugo/Wittgenstein connections.

All her novels are rich in allusive details and this use of allusion is one of the devices employed in the building of characters.

The allusions in Under the Net stem from classical legend, astronomy, modern philosophy and the author's personal background. Iris Murdoch's method of interweaving these allusions among the characters, results in a work which can be enjoyed on several levels of appreciation; it also yields interesting and significant comments on the characterisation itself. The novel is dedicated to Raymond Queneau, a master of comic situations, whose influence is also discernible.

The classical/astral references which appear throughout the book are noteworthy in the first chapter where Jake and his boon companion, Finn, discover that they are homeless, having been thrown out of Madge's appartment to accommodate her liaison with Samuel Starfield, a business magnate. The name "Starfield" has obvious, celestial affinity as has Jake's knowing reference to "Sacred Sammy the diamond bookmaker" (p. 14). Jupiter, the pleasure-loving ruler of gods and men, is also the largest of the planets; as prince of light, white is the colour which is associated with him.[3] While Sammy's name is also "in lights" (p. 14) as a successful bookmaker, his interests extend to other areas in the entertainment world. Jake is enviously aware of Sammy's reputation: "Starfield now did a bit of everything in those regions where his tastes and his money could take him; women's clothes, night clubs, the film business, the restaurant business" (p. 14).

The reference to "women's clothes" and "the film business" suggest Sammy's simultaneous relationships with Madge, whose mode of dressing has suddenly become more expensive, and with Sadie, who is

striving for stardom; they also hint at the philandering of Jupiter. Sammy apparently resembles the god in this respect, for Jake cynically describes his tastes as "exotic and far from matrimonial" (p. 14). Sammy has obviously exerted considerable personal influence on Madge whom he is transforming, according to Jake, into "a symbol of conspicuous wealth" (p. 14), recalling Jupiter's visit to Danaë disguised in a shower of gold. Jake himself refers to Madge's "metamorphosis" (p. 12) when he notices the remarkable change in her outward appearance. When Madge announces the name of the person who has seduced her affections from Jake, she does so with a sense of achievement and pride: "'His name is Starfield. You may have heard of him.' A triumphant look blazed without shame in her eye" (p. 14). The young women seduced by Jupiter were honoured in producing the god's offspring. While it is actually the god who undergoes metamorphosis in the Danaë legend and elsewhere, in order to dominate the woman, nevertheless, in both legend and novel, the woman also undergoes a physical change or evolution. In the legend she becomes pregnant; in the novel she develops a more elegant, sophisticated appearance. In both legend and novel the powerful, unseen presence is evident. Iris Murdoch in extending the idea of metamorphosis to include both participants, reveals an instance of the way in which she manipulates her allusive source in the interests of her novel.

Jake's initial truculence is allayed by Sammy's explosions of paternal geniality in Chapter five; he even begins to admire the latter's nerve and financial wizardry in the electric atmosphere of the betting scene. However, Sammy's powers over Madge, Sadie and indirectly over Jake, are not lasting; in fact, he is eventually outwitted by Jake who steals Mr. Mars from him and by Madge who finds herself a new protector.

His Olympian status thus diminished, he later degenerates into a tin god, the colour white also designating tin or white metal in later, medieval alchemy.[4] Sammy's character has therefore little depth on subsequent analysis of allusive associations. Iris Murdoch does, however, succeed in making him an intriguing and ambiguous character for Jake in their primary encounter.

It must be emphasised at this point that the Sammy/Jupiter allusion is in no way to be connected with the influence exercised by Jupiter as the symbol of divine purpose in the Aeneid. Sammy's exploits represent the less commendable aspect of the deity; while they afford good entertainment, they are indicative of the abuse of power. This is a further instance of Iris Murdoch's eclectic use of allusive material to promote character portrayal. Nevertheless, Sammy's initial manipulation of Madge's affairs makes an abrupt psychological impact on the life styles of both Jake and herself. Consequently, Jake is rudely shaken out of his parasitic way of life and in his mere quest for alternative accommodation, he becomes inevitably concerned in the immeasurably greater quest for self-realisation.

Other astral allusions occur in chapter eight which also hint at stellar influences hovering over Jake and his relationship with other characters. On the occasion when Jake in a pleasant state of inebriation is enjoying himself with his friends in the ruined nave of the Church of St. Leonard Foster, he is twice associated with Orion the mighty hunter who is always defeated by cunning. Jake concentrates on the constellation of "Orion rising through a forest of grass" (p. 103) and when unable to think of an adequate reason for not meeting Lefty at some future date to discuss his

career, he observes: "Orion was putting his foot in my eye" (p. 104). This temporary "blackout" is reminiscent of Orion's being blinded by Oenopion whilst under the influence of the wine sent by Dionysus. Jake is completely unaware of the fact that when Lefty discusses money and the move to the new party headquarters next morning, it is the Mime Theatre that NISP is taking over. Orion was informed by an oracle that his sight would be restored if he sailed east and turned his eye sockets "towards Helius at the point where he first rises from Ocean."[5] A dawn revelation also awaits Jake: Dave produces a belated message from Anna urgently desiring to see Jake at the Mime Theatre. On his arrival she has disappeared and the silence of the Mime Theatre has been shattered forever. Throughout this chapter there is a humorous blending of Christian and pagan elements. Lusty Orion overlooks the tipsy revellers in the ruins of a Christian church, there is a baptismal swim in the Thames under a sky cascading with stars" (p. 106) for all except Dave who is Jewish; as dawn comes, Jake thinks he can hear the bells of six churches ringing. The author's emphasis on bells and stars may well be no more than an amusing commentary on the befuddled state of Jake and his companions; it nevertheless exemplifies yet again Miss Murdoch's eclectic use of allusive sources.

There are more references to the word "star" and its various connotations. As Jake reflects on the personalities of Sadie and Anna, he concludes that a film star is a curious phenomenon. Of their different contributions to their singing act he observes: "Anna provided the voice and Sadie provided the flash. . . . Sadie had éclat. . . . Sadie is glossy and dazzling" (pp. 29-30). Several times Jake describes Anna's beautiful singing voice; in fact he is reminded of her by her singing at

the end. It is Sadie, however, who though less gifted, supplies the surface glamour in their act which attracts popular taste.

The word éclat appears again with reference to Hugo's set pieces in which he was concerned to combine "éclat with duration" (p. 54). The word here, used in its literal sense, refers to the vivid colours of the fireworks. Hugo's rockets are used in the July 14 firework display in Paris where Jake describes the opening display as "the first constellation" (p. 189). As the girl Jake mistakes for Anna sat gazing skywards, "a stream of stars fell from the sky into her lap" (p. 191). When a spent rocket simultaneously fell at Jake's feet bearing the name "Belfounder", his tendency to jump to conclusions may well cause him to turn a coincidence into a portentous sign of Hugo's influence hovering threateningly over both Anna and himself.

The stellar influences, on account of this ironic relationship with the supernatural at work in human affairs, are a suitable accompaniment to the second group of classical allusions derived mainly from the Aeneid where Aeneas, son of Venus, and his exploits, are constantly under divine surveillance. In Jupiter's conversation with Venus in the Aeneid concerning the fate of Aeneas, he first announces that he will exalt Aeneas "Even to the starry skies" and then emphasises the starry nature of Aeneas' quest by stating that Julius Caesar "from the fair seed of Troy" will rule an empire stretching to the ocean's limits "whose fame shall end in the stars".[6]

The prophecy of Jupiter concerning Aeneas' destiny links him with Jake who is also engaged in a quest and who frequently expresses the idea that his fate will be decided for him. Refusing Dido's offer of

marriage, Aeneas observes:

> If fate allowed me to be my own master, and gave me
> Free will to choose my way of life, to solve my problems,
> Old Troy would be my first choice.[7]

While Aeneas' destiny is to found the Roman race, not rebuild Troy, the hypothetical "If" in the quotation clearly indicates his awareness of the power of fate in his life. Jake, too, spurns Madge's advances in Paris by appeal to the vision of his own destiny "which had imposed itself upon me as a command" (p. 184). Jake further states that his consolation lies "in a dreadful fatalism" (p.66) when he experiences feelings of guilt at publishing The Silencer without Hugo's knowledge. Both Jake and Aeneas are instruments of a divine intention. Aeneas is informed by Creusa's ghost that the circumstances contributing to his exile are "part of a divine purpose".[8] Jake's certainty that he will eventually be reunited with Hugo comes from the conviction that "Whatever god had arranged for me and Hugo to have deeply to do with one another would not leave his work unfinished" (p. 208). And, planning to visit Hugo in hospital, he senses that "It was as if from his bed in the hospital, Hugo were holding the end of a cord to which I was attached and from time to time I could feel it twitching" (p. 215).

Grim sequences from the sacking of Troy form the basis for tragi-comic and comic episodes; one of these is the van episode at the Mime Theatre. During his search for Anna, Jake returns to the Mime Theatre only to find that all her properties have been packed in a waiting removal van. As he rummages through its contents, the van moves off; like the Greeks "in the hollow womb"[9] of the wooden horse, he is caught "in the belly of the vehicle" (p. 111) with the stuffed snake,

Anna's coronet, the rocking horse, and the thunder sheet.

This scene with its stage properties is reminiscent of the Trojan Horse episode in the Aeneid. Sinon advises the Trojans to bring the wooden horse within their walls to appease Minerva whose sanctuary has been desecrated by Ulysses even to the seizure of her virginal headband. The headband and the coronet express the identities of Minerva and Anna respectively. Anna's sanctuary has in a sense been desecrated by the invasion of the removal men and NISP. Jake resembles both Sinon and the Greeks inside the horse. He, like Sinon, has arrived on the scene dishevelled and bleeding; his shaking of the thunder sheet as he leaps from the vehicle gives off "the uncanny sound" which makes passers-by "stop to stare and listen" (p. 112), an allusion to the eerie metallic ring given off by the impact of Laocoon's spear on the wooden horse's side. Shortly after this, Laocoon and his sons are devoured by twin snakes.

Jake's resemblance to the Sinon/Greek element is evident only in his dishevelled appearance and his concealment. He is not actually a betrayer though he has arrived too late to be of any assistance to Anna; neither has there been intentional betrayal by Lefty who has taken over the theatre premises in ignorance of the relationship existing between Jake and Anna. This is simply another instance of the workings of fate. At any rate, Jake's impulsive brandishing of the thunder sheet which he had longed to do on his previous visit to the theatre, provides a comic episode quite in keeping with his irresponsible behaviour the previous evening. It is followed by another even funnier incident when Jake visits the film studio. The fight on the set is similar to that within

the walls of Troy and Jake leaves the "battlefield" carrying the obliging dog Mars on his shoulders as Aeneas carried his old father from Troy. Jake's ingenious escape from a potentially embarrassing situation is in flippant contrast to the tragic circumstances in which Aeneas is forced to flee from his native land.

Jake's desperate search for Anna in the thronged Tuileries Gardens on Bastille Day, a grim reminder of bloodshed and terror, resembles that made by Aeneas for his wife, Creusa, in the streets of burning Troy. Jake repeatedly calls Anna's name, as Aeneas did Creusa's. Both searches prove fruitless; Jake finally confronts a complete stranger, Aeneas only Creusa's ghost. Later at Mrs Tinckham's shop, Jake hears Anna on the radio from Paris, but he never again meets her in the flesh.

In pursuit of his quest, Aeneas visited the gloomy cave of the Cumaean Sibyl to seek advice; Jake goes for comfort to Mrs Tinckham's dusty shop; two elderly ladies giving advice to two young men. There is a parallel between Mrs Tinckham with her Amazing Stories (p. 15) which nobody wants to buy and the aged Sibyl in her business deal with Tarquin.[10] Iris Murdoch's Sibyl is as mysterious for Jake as the Cumaean one was for Aeneas. It detracts nothing from her appeal that Mrs. Tinckham is a rather sleazy chain smoker; indeed, this compulsive habit only serves to create the impression of "an earth goddess surrounded by incense" (p. 17).

Both Aeneas and Jake are seekers; Aeneas for the site of "an Italian Kingdom, the soil of Rome,"[11] a task which the gods never allow him to forget in spite of his dalliance in the opulence of Carthage with

Dido. The object of Jake's search is more nebulous; like Aeneas he is subjected to mundane temptations exemplified in Madge's lucrative offer and the romantic search for Anna in the fabled setting of Paris. However, though he does not yet realise it, Jake's search is for his own identity. His geographical search for Anna and Hugo finally leads him to an understanding of himself. Anna "faded like a sorcerer's apparition . . . she really existed now as a separate being and not as a part of myself" (p. 238). Of his search for Hugo he concludes: "His very otherness was to be sought not in himself but in myself or Anna. Yet herein he recognised nothing of what he had made. He was a man without claims and without reflections. Why had I pursued him? He had nothing to tell me" (p. 238). Hence, the fact that Jake's search for his friends is unsuccessful—he discovers Hugo only to find that he will lose him again—becomes insignificant. In his search for himself he is ultimately successful.

Marked classical associations are also discernible in the characterisation of Hugo/Wittgenstein; Iris Murdoch blends physical and psychological elements from the Polyphemus legend into his creation. It is significant that while the Aeneas motif is entirely absent from Hugo's make-up, Jake's creation owes nothing to the Cyclops. Thus, while the two characters are linked in their indebtedness to classical sources, the author's method of selection serves to reveal a fundamental difference in their respective characters.

Three salient features about the legendary Polyphemus were his monstrous size, his sight peculiarity and his addiction to solitude. Hugo resembles Polyphemus in the first connection: "He was extremely large,

both stout and tall, with very wide shoulders and enormous hands. His huge head was usually sunk low between his shoulders . . . He had dark, rather matted hair and a big, shapeless mouth which opened every now and then, occasionally emitting a semi-articulate sound" (p. 56). Iris Murdoch makes several other outstanding references to Hugo's size; twice he uses the expression "That's colossal" and is described as "a surfacing whale" in the fracas on the Roman set. These details provide a description of an unusual physical specimem, to which Wittgenstein bears no resemblance whatever. However, if we think of him as an intellectual giant of unusual proportions, then the figurative resemblance is quite clear.

On three occasions Iris Murdoch alludes to Hugo's unusual visual powers. Jake describes how "his brooding gaze traced around the room or across the countryside a line which seemed to be suggested by none of the ordinary objects which lay in his field of vision" (p. 56). When Jake is searching for Anna, he notices the statuary at the Medici fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens and remarks on the "one-eyed gaze of huge, rain-marked, weather-stained, pigeon-spattered dark-green Polyphemus"(p. 186) contemplating the ill-starred lovers, Acis and Galatea.[12] The details of the statuary, stressed in the deliberate listing of compound epithets, suggest a further inclination on Jake's part to sense the ominous influence of Hugo reaching out to destroy his relationship with Anna, as does the discovery of the Belfounder rocket later in the evening. The reference to the weather and pigeon spatterings recalls the scene in Hugo's deserted apartment which has been invaded by the starlings. When Jake and Hugo part company outside the hospital, Jake describes him as "looking

sightlessly at the pavement"(p. 235). From descriptions given by Norman Malcolm, we know that Wittgenstein's eyes were deep and fierce in expression.

The quality of loneliness is shared by Polyphemus, Wittgenstein and Hugo. There are clear references to the isolated life of Wittgenstein in particular and to Hugo's solitary living quarters. Polyphemus lived a life which was unsociable even by Cyclopean standards; Wittgenstein was reputed to be unable to tolerate the society of his academic colleagues. When Jake suggests to Hugo that they meet again before the latter's departure to Nottingham, Hugo is obviously unwilling to prolong their relationship. Jake describes the parting: "He wanted to be rid of me. I wanted to be rid of him" (p. 236). Later when he thinks about Hugo, Jake remarks: "He towered in my mind like a monolith: an unshaped and undivided stone which men before history had set up for some human purpose which would remain forever obscure" (p. 238). Obviously Jake and Hugo are very different personalities; Jake is a creature of cities, waterways and men. Hugo is pictured by Jake as "in some small desolate workshop, holding a watch in his enormous hand" (p. 238) as if he were contemplating the passage of time.

The modern philosophical allusions in the novel are derived mainly from Iris Murdoch's professional interests as a philosopher in the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The philosophy and biography of Wittgenstein contribute a great deal to the development of three male characters in the novel. Amongst linguistic philosophers Wittgenstein stands out not only for his contribution to the development of linguistic philosophy but also for the myths generated by other aspects of his life and character.

To use a cliché, Wittgenstein became a legend in his own lifetime.

As was noted earlier in discussion of the Jupiter theme, Iris Murdoch tends to develop allusive material to meet her literary requirements. Allusions to Wittgenstein's life are discernible in the characterisation of Jake, Dave Gellman and Hugo Belfounder. This parcelling out of material from one genetic source among three people requires examination since one of them, Jake, is the protagonist. An analysis of allusive evidence, as it appears, may help to elucidate Iris Murdoch's purpose.

Though Jake as narrator opens the novel, he shows no traces of Wittgenstein's influence—quite the reverse. We are not conscious of this influence until Jake refers to frustrating discussions with his friend, Dave Gellman, like Wittgenstein a linguistic philosopher, who is seemingly unable to understand Jake's line of argument. As Jake remarks: "With Dave we never seemed to get past the word" (p. 22). Further links soon appear to establish the close professional resemblance between Dave and Wittgenstein. Dave is also of German Jewish origin; his spoken English shows peculiarities in construction such as: "If I would be you" and "Always you are thinking" (p. 26). As a devotee of linguistic philosophy, Dave's concern for exactitude in verbal expression is described by Jake: "It took me some time to realise that when Dave said he didn't understand, what he meant was, that what I said was nonsense" (p. 22). This corresponds to Wittgenstein's statement in the Preface to the Tractatus: "what can be said at all must be said clearly and what we cannot talk about we must consign to silence."[13] The silence theme is later taken up by both Jake and Hugo. Finally, Dave

and Wittgenstein alike appear to have been popular, if earnest, teachers. Dave, therefore, may be thought of as representing the vocational facet of Wittgenstein.

However, it is Jake's relationship with Hugo which provides the leitmotiv of the book, and it is the character of Hugo which has the strongest resemblance to Wittgenstein's as can be seen from Norman Malcom's Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir.[14] Hugo is also of German descent, from a prosperous family. His interests are in film making, music and mechanical devices. His specialty lies in the making of firework displays requiring ingenuity and precision. Jake describes Hugo's delight in "the trigger-like relation of the parts, the contrasting appeal of explosion and colour, the blending of pyrotechnical styles, the methods for combining éclat with duration, the perennial question of the coda. Hugo treated the set piece as if it were a symphony; he despised the vulgarity of representational pieces, 'Fireworks are sui generis', he once said to me. 'If you must compare them to another art, compare them to music!'" (p. 54). At the end of the book, Hugo becomes a watchmaker, a skilled occupation requiring fine mechanical precision.

Although Wittgenstein had no interest in pyrotechnics, his first academic post was in the Department of Engineering at the University of Manchester, where he did research in aeronautics and patented some of his inventions. He also built a mansion in Vienna for one of his sisters; the design was his own work down to the smallest detail and was of a severe and exact beauty, somewhat like his literary style in the philosophical works. He was also a skilled musician and wrote a technical paper on rhythm in music. He would whistle an entire symphony,

pausing only to comment on some technical point.

Hugo and Wittgenstein also share an interest in the cinema. Hugo is a successful producer, one of his stars being Anna Quentin's sister Sadie with whom he is hopelessly in love. Although Wittgenstein's interest in film did not run to making movies, he found the cinema an agreeable relaxation from his exacting philosophical work. He liked Westerns, but his particular favourites were lighthearted stars such as Carmen Miranda and Betty Hutton, both of whom typified the gloss and glamour of light romantic comedy. Neither actress portrayed characters of any depth and the two sisters in the novel, Anna and Sadie, resemble their film counterparts in having a superficial attraction. Sadie is a clever, brittle person, determined to get to the top at all costs. We first encounter her in the frivolous setting of the beauty parlour where the accent is on physical glamour. But neither Sadie nor Anna are seen in dramatic roles, apparently having little talent.

Another of Wittgenstein's interests was in ornithology; he spent a period of his life in a primitive hut on the Galway coast where he became something of a legend because of his skill in training birds. When Jake visits Hugo's apartment he is amazed to see crowds of starlings which have evidently nested on the ledge outside. The birds "were a pretty sight, as they scrambled and fluttered and jostled each other, spreading their serrated wings, framed in each window as if they were part of the decoration of the room" (p. 93). The words "starlet" and "starling" sound similar and the bird motif suggests a crowd of gold-digging females anxious to catch the producer's notice. There is an allusion here both to Wittgenstein's film and ornithological interests. Unlike

Wittgenstein's Galway hut, Hugo's house is only half primitive; it therefore reflects two sides of his nature. Jake and his friends notice that the bedroom, where Hugo feels most at home, is furnished with Spartan simplicity, whereas the other room is luxurious, making "an idle and elegant scene"(p. 92); there are Renoirs on the walls but few books. Unlike Wittgenstein's birds, Hugo's starlings are tame; in this scene, one feels their significance is mainly metaphorical.

In a much later episode when Jake visits Hugo's apartment, the place is deserted except for the starlings and their droppings. At this point the allusive significance recedes: "The room was whirring and disintegrating into a number of black pieces. . . . Hugo's flat seemed already more like an aviary than the abode of a human being" (p. 239). This change in emphasis reflects Hugo's complete loss of interest in film-making; his former home is divested of his personality. At the conclusion of the novel, he gives away all his wealth and goes to live modestly in Nottingham. Wittgenstein also gave away his fortune and died in very modest circumstances.

Hugo resembles Wittgenstein in having a slow, deliberate mode of speech, in his probing questioning, and in his interest in the problems of language. As a linguistic philosopher, Wittgenstein was interested in the ability of language to make sense of experience. "In both periods of his philosophy, his aim was to understand the structure and limits of thought and his method was to study the structure and limits of language . . . Like Kant he believed that philosophers often unwittingly stray beyond the limits into a kind of specious nonsense, that seems to express genuine thoughts but in fact does not do so. He wanted to discover the exact

location of the line dividing sense from nonsense, so that people might realise when they had reached it and stop". More positively, "His purpose was not merely to formulate instructions which would save people from trying to say what cannot be said in language, but also to succeed in understanding the structure of what can be said. He believed that the only way to achieve this understanding is to plot the limits, because the limits and the structure have a common origin. The nature of language dictates both what you can and what you cannot do with it."[15] This intention led Wittgenstein to adopt a style of discussion which was essentially interlocutory and rhetorical: "Why can't a dog simulate pain? Is he too honest?"[16]

Hugo and Wittgenstein have in common this style of philosophising. Hugo who met Jake in the Cold Cure Centre, submits him to close questioning. For example, when Hugo discovers he translates novels from the French, he asks: "What do you mean when you say that you think the meaning in French? How do you know you're thinking in French? If you see a picture in your mind how do you know it's a French picture? Or is it that you say the French word to yourself? What do you see when you see that the translation is exactly right? Are you imagining what someone else would think seeing it for the first time? Or is it a kind of feeling? What kind of feeling? Can't you describe it more closely?" (p. 58). Hugo's resemblance to Wittgenstein initially apparent in his obsessive interest in mechanical precision, obviously extends to his employment of a stringent process of enquiry and a meticulous concern for exactitude in linguistic expression.

Nevertheless, it falls upon Jake to articulate conclusions to these enquiries which bear a strong resemblance in approach to Wittgenstein's. During one of their conversations, Jake and Hugo are led to discuss what it means to describe a feeling or a state of mind:

> "There's something fishy about describing people's feelings," said Hugo. . . . It means that things are falsified from the start. If I say afterwards that I felt such and such, say that I felt 'apprehensive'—well, this just isn't true. . . . I didn't feel this. . . . I didn't feel anything of that kind at the time at all. This is just something I say afterwards. . . . The language just won't let you present it as it really was. . . . All one could say at the time would be perhaps something about one's heart beating. But if one said one was apprehensive this could only be to try to make an impression—it would be for effect, it would be a lie" (pp. 59-60).

Jake replies: "But at this rate almost everything one says, except things like. 'Pass the marmalade' or 'There's a cat on the roof', turns out to be a sort of lie." Hugo is puzzled and agrees. It is Jake who concludes: "In that case, one oughtn't to talk" (p. 60). This conclusion about the ultimate redundancy of language was Wittgenstein's: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."[17] Eventually it is Jake who publishes a development of his conversations with Hugo in a book, The Silencer, a dialogue between Annandine (Hugo) and Tamaris (himself).

The silence motif recurs in the scene where Jake meets Anna in the Mime Theatre which has been financed by Hugo, who also figures as one of the masked characters in the mime. The theatre is completely silent and the players perform noiselessly. Anna tells Jake that she has given up singing because it is "corrupt" and adds: "Only very simple things can be said without falsehood" (p. 43). Jake has the feeling that Anna's words

are not her own, but that she is "in the grip of a theory" (p. 43). Wittgenstein also had a theory that language was distorted by singing, and the idea of the Mime Theatre is explicable in the light of Hugo's remark to Jake in the Cold Cure Centre: "I suppose actions do not lie" (p. 60). When Jake discovers a copy of The Silencer bearing Anna's name, he does not assume that she has derived her ideas from that source, but from personal contact with Hugo. He feels that both the book and Anna's ideas are debased travesties of Hugo's thoughts. Jake is finally beginning to feel a sense of responsibility for his actions; also, his maturing judgement is making him more self-critical. He remarks of The Silencer after re-reading it: "There remained the fact that Annandine was but a broken-down caricature of Hugo. Hugo would never have used words such as 'theory' or 'generality'." I had not achieved more than the most shadowy expression of Hugo's point of view" (p. 81).

The notion of debasement and deception has been palpably evident in Jake's attitude to The Silencer published without the knowledge of Hugo. He describes his feelings: "In fact, I knew in my heart that the creation of this record was a sort of betrayal of everything which I imagined myself to have learnt from Hugo. . . . Indeed, the thing began to have for me the fascination of a secret sin" (p. 62). Jake is so consumed with remorse that he is unable to face Hugo on the day of publication and terminates the relationship which had begun with the philosophical discussions in the Cold Cure Centre. In fact, Hugo did not recognise plagiarism in The Silencer, but Wittgenstein was always enraged by misrepresentation of his views in literary journals.[18]

Wittgenstein's philosophy also supplies the theme from which the title of the novel is drawn. "Miss Murdoch has said that the image of the net of which she was thinking when she wrote the book was that of Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 6.341 . Here Wittgenstein uses the net as a picture of the way in which concepts, ideas, connections of thought can be used to 'bring the description of the universe to a unified form.'"[19] A. S. Byatt comments: "He [Wittgenstein] writes: 'Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots. We can now say: Whatever kind of picture these make, I can always get as near as I like to its description, if I cover the surface with a sufficiently fine square network and now say of every square that it is white or black. In this way, I shall have brought the description of the surface to a unified form.'"[20]

A superficial reading of the novel might suggest that the net is conceived as a trap, a prison from which the characters seek to escape. A number of critics have emphasised this interpretation of the metaphor, assuming that the allusion is to Vulcan's net. A. S. Byatt has noted this interpretation of the novel's significance: "Society is seen as precisely the net which is always coming down to catch us but which has large and coarse meshes that we can easily escape through, if only later to be caught on other, finer meshes."[21] However, an alternative reading of one passage in The Silencer would suggest the reverse of escape: "All theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular. Indeed it is something to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net" (p. 80). Here, creeping under

the net is not a search for freedom; it is an attempt to approach more closely an object which is itself caught up in the net. This is a reference to Wittgenstein's concept of the net as a network of explanatory laws: "Laws like the laws of causation, etc., treat of the network and not of what the network describes".[22] On this view of the net as a network of concepts or ideas, "to crawl under the net" suggests being caught up in the process of theorizing about experience; making sense of experience by pushing language to its limits.

Interestingly, Miss Murdoch's approach to this exploration of the limits of language appears to be the reverse of that arrived at by Jake and Hugo in their conversations reported in The Silencer. For them the limits of language are reached in mundane breakfast table conversation about the marmalade. But writing of another linguistic philosopher, Gilbert Ryle, she comments: "The 'world' of The Concept of Mind is the world in which people play cricket, cook cakes, make simple decisions, remember their childhood and go to the circus; not the world in which they commit sins, fall in love, say prayers or join the Communist Party."[23] Miss Murdoch's world and Jake's world is clearly the latter; Hugo's the former. Hugo's world is Ryle's and Wittgenstein's world. Despite the range of interests in the lives of Hugo and Wittgenstein, these are pursued mechanically and precisely, with attention to the sort of concrete detail which characterises our thinking about cricket, cookery and visits to the circus. This is the essential difference between Hugo and Jake. Jake describes his friend: "But it was as if his very mode of being revealed to me how hopelessly my own vision of the world was blurred by generality. I felt like a man who, having vaguely thought that flowers are all much the same, goes for a walk with a botanist. Only this simile

doesn't fit Hugo either, for a botanist not only notices details but classifies. Hugo only noticed details. He never classified" (p. 61). Jake concludes: "Hugo suggested that I should come and live with him, but some instinct of independence forbade this. I felt that Hugo's personality could very easily swallow mine up completely, and much as I admired him, I didn't want this to happen" (p. 61).

Eventually, Hugo rejects his pyrotechnical and dramatic interests for the life of a watchmaker. His interest in fireworks has been purely that of an engineer. A firework was "an honest thing. . . . No one talks cant about fireworks. . . . They were even exported to America. Then the newspapers began to talk, and to refer to them as works of art, and to classify them into styles" (pp. 54-5). The vulgarising of his skill in this way disgusts him; he refers to both the manufacture of fireworks and film-making as a "racket" (p. 223). Hugo had a need to "travel light" (p. 223); obviously the human complications brought on by wealth and success were an obstacle to understanding things.

Iris Murdoch's purposeful eclecticism in references from philosophical sources other than Wittgenatein throws further light on Jake's character. Marxist theories, perhaps from her own personal experiences of politics, are noticeable in Lefty's attempts to organize and exploit Jake's literary talents as a party worker for NISP. The fact that Jake does not follow the suggestion to write propagandist plays for the West End is a mark of his individualism and his unwillingness as man and writer to commit himself exclusively to one particular dogma. As he tells Lefty: "Ideas occur to individuals. That's always the trouble with the human race" (p. 100). Dave Gellman expresses these ideas of

service to the community from another aspect in his advice to Jake to get a job and become a useful member of society: "Society should take you by the neck and shake you and make you do a sensible job. Then in your evenings you would have the possibility to write a great book" (p. 28). Jake eventually does get a job in a hospital and finally decides to write down his own ideas instead of translations of other authors. Jake is not an unquestioning follower of any one political doctrine or creed; it so happens that the Marxist emphasis on work organization is just what he needs to give him orientation. It does not appear that Iris Murdoch intended to treat the political approach too seriously; Jake receives a letter from Lefty at Mrs. Tinckham's expressing a wish to renew their association in which he is reported as saying: "after all, life wasn't entirely a matter of politics, was it?" (p. 246). Jake concludes: "I got a good impression from this letter; and though I doubted whether Lefty really entertained the final statement, I felt that here I had to do with a man" (p. 246). Jake obviously appreciates Lefty as a sociable human being; his opinion of Lefty contrasts sharply with his remarks about Hugo's monolithic quality and his conclusions that the latter "had nothing to tell me" (p. 238).

Under the Net, was published in 1954 one year after the completion of her critical work, Sartre: Romantic Rationalist. While Iris Murdoch's primary interest in Sartre was as a philosopher, Jake, as he appears at the beginning of the novel, resembles self-involved characters in Sartre's novels, particularly Antoine Roquentin, the hero of La Nausée. Jake makes this self-revelatory statement about his friend, Finn, with whom he has lived on close terms and who has often shared his vicissitudes: "I count Finn as an inhabitant of my universe, and cannot conceive that he has one

containing me" (p. 9). Like Roquentin, Jake has a horror of contingency which is noticeable in the approaches to Dave's house and in the vicinity of Hugo's film studio. Of the studio he says: "The Bounty Belfounder Studio is situated in a suburb of Southern London where contingency reaches the point of nausea" (p. 139). Roquentin contemplates a pebble on the sea-shore and a curious sickly horror or nausea overcomes him.[24] Similar experiences follow and he is beset by a fear of objects; both Jake and Roquentin have this detestation of "swooning abundance".[25]

Roquentin is employed on a piece of biographical work, which does not really necessitate originality. One day after he has abandoned this in disgust, he listens to a rendering of a popular song, Some of These Days, in a café. The beauty in the sequence of the notes makes him feel that both the singer and the composer are cleansed of the sin of degenerate existence because they have created something worth-while. In his turn, Roquentin feels the need to create something—a novel, the hard work involved and the beauty of his creation, will enable him to recall his past superfluity without disgust.

Jake also finally decides to abandon translations and take up creative writing. In the closing pages of the novel while at Mrs Tinckham's, he hears Anna's beautiful voice over the radio singing an old French love song. Though he is enchanted by "the splendour of the husky gold" (p. 251) in her voice, he tells Mrs Tinckham to switch off, informing her that he is going to get a job. Like Sartre's hero, Jake has decided to change his life style.

As already stated, the novel is dedicated to Raymond Queneau the author of Pierrot Mon Ami which also has an immature and irresponsible hero. Jake's association with the animal Mars, his absurd predicaments on Sadie's fire escape and with Hugo at the hospital are all reminiscent in spirit of Queneau's story. These along with the humorous treatment by Iris Murdoch of the more serious classical sources in the removal van scene and the fight on the Roman set, for instance, emphasise the fact that she intended her work to be entertaining as well as instructive.

References have been made throughout this chapter to the manipulation of allusions on the author's part. If one supposes each allusion to signify one personality facet, then it becomes apparent that some characters are more generously endowed than others. Sammy, for instance, has the shallow external qualities of Jupiter, none of the divine attributes. Dave shows us Wittgenstein's linguistic analysis and a hint of Marxist sympathies. This combination makes him a stable person who always gives Jake honest, sensible and ultimately beneficial advice despite his utilitarian approach and his cold dissection of Jake's problems. Hugo is overburdened with Wittgenstein's eccentric biographical material, his complicated thought process and his preference for social isolation, the last of which is re-emphasised by the Polyphemus allusion. The Polyphemus allusion, which also highlights the physical absurdities of Hugo, gives him an air of buffoonery; at other times, as for instance, when Jake refers to Hugo's 'sightless' glance as the two leave the hospital, we are again made aware of Hugo's social limitations. Not surprisingly he is described by the fashionable and shallow Sadie as "the most frightful man" (p. 52).

The Aeneas influences in Jake are basically essential in a questing adventurer like himself; he is a compulsive searcher. For example, when he once feels the urge to find someone or something, he is in a feverish state of impatience until his task is accomplished. When he eventually discovers Anna's whereabouts at the Mime Theatre, he describes how with pounding heart, he "ran all the way to Leicester Square station" (p. 33), an indication that Jake is rather highly strung and apprehensive. Though he is "thoroughly obsessed by the idea of going to Paris" (p. 165) in his final search for Anna, he takes the night ferry not merely to save money but because he is nervous of air travel (p. 166). This fact does not separate Jake from Aeneas who was also made constantly aware of physical dangers during the course of his wanderings. Jake like Aeneas accepts the sea; he is more at ease with water as his swimming prowess and his excursions near the Thames and the Seine demonstrate.

Jake and Aeneas are always expecting things to happen and both are "moved on by destiny".[26] Neither hero reaches his objective until he has passed through a series of purgatorial adventures and apparent digressions from the main purpose. Whereas the trials of Aeneas are more physical in nature, Jake's emotional embroilments with his friends and acquaintances serve as correctives to deepen his self knowledge until he finally senses his true purpose in life.

The Wittgenstein connection is clearly seen in the way Iris Murdoch chooses Jake, not Hugo, to record the ideas in The Silencer. The fact that Jake does this in an imaginative way, fills him with guilt at the time and also recalls Wittgenstein's anger at the misrepresentation

of his views in literary journals. The hospital orderly post is Jake's first honest attempt to find stable employment; it is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's period of service as a hospital worker. Because of this action Jake gains a clearer insight and a sense of dedication which leads to his ultimate salvation. He states: "At some time in the future, I decided, I would arrange the work, whether here or elsewhere, only half-time. Then in the other half of the day I might do some writing. It occurred to me that to spend half the day doing manual work might be very calming to the nerves of one who was spending the other half doing intellectual work" (p. 209).

Comic influences mainly from Queneau which characterise Jake's boyish conduct before he finally matures, are apparent in his display of excessive care and attention to detail in ludicrous acts such as the painstaking arrangements for the theft of Mars' cage from Sammy's apartment and the absurdities at the Post Office. Mock-heroic episodes like the van scene and the Roman set disturbance not only show Jake in riotous contrast to his classical counterparts but serve to "convey the sameness between antiquity and today."[27] "Iris Murdoch's mythologising is directed to the universal and the basically human. The human limits and situations governing man's attempts to discover freedom, she believes, remain the same through all ages."[28]

Thus Under the Net functions at two levels, as an adventure story and as a philosophical novel. The legendary, mythical, and other allusions are clearly necessary to Miss Murdoch's purpose at the philosophical level. The allusive material working through the characters' thought process leads to a peculiar sequence of events.

Hence, allusions, characters and narrative are interrelated; each reinforces the others which results in a fuller and richer appreciation of the novel.

Footnotes to Chapter I Under the Net

1 Iris Murdoch, Under the Net (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 43. Hereafter cited as Under the Net. All quotations from Under the Net are taken from this edition and hereafter cited in the text.

2 Ann Culley, "Theory and Practice: Characterisation in the Novels of Iris Murdoch", Modern Fiction Studies: A Critical Quarterly, Lafayette, Indiana: The Purdue University Department of English, 15, No. 3. (Autumn 1969), pp. 344-5.

3 E. Cobham Brewer, A Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (London Cassell and Co. 1952), p. 621. Hereafter cited as "Brewer".

4 Brewer, p. 621.

5 Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), I 151.

6 C. D. Lewis trans., The Aeneid of Virgil (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1953) I 260.

7 Ibid., IV 41-43.

8 Ibid., II 77-8.

9 Ibid., II 52.

10 Brewer p. 997

11 Aeneid IV 276

12 Brewer, p. 10

13 Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1922). Hereafter cited as Tractatus.

14 Norman Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir with a Biographical Sketch by Georg Henrik von Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1958). All biographical details relative to Wittgenstein in the thesis are taken from this work, hereafter cited as Ludwig Wittgenstein.

15 David Pears, Wittgenstein (London: Fontana/Collins, 1971), p. 12.

16 Ludwig Wittgenstein p. 29.

17 Tractatus Section VII p. 189.

18 Ludwig Wittgenstein, pp. 58-9.

19 A. S. Byatt, Degrees of Freedom (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 15. Hereafter cited as Degrees of Freedom.

20 Ibid., p. 16.

21 Ibid., p. 14.

22 Ibid., p. 16.

23 Ibid., p. 28.

24 Jean-Paul Sartre, La Nausée (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1938), p. 12.

25 Iris Murdoch, Sartre: Romantic Rationalist (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 3.

26 Aeneid I 32.

27 Peter Wolfe, The Disciplined Heart: Iris Murdoch and her Novels (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966), p. 58. Hereafter cited as The Disciplined Heart.

28 Ibid., p. 59.

CHAPTER II

The Flight from the Enchanter

The characters in The Flight from the Enchanter, Iris Murdoch's second novel, are from widely varied walks of life which results in a richer and broader social panorama than in any of her other novels. This impression is further enhanced by Iris Murdoch's withdrawal from the first person narrative used in Under the Net where details and events tend to be more coloured by the narrator's vision of them.

The main theme is the search for human freedom, both social and personal; unlike Jake in Under the Net, whose quest consists in overcoming obstacles that are largely within himself, the different characters here encounter many external difficulties—some insurmountable—in their search for freedom. The quest for social freedom forms the background for events connected with the lives of terrified refugees who in diverse ways have escaped from Hitler's Europe to find asylum in England. An organization known as SELIB enables them to acquire work permits to eke out a living; what it cannot provide is emotional security and peace of mind. Personal freedom is also linked with social freedom in the sense that while the body may be free, the mind is not necessarily so. During the course of the novel these two freedom themes are often interwoven but in every case there is engendered a feeling of stress in order to escape from the presence of some restrictive force; the novel's title reveals this force to be enchantment, personified in the figure of Mischa Fox.

As in such later novels as The Unicorn and A Severed Head, there is a circle of characters revolving round the central figure of power, though Mischa Fox, who is the last character to make his appearance, is

far more remote and less frequently in evidence than is Hannah Crean-Smith or Honor Klein. Iris Murdoch's second novel provides an interesting contrast in that other characters indulge in highly critical discussions concerning each other and particularly the main character himself.[1] This serves a dual purpose; while it affords a many-faceted view of the person discussed, it also proves self-revelatory. As in the case of Honor Klein, references by other characters are of such a nature as to suggest an unusual personality; Mischa, though infinitely more subtle, resembles his predecessor Sammy Starfield in Under the Net, in that he is a business man and also a press lord who uses unscrupulous methods to gain his ends. His whereabouts are usually unknown while his unexpected visitations invariably portend embarrassment for his hosts. When he arrives in England determined to acquire the ownership of an obscure but independent periodical, the Artemis, Rosa Keepe, sister of the editor, finds ominous this project by the man she has formerly refused to marry.

Mischa's aura of power is emphasised when John Rainborough is discussing his arrival before he is aware of Rosa's knowledge of it: "She might miss it in the papers, and after all, the heavens don't turn red when Mischa Fox lands; comets don't burn in the sky, whatever some people may think" (p. 30). Rosa's remark to Rainborough and Peter Saward sums up Mischa's attitude towards people: "The Artemis is a little independent thing. . . . Perhaps the sight of a little independent thing annoys Mischa. It's like the instinct to catch fish or butterflies. To feel the thing struggling in your grasp" (p. 53).

The pervasive sense of Mischa's power is enhanced by Iris Murdoch's choice of allusion. He appears to be chiefly associated with the Egyptian god Ra, the sun god, "whose rays dominate Egypt so strongly."[2]

> The earliest efforts to personify it[the sun] identified it with an old hawk-god and thus sought to describe it as a hawk which flew daily across the sky. Therefore the two most popular forms of the solar deity Re . . . have the form of a hawk or of a hawk-headed man (later sometimes also of a lion with a hawk's head). . . . Less popular is the description of the sun as Khepri . . . or "the Scarab-Like," i.e. as a scarab rolling his egg (the sun) across the sky, or as a man who wears a scarab on his head or instead of a head.[3]

The hawk and the scarab motifs respectively suggest watchfulness and tenacity in the sun's powerful progress. Mischa's face is also described as "hawk-like" (p. 209). The hawk is noted for its skilful manoeuvering, its hooked bill and keen eyesight; a sparrow hawk in search of its prey can bring to bear eyes eight times as acute as a man's.[4] The scarabaeus sacer of Ancient Egypt is a determined scavenger; it shapes pieces of rubbish and animal excrement into a ball which it rolls along the ground. Despite the attempts of other scavengers to hijack the ball, the scarab holds on grimly to its property until it can bury it safely.[5] Mischa's power also owes much to the fact that he is all-seeing and the novel reveals his pincer-like control of his victims. Scarab and lion allusions are noticeable in the description of Mischa's Italian villa, where there are references to a lion fountain flowing into a sarcophagus and to poor, dried-up beetles toiling with their loads. The dual head motifs of the Egyptian deity are paralleled in Mischa's eye colouring; one blue eye and one brown, suggesting two strongly contrasting faces.

Mischa's trick of revealing only one eye at a time recalls another representation of the sun-god when he is parallel with the moon: "The fact that this celestial deity shows only one eye at a time is explained by the various myths which . . . recount how the sun-god lost an eye . . . in a combat with Seth."[6] When Annette first meets Mischa at Nina's, this eye peculiarity is very remarkable: "Each one was its own clear unflecked colour. There was thus a brown profile and a blue profile, giving the impression of two faces superimposed" (p. 79). Annette finds this peculiarity fascinating: "At any rate, it would make one memorable" (p. 80). It is also perhaps indicative of an ambiguity in Mischa's attitude and behaviour towards those he encounters; one side of him is always concealed. This duality in Mischa's case is frightening. During one of his visits to Peter Saward's, Mischa explains about his childhood: "I used sometimes . . . to kill animals. . . . I was so sorry for them. . . . I couldn't stand it" (p. 208). He describes this feeling as "an intolerable compassion, a sort of nausea" (p. 208). Peter reflects on this strange region of sensibility . . . how strangely close to each other in this man lay the springs of cruelty and of pity" (p. 208).

Both the reader and Peter Saward are struck by Mischa's strange affinity with the hieroglyphics in the script which Peter is working to decipher:

> It seemed just then to Saward that Mischa was about to read out to him the things that were written upon the sheet. He could hardly bring himself to believe that Mischa could not understand it. As he looked down at the writing, with his brown-eye visible, and his sallow hawk-like face, he seemed suddenly to Saward to be the very spirit of the Orient, that Orient which lay beyond the Greeks, barbarous and feral, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon (p. 209).

Mischa is a mysterious figure; his origins and age are unknown. Even close associates like Rainborough who considers it a mark of prestige to be known as his friend exclaims:

> No one knows Mischa's age. One can hardly even make a guess. It's uncanny. . ... I'm sure even Calvin Blick doesn't know. No one knows his age. No one knows where he came from either. Where was he born? What blood is in his veins? No one knows. And if you try to imagine you are paralysed. It's like that thing with his eyes. You can't look into his eyes. You have to look <u>at</u> his eyes. Heaven knows what you'd see if you looked in (p. 35).

The Egyptian influence extends fittingly to Calvin Blick, Mischa's representative and general factotum; he recalls the main characteristics of the white ibis god Thout, who is also the moon god and scribe to the company of gods.[7]

The white ibis allusion is seen working through Calvin's obvious physical interest in Annette Cockeyne. Appropriately Calvin has an affinity for girls of the ibis type; this species is known among ornithologists as one of the long-legged "glamour birds".[8] "He noted with approval her narrow long-legged build and the pallor of her face and the creamy smoothness of her bare legs" (p. 19).

Calvin is identifiable with the moon in Iris Murdoch's reference to his "pale eyes whose colour no one could ever remember" (p. 14).

The moon functions as a mirror in that it reflects light derived from the sun. This is also true of Calvin whose powers are delegated to him by Mischa. Rainborough describes Calvin thus: "Blick is the dark half of Mischa Fox's mind. . . . He does the things which Mischa doesn't even think of. That's how Mischa can be so innocent" (p. 33). We never see the other side of the moon so we don't know what is taking place; it is the same in the Mischa/Calvin relationship. Calvin's nefarious schemes are planned in secret; while Mischa may benefit from them he does not need to know what method is employed in his interests. This idea of the moon as a helper links Calvin with the moon god's function as healer of the injured eye of the sun god Ra.

> In like manner when Thout takes care of the injured eye of the solar or celestial god, and heals and replaces it, the underlying idea seems to be that the moon regulates such disturbances as eclipses; it may moreover, equally well imply that the moon, being the second eye of the heavenly god, is simply a weaker reappearance of the sun at night.[9]

When Mischa is absent or otherwise occupied, Calvin takes his place; he is Mischa's eye in his absence. In this task he relies on his powerful camera lens which he describes to Hunter as "the truthful eye that sees and remembers" (p. 160).

Calvin's camera also suggests his connection with Thout as scribe and recorder. In his capacity as secretary, Calvin acts as an intermediary, spy and blackmailer for Mischa. As intermediary, he visits Hunter to represent Mischa in the latter's project to purchase the Artemis. As a spy, he acquires information from Annette relative to her plans and whereabouts so that Mischa may stalk her. Also in his capacity as spy he photographs Rosa with the Polish brothers; he uses

the photograph to blackmail Hunter into selling the Artemis and later he shows it to Rosa herself to prevent her from rejoining Mischa.

Calvin's close identification with Mischa's affairs makes him reminiscent of one of those "local divinities" explicable "as different manifestations of the sun".[10] Both as "a weaker reappearance" and a "manifestation" he is made a subordinate to Mischa. This is evident in his final confession to Rosa when the latter tells him that Mischa ought to have killed him years earlier: "Mischa did kill me years ago" (p. 280). Rubin Rabinovitz commenting on the role of the oppressor in Simone Weil's Gravity and Grace states: "Since the thought of being the absolute plaything of another human being is horrible for the slave, he substitutes devotion for obedience, he pretends he does willingly what he has been forced to do. This fawning state corrupts the soul of the slave."[11] Calvin, in fact, has been spiritually annihilated by Mischa's influence; he becomes an efficient transmitter of that influence into the lives of Mischa's other victims. Calvin, whose origins are as obscure as Mischa's enjoys his master's social protection; in return he becomes his creature.

Nina the dressmaker is also one of Mischa's protected creatures; in providing material security for her as refugee, he has destroyed her autonomy. She may ply her trade, but any initiative or creative enterprise she may possess will be frustrated because that will conflict with his private demands on her services. She is aware from gossip that she is regarded as one of Mischa Fox's creatures; he "was supposed to have at his disposal dozens of enslaved beings of all kinds whom he controlled at his convenience" (p. 143). There are no physical

relations between Mischa and Nina; he simply visits her at intervals to enlist slight favours connected with his mysterious business affairs. Rosa, wrapped up in her own troubles, is oblivious of Nina's dire necessity. The idea of flight appears impossible to Nina; she is needlessly afraid that as a stateless person without identity papers she will be seized by the men in uniform. Moreover, if she goes to the Australian embassy, she fears that Mischa will find out and seek retribution. In her misery and frustration she therefore takes her own life.

This is one of those instances where the two freedom themes, social and personal become interwoven, with tragic results. Nina and the decrepit mother of the Lusiewicz brothers are two refugees afflicted with spiritual lethargy. Rubin Rabinovitz discussing Simone Weil's The Need for Roots comments: "One of the important themes . . . is that suffering and uprootedness do not necessarily ennoble the afflicted person. It takes a Christ-like saintliness to rise above one's suffering; most of the victims of affliction sink into spiritual lethargy; afterward they become afflicted with self-hatred and even participate in their own degradation."[12]

There are no specific literary allusions in Nina's background; her attitude recalls most strongly that of a suffering dumb creature in captivity. Through Annette's eyes Nina resembles a "small artificial animal" (p. 76) in that the dark hair on her head and arms is dyed blonde. Perhaps this observation is most appropriate to define Nina's status in Mischa's estimation; she is simply something to be manipulated at will.

Annette Cockeyne though not herself a stateless fugitive from war-torn Europe, is nevertheless splendidly rootless; the daughter of a diplomat and fluent in four languages, she has spent her life travelling at maximum speed from one country to another without forming attachments of a lasting nature. Her parents' attempt to transform their cosmopolitan ragamuffin into an elegant English débutante has led them to send her to a London finishing school. Having exhausted Ringenhall's cultural possibilities, Annette decides to leave in order to complete her education in the "School of Life" (p. 12). When Annette quits the shelter of Ringenhall she is gloriously free; at the same time she is dangerously vulnerable. In this state she first encounters Mischa Fox.

In essence Annette resembles Hans Andersen's little mermaid who wishes to leave her sea palace to learn about the world of human beings. She falls in love with a mortal, a handsome prince, whose life she saves in a shipwreck. In her efforts to break down the barriers between them she visits an enchantress who, in exchange for her beautiful voice, gives her a magic potion which with much pain transforms her tail into legs. She is not destined to marry the handsome prince, who loves another; the little mermaid contemplates the happy pair, half minded to kill the prince, but she relents and becomes foam on the sea. In the last chapter, having recovered from her infatuation with Mischa, Annette is described as looking at another happy pair of lovers— her own parents.

Both fairy tale and novel reveal a young girl's nostalgic longing for pleasure and excitement in the great world. The little mermaid learns

from her grandmother of the difference between mortals and themselves who are soulless and at death become sea-foam. When the mermaid looks wistfully into the ship's cabin she feels to be an alien to the happy mortals, hence her tragic striving to become like them. The Cockeyne children though living a life of easy luxury in keeping with the fabled associations of their name,[13] "Can't have a normal childhood" (p. 58) as Nicholas says, because of their perpetual wanderings. Annette herself reveals some of the mermaid's yearning to belong somewhere, in her thoughts on the innumerable train journeys:

> In the silence the grass would seem very close to her; and she would stun herself with the thought that the grass was really there, a few feet away, and that it was possible for her to step out, and to be down in it, and let the train go on without her. Or else, travelling towards evening, as the lights were coming on in the houses, she would see the cyclist at the level-crossing, his face preoccupied and remote. . . . She could not break the spell and cross the barrier into what seemed to her at such moments to be her own world. . . . But the world of the chambermaid and the cyclist . . . continued to exist, haunting and puzzling her . . . (p. 58).

The novel elaborates the sea imagery of the fairytale at several points. In its opening chapter there is a description of the chandelier in the dining room at Ringenhall whose lustres resemble "tiny drops of crystal, each one glowing with a drop of pure light tinier still, as if a beautiful wave had been arrested in the act of breaking while the sun was shining upon it" (p. 10). Annette swings on the chandelier with "her feet neatly together and her toes pointed" (p. 10) which creates a tail-like effect; the tinkling of the lustres resembles the sound "which you would expect a wave of the sea to make if it had been immobilised and turned into glass" (p. 11).

More sea imagery is noticeable when Annette plunges her arm into the fish bowl at Mischa's party in an effort to attract his attention. The same mood causes her to rush into the sea later in the evening so that she has to be dragged out by Mischa. Annette is told both by Calvin and Mischa that she resembles her beautiful mother; the prince in the fairy tale tells the mermaid that she closely resembles the lovely girl who he thinks saved his life.[14] This information is not received with enthusiasm by either Annette or the mermaid since both are engrossed in their own romantic longings.

On several occasions Annette is described as a mermaid. Rosa tells her as she is studying her youthful skin, "You are completely smooth, you should have been a mermaid" (p. 64). Intoxicated at Mischa's party, Annette has a brawl with Rosa who has just smashed the fish bowl, leaving the fish in a very distressed state. In her torn dress, she is described as rising "like a mermaid out of the sea-green sheath of her dress" (p. 199). Annette finds walking painful after spraining her ankle in falling down Rosa's stairs as did the little mermaid after her transformation. Mischa also refers to a mermaid type in his cataloguing of women at Rainborough's house: "The female equivalent of Pan is the sleek mermaid. Their bodies are streamlined. They are proud of this, not ashamed as the psychologists say. A real woman is proud of this" (p. 134). We know that Annette is never tired of admiring her smooth, slim form and long legs.

In keeping with Mischa's mermaid imagery, Annette wears the sea-green brocade dress each time they meet. On the first occasion, at a fitting in Nina's room, Mischa's penetrating glance and touch stir up

Annette's emotions and she seeks refuge in flight. The second momentous occasion is at Mischa's party where Annette's infatuation is apparent: "He put his hand under her chin and lifted her head; and she gave him without concealment a look of yearning which made Rainborough turn away in embarrassment and surprise" (p. 191). The last occasion is when they go to the sea-shore.

When Mischa first sees Annette in the mermaid dress at Nina's he begins to exert his power over her. Iris Murdoch interweaves the Egyptian and fairy tale allusions here. It is Mischa's eyes which attract Annette. The revelation of the brown and the blue profile recalls that aspect of Ra deprived of one eye and giving the impression of two faces. The hawk-headed aspect of Ra is noticeable in Mischa's close observation of Annette on that occasion and later. He is invariably watchful, to Rainborough's embarrassment, resembling this species of bird hovering over its prey before swooping down on it. Annette remains willingly in his powers; it is only when Mischa realises that Annette will demand his attention and unlike Nina, will make extraordinary scenes if he does not comply, that he drops her as the hawk drops its victim, and goes off abruptly to Italy, avoiding further contact. Her resemblance to her mother initially attracted Mischa to Annette; he has exploited Annette's emotions perhaps, in reprisal for a previous injury at Marcia's hands. Annette is completely disoriented by his treatment, as devoid of humanity as was his caging of Nina; she is only saved from sharing Nina's fate by a lucky chance. Annette swallowed the tablets believing them to be lethal. Ironically, she describes herself at this time as a "refugee" (p. 249). The tragic death of Nina, the true refugee, contrasts sharply with

Annette's bungled attempt.

Just as the Annette episode turns out to be tragi-comic, so does the Rainborough sequence. Rainborough is the first of a line of posturing courtly lovers depicted in Iris Murdoch's novels, soon to be followed by Effingham Cooper in The Unicorn and most recently by Edgar Demornay in The Sacred and Profane Love Machine. Rainborough would have liked the role of being unhappily in love with Rosa if only his friend Peter Saward had not already usurped it. "As a lonely and unfortunate admirer Rainborough could, he thought, have found in the tension of such a relationship a mode of being both apart from and together with the beloved: such a combination, in short, of security, yearning and rapture, as had now become his ideal conception of partnership with a woman" (p. 30). Rainborough's posturings are frequently ridiculous; Iris Murdoch fittingly uses the comical allusive material connected with Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass, for his presentation.

Rainborough is regarded as a clever man who "hasn't yet found his niche" (p. 27). He has come to SELIB from the Home Office because he thinks he will soon become a very important member of the organization. His position at SELIB proves to be a very precarious one; he speedily becomes prey to Agnes Casement, his secretary, whose origins are almost as obscure as Mischa's and Calvin's. He is just as unsteady in his new post as Humpty Dumpty on his wall, to whom Alice remarks: "Don't you think you'd be safer on the ground? . . . . That wall is so very narrow".[15]

Like Humpty Dumpty Rainborough appears to have an enormous forehead on account of baldness; he is very conscious of this defect and envious of both Peter Saward and Mischa who have luxuriant hair. Humpty Dumpty is so sure of maintaining his seat on the wall yet he falls off. Ironically Rainborough describes his own position in the extraordinary political manoeuvering at SELIB: "I'm waiting until my own seat is made so impeccably safe that I can start making it hot for other people without needing to be afraid of reprisals" (p. 34). He fails to get the expected promotion and resigns eventually. Rainborough's tumbles are not catastrophic; they are embarrassing in that he is made to look foolish in compromising situations with women. He is almost caught rolling on the floor with Annette when Mischa calls at his house and is discovered by Calvin falling off the sofa during an amorous scene with Miss Casement.

Though Rainborough is in no sense Mischa's creature like Calvin and Nina, nor a defenceless victim like Annette, he is always uneasy in Mischa's watchful presence: "It was as if Mischa were deliberately reducing him to a state of hypersensitivity and confusion", (p. 131). It is this trait in Mischa, Ra in his hawk-god manifestation, which causes Rainborough to seize desperately on the first topic that comes into his mind—unfortunately dominant women—to distract Mischa's attention from the china cupboard. He unwisely confides his annoyance to Mischa about the female invasion of SELIB describing it as "a vast legion of clever and provoking females each one looking like a combination of Annette and Miss Casement" who are "exquisite and hard as iron, with cruel eyes" (p. 132). Mischa now on the scent, maliciously adds to Rainborough's discomfiture by inviting Miss Casement to his party

where she continues her relentless attempts to erode his resistance.

Rainborough is most at ease in his childhood home with his wistaria tree; this is a "safe stronghold" (p. 118) to him. When Agnes Casement's machinations at the office intrude into his peaceful home surroundings, Rainborough is unhappy. His personal freedom is being threatened by a stranger in the same way as the Polish brothers threaten the freedom of Rosa's home. The hospital extension requires the curtailment of his garden and the felling of his tree; Rainborough's old social order must make way for a new. When Agnes severs the wistaria's trunk, the symbol of Rainborough's past security is gone forever. When she sweeps him off in her red MG sports car Rainborough is disoriented; only Marcia Cockeyne's timely arrival and cool efficiency save him from extinction.

Rainborough's embarrassing experiences have taught him more about women. He can differentiate between the spiritual qualities of Rosa and the artificiality of Agnes; he notes the true natural bloom of Marcia's beauty in contrast with the shallow veneer of his secretary's. Thus, Rainborough's experience is also an achievement of personal growth, however limited. The same may be said of Annette, who also survives, whereas in Nina's case destruction ensues. The enchanter's schemes are foiled by Marcia; without her intervention Rainborough would have been completely helpless. This is yet another example in Iris Murdoch's writing where the male is made to appear ludicrous. The author's apt choice of allusive material is summed up in Alice's remark as she leaves Humpty Dumpty: "Of all the unsatisfactory people I ever met . . ."[16]

The character at the opposite pole of confrontation with Mischa is Rosa Keepe; she knows more about his personal background than any one else; therefore, having more cause for alarm at his sudden reappearance, she merits both Mischa's and the reader's attention. More than that of any other, Rosa's characterisation involves the delineation of the novel's theme, the struggle for social and personal freedom against restrictive forces. In Rosa's case the two freedoms are intricately linked owing to her previous association with Mischa.

A shareholder of the Artemis, a periodical logically connected with women's rights, Rosa has inherited her shares from her late mother, herself a suffragette and a Fabian. Unlike her mother, however, Rosa appears to have lost interest temporarily in what the paper symbolises, having become rather cynical about causes. Rosa is aware that Mischa simply wants the paper to put her in a dilemma; perhaps it is "a carefully thought out reprisal" (p. 101) for what has formerly passed between them. This is a point at which the two freedoms are linked. From the social standpoint, if Mischa's callous and flippant classification of the various types of women is to be credited, his purchase of the Artemis will doubtless corrode its most fundamental principles. From the personal aspect, if Mischa takes over the Artemis it will upset Rosa's brother, who will then have to surrender his editorial post; consequently she will have this reproach to contend with. Unfortunately, as Rosa admits to herself, she does not seem to have entirely escaped from Mischa's power, despite her refusal of marriage: "But to find herself still, however partially and however obscurely, fascinated by the idea of Mischa was alarming, not so much because this fascination

might ever come definitively to tempt her, as because of the endless variety of torments which such a situation could promise" (p. 102).

The personal and social tensions linking the Artemis and Mischa are aggravated by Rosa's employment as a machine operator in a factory where, according to Hunter's interpretation, "She wants to be in touch with the people and to make her life colourless" (p. 15). He wrongly attributes this decision to the fact that Rosa has been named after Rosa Luxemburg, a founder of the German Communist Party, killed in a street demonstration in 1919. Rosa herself, however, does not share these fanatical ideals; at this time she is no more deeply concerned with communistic principles than with women's rights. Rosa comes to the factory at a difficult period in her life; she is conscious of her failure as a teacher and her mood is one of gloomy cynicism because of the frustrations experienced in her journalistic career. She is not socially conscious of the factory workers: "She was on amiable terms with the men and women with whom she worked but she remained at a distance from them, eccentric, solitary, only just failing to be an object of suspicion" (p. 45). Iris Murdoch again describes Rosa's isolation: "Rosa never wanted other human beings to come too near" (p. 45). The only person she feels close to is her brother and their intimacy though not of the incestuous nature of Honor Klein's for Palmer, in A Severed Head, nevertheless makes her feel obscenely near to him. Rosa is merely interested in individuals; she feels the desire to get to know certain of her workmates and perhaps help them. It is this personal rather than communistic approach to human beings which leads her to her terrible isolated involvement with the Lusiewicz brothers.

Initially, the two young Poles resemble "half-starved, half-drowned animals" (p. 43) who become utterly dependent on her. Rosa herself experiences a sense of power in moulding them into shape: "Rosa feared this power, but she enjoyed it too. . . . she felt as if she had received a pair of young leopards as a present. It was impossible not to adore them, it was impossible not to be pleased to own them" (p. 46). It would seem that Rosa is partaking of some of Mischa's characteristics in her preliminary attitude to the Poles. She is so engrossed in her own project concerning them that she does not really act in their best interests. Then like Agnes Casement with Rainborough, after a probationary period of adoration for Rosa, the two brothers develop from willing slaves into dominant creatures of power who make her their sexual servant. The place where they exert this power is the small space inside an old bed-frame at their Pimlico lodgings; here at first, they sit with Rosa learning English and delighting her with their charming ways. Iris Murdoch ironically describes Rosa's feelings: "She felt like the princess whose strong faith releases the prince from an enchanted sleep or from the transfigured form of a beast" (p. 51). Here also, first Stefan as the elder, then Jan, indicate their intentions of making love to Rosa. Rosa's physical interlude with the Polish brothers and the deviation from feminist principles with which she has been usually associated shows another aspect of Artemis herself: "Olympian Artemis was more than a maiden. Elsewhere at Ephesus, for instance, she was worshipped as Nymph, an orgiastic Aphrodite with a male consort . . . ."[17] Moreover: "Artemis was hostile to monogamic marriage because she belonged to the pre-Hellenic cult in which women mated promiscuously outside their own

clans . . ."[18].

Rosa and her brother both suffer at the hands of the Poles who from having nothing, gradually come to dominate their lives because both brother and sister, unknown to each other, fear that Rosa's secret will be discovered. Hunter suffers a delirious illness on account of his anxieties and because of a macabre nocturnal episode in which Stefan sets fire to his hair and threatens to kill him. Rosa, engrossed in her own problems, however, does not show undue anxiety about Hunter. "Rosa had her own theories about the cause of Hunter's sickness, but as they were too fantastic to reveal to the doctor, she kept them to herself" (p. 259). Hunter's monsters and delusions, however, while not shared by Rosa, are very real to him. They appear to be derived appropriately from Germanic and Slavic tales of a Mahr or a nightmare spirit which places a spell on sleeping people, often resulting in their deaths. The Mahr may appear in diverse shapes, entering the bedroom through a small aperture such as a keyhole.[19] This perhaps explains certain curious details of Hunter's malady: "Hunter would be awakened by the pain in his burnt forehead, which seemed to be refusing to heal. A feeling as if all the skin of his face were being drawn towards a hole in his brow persisted all day and as much of the night as was spared from the sequence of nightmares" (p. 259).

While Rosa herself is not endowed with European allusions, she is influenced by them; her physical relationship with the brothers parallels their arbitrary arrangements with the village schoolmistress. Their rendering of the student song Gaudeamus is very personal to them:

Post iucundam iuventutem
Post molestam senectutem
Nos habebit humus (p. 73).

It clearly states their own philosophy towards women and life, the horrors of old age and the final reckoning. The macabre senility of their mother who resembles a shrivelled native god, inspires Rosa with awe; there is absolutely no verbal communication. The mother symbolises Polish earth for the brothers on which with frenzied excitement they appear to dance at times: "Rosa learnt to know this mood, which would begin with both the brothers tense and quivering and would rise rapidly to an orgiastic climax, like some native festival" (p. 49).

The events of the novel thus reveal Rosa's two main problems; she fears Mischa's intentions concerning the Artemis and his discovery of her secret thraldom to the Polish brothers. To deal with the first one, she acts according to her hitherto forgotten heritage turning to Artemis and her followers led by the appropriately named Camilla Wingfield who, like Rosa's mother, was a suffragette and co-founder with her of the Artemis. Camilla symbolises feminist tendencies in her self-confessed slaughter of her husband and her objection to Mischa as a purchaser of the Artemis. The shareholders' meeting is itself a female triumph over male chauvinism, the hunters become the hunted and Artemis remains inviolate.

Rosa has yet to discover a method of escape from her personal servitude to the Poles. Stefan's presence in her house is a perpetual threat to her liberty; she does not feel strong enough to withstand the power of someone she believes does "not belong to human society" (p. 235).

"Only some spirit which came out of the same region beyond the docility of the social world could do this work for her. Rosa knew that she must go and see Mischa Fox" (p. 235). This is a dangerous antidote; Rosa feels that in divulging certain facts and asking Mischa's assistance, she will be "selling herself into captivity" (p. 241). Mischa's enchantment is far more potent than Stefan's.

Though Stefan disappears as a result of questions raised in Parliament about illegal immigrants, Rosa still senses another complexity in her relationship with Mischa:

> Always at the last moment and without apparent reason there would come the twist, the assertion of power, the hint of a complexity that was beyond her, the sense of being, after all that had passed between them, a pawn in Mischa's game—and with that twist the structure of tenderness and delight, ever so little shifted, would suddenly seem to her an altogether different thing (pp. 241-42).

The "twist" is Mischa's reference to Peter Saward's attachment for her; this causes Rosa to wonder about the nature of Mischa's intentions regarding Peter and herself, and furthermore her own attitude towards Peter. Rosa knows that she can never re-enter Mischa's world after Calvin's use of the compromising snapshot and the report of Nina's death. On the other hand, marriage with Peter seems impossible as Peter himself tells her: "But you don't really want it. Some god or demon makes you say it. Ah, if only you did! But you don't (p. 287). The god or demon is Mischa. It is not by chance that Peter shows Rosa the pictures of Mischa's childhood home; Mischa's influence will linger despite his departure.

Whatever Mischa's purpose was in attempting to create a final tension between Rosa and Peter there is some evidence, at any rate, to suggest allusive pairing between them from the beginning. There is a definite trace of Egyptian Isis influence in Rosa when she describes her dream to Peter:

> The front door was locked and I had to ring, and Miss Glasham came and told me very gently that her lodger had passed away. And then she let me come into this room and I saw that it had all become a senseless jumble of objects that someone would have to come and sort out and cart off (p. 285).

This recalls the episode of Osiris' own death when he is murdered by Seth and his body hacked into fourteen pieces which Isis collects and reassembles with great care. In another version of the legend she is represented as a winged deity fanning life into him for a time.[20] There is a curious episode between Rosa and Peter on her first visit to his room, linking her with this winged aspect of Isis. The whole room seems to be animated by Rosa's presence:

> Peter Saward felt the whole room suddenly stiffen. The walls were full of consciousness and jerked themselves upright. The ceiling trembled. . . . Still Rosa moved. She touched the green plant and drew her finger along the window pane. She stepped upon the books and breathed upon the pictures. It seemed to Peter Saward that she walked about in the air, and her shadow fell upon him from far above. . . . At last he felt Rosa's fingers touch his hair. They touched it lightly at first like birds not daring to land. Then they came back and plunged deeply in. Rosa drew her hands down the two sides of his face and lifted his head (p. 36).

This description suggests a more than casual bond between Peter and Rosa; he himself senses "an increase of concern about him" (p. 37) on her part

while Rosa's anger at his eventual failure with the hieroglyphics is evidence of some personal frustration at his wasted efforts.

Factually, however, the allusive link between Rosa and Isis is curtailed, as is the Rosa Luxemburg link. Rosa, for instance, is diverted from Peter's house by the strong pull of Mischa; at the last telephone box before Peter's home, she impulsively dials Mischa's number and goes straight to Italy. It is almost as if Iris Murdoch in Rosa's case were presenting allusive material with the option that Rosa might or might not fulfil its implications. As it is, Rosa only appears partially identifiable in each case. Only the Artemis allusion prevails, traceable through Camilla to her mother. Rosa is left in sole charge of the magazine; it still, therefore, remains a personal as well as a social concern. If she is to maintain the traditions which the Artemis and its long line of adherents symbolise, there will be no place for the ambiguities and doubts revealed in the use of Rosa's other allusive sources.

Peter Saward, in a sense, speaks Mischa's epilogue as a character in the novel. Iris Murdoch links him with both Mischa and Calvin in her allusions from Egyptian mythology; he is reminiscent of the god Osiris who

> finally developed into the god of changing nature in the widest sense. Thus he could become the divinity of the most important change, i.e. death, and could be evolved into the patron of the souls of the departed and King of the lower world, being at the same time the lord of resurrection and of new and eternal life".[21]

For this later reason he becomes characterised as the mildest and most beneficent of the gods. He is depicted as standing in the celestial

tree between the obelisks which symbolise time.

Peter has many connections with death; he is himself in a stage of advanced though quiescent tuberculosis. He retains a picture of his long dead sister in his room while his housekeeper regards him "with a mixture of reverence and horror which was identical with her attitude towards death" (p. 25). Rainborough feels that his closeness to death has "the strange effect of making Saward not weaker but more powerful" (p. 28). He also feels that this fact adds to Peter's remoteness. Rainborough is distressed at Peter's remark one winter evening: "When it is so cold, I think often of those who sleep out of doors" (p. 28). It takes Rainborough a moment to realise that Peter means the dead. Interestingly, Peter himself feels that Rosa has a reverence for his illness rather than a tenderness towards himself. Peter resembles Max Lejour the Platonist scholar of The Unicorn who is also a prisoner of books and ill-health; Max also contemplates death in the picture of his dead wife.[22]

The reference to "resurrection" in the quotation is paralleled in the description of Peter's room which resembles "an underground cavern" and the green plant with its "mysterious vitality" which "is sometimes visible and sometimes invisible" (p. 21). Resurrection is noted in a deeper sense, however, when Peter who has been entrusted by Mischa with photographs of his childhood surroundings, revives memories of them by showing them to Rosa when Mischa is gone from her life. Mischa himself was very grateful for the photographs procured for him by Peter exclaiming; "What a miracle it is to feel that after all nothing dies" (p. 206).

Peter resembles Osiris in that his nature is mild and tolerant; he has nothing hostile to say about Mischa, for instance, when Rainborough and Rosa are reviling him in his absence (pp. 32-5). "In Rosa's mind Peter represented the sweetness of sanity and work, the gentleness of those whose ambitions are innocent, and the vulnerability of those who are incapable of contempt"(p. 235).

Peter's conduct and profession bring him into line with the reference to time.[23] Peter "a historian of the empires which rose and fell before Babylon" (p. 22), keeps an hour glass in his room which "he would thoughtfully reverse from time to time" (p. 21). Since Peter cannot endure the wasting of time, he spends much effort writing down "plans for future work, or intuitions about present problems, or stranger things still, visions of the past" (p. 22). His room is crammed to the ceiling with thousands of books and reproductions all dominated by a picture of Mommsen. Peter is the first of his friends Mischa visits on his return to England and the last one he sees before he leaves. During his visit to see the photographs, they discuss nostalgic details of Mischa's childhood and his strange possessive love of living creatures. Finally, Mischa tells Peter, "I keep my childhood with you" (p. 209).

There is, however, something very close to Peter's heart which they do not discuss, Peter's love for Rosa. Mischa's approach to this matter has been devious in the past. Peter is always uncertain about Rose's attitude towards himself, as indeed, she is herself. Perhaps this has been Mischa's purpose, to keep both Peter and Rosa in a state of uncertainty so that nothing is achieved.

The Flight from the Enchanter has an unusually large canvas while the allusive material is proportionately extensive. An attempt has been made to show how each character makes his or her contribution to the philosophic pattern in keeping with the main themes of social and personal freedom. The allusive grouping is of value here, particularly in the case of the Egyptian references which enable the author to give an all-round picture of Mischa Fox whose less commendable qualities are enhanced by Calvin/Thout while Peter/Osiris provides a more sympathetic insight into his strange childhood and its future consequences.

The allusive materials for the other main characters, Mischa, Peter, Rainborough and Annette are clearly defined; Rosa's allusive material, though suggestive of a wider scope, is imprecise; The Rosa Luxemburg reference, for instance, does not fulfil expectations. Iris Murdoch's Rosa is solipsistic by nature; she resembles Mischa in having too little understanding for the needs of others. This attitude leads to Nina's tragic death. The Isis references are also fraught with contradictions. Isis represents the faithful consort and the wise and provident mother, assiduously revering the dead Osiris' remains and watching over her son Horus. Rosa's conduct towards Peter is invariably capricious: "The love of Peter Saward was her only luxury. She never tired of forcing him to display it and lay it out for her like a rich cloth; but only when she had first protected herself by mockery and laughter" (p. 38). Rosa's anxieties about her sensitive brother, Hunter, who is in her care, are mingled with impatience. The same disregard is revealed when she perfunctorily dismisses Annette from her house, where the latter has been entrusted to her care by

Marcia.

Perhaps Iris Murdoch left Rosa unfinished in order to reveal the flaw in her character. Camilla Wingfield's forthright assessment of her appears to be the most correct:

> I'd have left you all my money too if I'd thought you had any blood in you! You've missed a quarter of a million, my dear Miss Keepe, just reflect on that! No blood, Miss Keepe, that's the trouble with you, no blood! (p. 262).

Footnotes to The Flight from the Enchanter

[1] Iris Murdoch, The Flight from the Enchanter (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1956), pp. 32-5. All quotations from this novel will hereafter be cited in the text.

[2] W. H. Muller, "Egyptian Mythology" in The Mythology of All Races ed. Louis Hebert Gray and John Arnott McCulloch, (Boston: M. Jones 1918), XII, 24. Hereafter cited as "Egyptian Mythology".

[3] Ibid., pp. 24-5.

[4] R. T. Peterson, The Birds (New York: Time-Life Books, 1963), p. 65. Hereafter cited as The Birds.

[5] The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Animal Kingdom ed. for the English Language Edition P. K. Knauth, (U.S.A. R. B. Clarke, 1970, 1971), 15, 26-7.

[6] "Egyptian Mythology" p. 29.

[7] Ibid., p. 33.

[8] The Birds, p. 61.

[9] "Egyptian Mythology", p. 33.

[10] Ibid., p. 28.

[11] Rubin Rabinovitz, Iris Murdoch (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 14.

[12] Ibid., p. 13.

13 E. Cobham Brewer A Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1952), p. 269.

14 Hans Andersen, "The Little Mermaid" in The Golden Wonder Book for Children (London: Oldham's Press Ltd., 1934), p. 96.

15 Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 186.

16 Ibid., p. 197.

17 Robert Graves, The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1955), I, 85.

18 Ibid., I, 225.

19 The Mythology of All Races II, 288-9.

20 "Egyptian Mythology" p. 114.

21 Ibid., pp. 93-7.

22 Iris Murdoch, The Unicorn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1963), p. 68.

23 "Egyptian Mythology" p. 93.

CHAPTER III

A Severed Head

A Severed Head uses allusions from Oriental, Classical and Celtic legend; the author's blending of copious materials among a much smaller group of characters than in either Under the Net or Flight becomes an important consideration in the study of the novel. The diversity in sources extends to each individual, affecting character relationship and incident, hence contributing to the astonishing behaviour of the small circle of characters.

The novel is a satirical account of the struggle which certain ego-centric people engage in to assert power over others in the absence of self-control. Palmer Anderson, a successful psychoanalyst, is having an affair with Antonia, one of his clients, and the wife of Martin Lynch-Gibbon; at the same time he is maintaining incestuous relations with his own sister, Honor Klein. Palmer explains to Martin that since he and Antonia are not really suited as husband and wife, it will benefit all three, if he [Palmer] lives with Antonia. He explains that civilised and intelligent people like themselves can make this arrangement work because Antonia and he intend to take care of Martin:

> You see . . . it is not at all our idea that you should leave us. In a strange and rather wonderful way we can't do without you. We shall hold on to you, we shall look after you.[1]

In the course of Palmer's machinations, Martin's emotions are adroitly ignored; he is, in fact, willed by Palmer's insistent plausibility into suffering his indignity without resort to violence. He remarks to Alexander, his brother, "I can't help being touched by the way he has tried to hold me as well as Antonia in this situation" (p. 41). At this stage

Martin lacks individuality and initiative. He describes his situation: "I was their prisoner, and I choked with it. But I too much feared the darkness beyond" (p. 53).

Palmer's vitiated morality apparently prevails at the outset: in spite of his tarnished relationship with both Martin and Antonia, Martin still regards him as his best friend (p. 37). However, as soon as Honor Klein makes her entry, her criticism begins to erode the sophistries and absurdities rationalised by Palmer in his dealings with Martin. Honor represents basic truth which, as she tells Martin, is incompatible with civilisation in Palmer's terms. As a result of his association with Honor, Martin gradually rids himself of the distorted image of society created by Palmer, and learns to behave according to his true convictions. The day he gives Palmer a black eye, he thinks, "Perhaps if I had hit Palmer on day one, everything would have been different" (p. 146). Because of Honor's intervention, Martin is even stimulated into writing a personal account of the events leading up to his union with her. Therefore, A Severed Head, seen from Martin's angle, is the story of a man's eventual achievement of autonomy and the partner best suited to him after a series of tribulations, mostly comic, arising out of his social and personal circumstances. As noted by Jake's personal narration in Under the Net, the use of the first person identifies Martin more closely with, in this instance, the author's philosophical theories about aspects of power.

Martin describes the earliest and somewhat fanciful circumstances of his relationship with Palmer, four years previously: "We used to read Dante together; and his relaxed gaiety, his unshadowed enjoyment of his

pleasures eased and complemented, though without dispelling, my affectation of a resigned melancholy" (p. 19). Palmer while inspiring Martin as "a complete and successful human being" (p. 19), does not act as a deterrent in Martin's self-acknowledged affectation; presumably he likes Martin's act. This suggests a selfish or manipulative attitude on Palmer's part towards other people's emotional peculiarities. Palmer, moreover, is shortly to describe his involvement with Martin and Antonia as "a dangerous adventure" (p. 31); this man makes a prosperous living counselling neurotic young people and "a formidable number of well-known patients" (p. 19). If his relationship with Martin can be taken as typical, Palmer gains his impressiveness and his ends by pandering to his associates' delusions, in very much the same way as a conjurer prevails over the senses of his audience by using the hocus-pocus of his trade. Martin's relationship with Palmer may be understood in the light of this statement made by a critic of Iris Murdoch's works:

> The various drives to power portrayed in A Severed Head are the natural products of our unnaturally specialised age, and in the exalted position occupied by psychoanalysis. . . . It has become fashionable to discuss our most intimate problems especially on the psychoanalyst's couch. . . . By virtue of the faith accorded him by his mangled society, Palmer is frequently referred to as a modern magician.[2]

There is a strong suggestion of magic about Palmer; Iris Murdoch's allusive treatment of him recalls the Chinese god Mu King. This deity, ruler of the immortals, lives in a blue and violet palace and is the purest of beings. The first glimpse of Palmer shows him in his consulting room wearing a loose purple gown against a backcloth of Japanese prints executed in soft blues and charcoal blacks while the air is "agitated by a mysterious breeze" (p. 28). Purple is often noticeable

in Palmer's house furnishings and dress. He not only has the trappings but the manner of an Eastern mystic in his cryptic remarks to Martin such as, "Happiness is neither here nor there" and of Antonia, "She is due to move on" (p. 28). These maxims reflect somewhat debased interpretations of Zen Buddhist doctrines, one of which indicates that the individual must strive for self-realization, regardless of such contingencies as social position, family or religious faith. According to Zen belief and practice:

> The Zennist whose mind is liberated and illuminated by transcendental wisdom can attain mental tranquillity, fearlessness, and spontaneity, whereby he can engage in any art or sport without worrying about gains, pleasures, victory or defeat.[4]

This creed could be hazardous taken in conjunction with Palmer's own peculiar theory of permissiveness. Antonia's moving on may be interpreted literally as moving from Martin's house to Palmer's; it may or may not include ethical considerations. It is, therefore, a statement in keeping with Palmer's fancy dress, to be assumed or discarded at will. Though he is over fifty, Palmer appears uncannily youthful; Martin who also feels his power, thinks, "It was impossible to pin wickedness or corruption on to such an image" (p. 30). In fact, he has all the requisites of a successful and fashionable psychoanalyst particularly the quality of achieving empathy with his clients. His Japanese experience may have enhanced his beautiful politeness, a quality he favours in all his consultations with Martin, at any rate, rather than blunt factual veracity.

In her latest novel, The Sacred and Profane Love Machine, Iris Murdoch again comments on the limitations of Palmer's profession. Blaise Gavender who also practises a form of analysis in psycho-therapy as well as deception of his wife in connection with it, nevertheless realises that he is some sort of charlatan who enjoys power, "for all medlers with the mind enjoy that."[5] He considers that "His fascination with the enchanted enchanting curiously self-determining world of psychoanalytical theory had now begun to seem . . . to be a form of self-indulgence."[6] This description seems well-suited to Palmer, satirically presented as all-knowing and omnipotent in the affairs of his patients. Blaise Gavender feels that he ought to abandon this form of treatment and study to obtain medical qualifications. This is Palmer in reverse; he has abandoned medical practice in favour of psychoanalysis and now, though he has assumed the powers of curing other people's neuroses, is, in fact, as misguided as his patients.

Palmer glibly informs Martin at the time of his affair with Antonia, "I know Antonia very well, Martin. Better in some ways than you do. That's not your fault but my profession" (p. 29). When he tells Martin that he is being perfectly straightforward and "wrapping nothing up", Martin counters, "It's all wrapping. You're too clever for me" (p. 30). Unfortunately, Palmer cannot conceive of his patients' having opinions differing from those he has already planted in their minds; moreover, when his own desires for self-gratification conflict with his supposed professional tenets, his complete self-confidence clouds his judgement of those he presumes to guide. Honor ultimately proves herself the superior analyst: her advice to Martin, exactly the

opposite of Palmer's is, incidentally, that which he eventually follows: "You do him no good by letting him [Palmer] off. He wants, he needs, your harshness, your criticism, even your violence." (p. 65).

Martin tells Georgie that "Palmer is good at setting people free" (p. 6). Ironically, Georgie's rejoinder is, "I don't trust these professional liberators. Anyone who is good at setting people free is also good at enslaving them if we are to believe Plato" (p. 7). After her suicide attempt, Palmer is at hand to become Georgie's analyst; as Martin watches her leave for America with Palmer, he reflects, "She was . . . enslaved now" (p. 198). Palmer's influence on Martin is felt to be hypnotic as he wills him to accept the loss of Antonia gracefully; it is described as "something big and formidably well-organised" (p. 31).

Martin's beautiful statuesque mother/wife who is still involved in a clandestine affair with his own brother, Alexander, when she is not coddling Martin, attracts Palmer's trained eye. He exploits fully the Oedipal nature of Martin's marriage to Antonia telling him, "You have been a child to Antonia and she a mother to you, and that has kept you both spiritually speaking at a standstill" (p. 29). While the sustained use of Oriental allusions in Antonia's characterisation serves to match her fittingly with Palmer, they also emphasise this statement to Martin. Antonia is reminiscent of the Chinese goddess Hsi Wang Mu or the Golden Mother of the Tortoise.[7] Antonia's predominant colour is gold: Martin thinks that colour "the best general epithet for her appearance" (p. 16). Antonia's material and more stable aspect is noticeable in her domestic arrangements as well as in

her over-protective treatment of Martin; she has sometimes been taken for his mother, which neither of them finds in the least unflattering. When she explains to him about Palmer's new role in her life, she calls Martin "My child, my dear child" (p. 27).

Unlike Honor who is habitually seen encumbered with parcels and tea chests and Georgie, whose ramshackle bed-sitter shows her "relentless lack of taste" (p. 8), Antonia manages to create an integrated world out of her household possessions with "restrained felicity" (p. 21), no matter how often the removal men take over. The tortoise reference is useful in that Martin is described as living in a "bright multi-coloured shell" with her whereas Georgie's disorganised establishment reveals "no such carapace" (p. 8). The idea of Martin living in a shell whether elegant or the reverse, is also suggestive of a close inhibited existence which is, in fact, true of his life despite his acquisition of a mistress. He has to break out of Antonia's shell in order to lead a fuller and more meaningful life. Antonia's celestial aura is further enhanced when Georgie, on the ill-fated visit to Martin's home, feels that it would be a sacrilege to touch the ornaments on Antonia's "little shrine" of a mantel piece (p. 71).

At the time of her affair with Palmer, Antonia, whose religiosity is a mixture of borrowings from popular Oriental cults and vestigial Christianity, believes that "all human beings should aspire towards, and are within working distance of a perfect communion of souls" (p. 17). Martin uses the term "religiosity" to describe Antonia's personal concoction of ethics as opposed to the more formal "religion" generally

associated with the idea of being bound by a set of rules. Whether one could be within working distance of such a goal is questionable except in terms of Antonia's drawing-room metaphysic. Martin explains that a beautiful woman like Antonia whose conversation reveals "an undogmatic apprehension of an imminent spiritual inter-locking where nothing is withheld and nothing hidden" (p. 17), encourages confidences and emotional relationships. He lights on the simple truth about her when he says, "Antonia has a sharp appetite for human relations" (p. 17).

Antonia and Palmer also share an insistence on good manners and courtesy to others; appearances matter even though one has been guilty of or has suffered the direst insult. In the enchanted society of Palmer and Antonia, etiquette requires polite conversation even to one's wife in bed with her lover. Palmer creates a scenario, so that Martin cannot make a scene; he praises the wine Martin has brought exclaiming, "I love a dormitory feast. I'm so glad you've come. I've been looking forward to you all evening" (p. 106).

Nevertheless, while Antonia seems entirely suited to Palmer there remains another, more fundamental aspect of her nature which removes her entirely from his orbit. Iris Murdoch gives her, as the daughter of a distinguished regular soldier, a name belonging to Roman tradition. She recalls Marcus Aurelius Antoninus the second century Roman emperor; Aurelius also was not an original thinker but was greatly impressed by Greek philosophical teaching as shown in the Meditations.[8] Antonia even wears elegant Roman clothes bought by Martin; finally, she returns, as it were, to her Roman past with Alexander, where presumably she will further add to her collection of objects d'art,

experiences and people. Iris Murdoch's allusive chemistry in Antonia's characterisation is noticeable; she becomes attracted to Palmer temporarily just as ancient Romans were to exotic frends from the East. She is an eclectic, "appreciating and clinging to the aesthetic accomplishments of the tradition in which she was born to superior status . . . but restlessly seeking beyond it and beneath her own position for illicit emotional sensations.[9] Her marriage with Martin has apparently been merely one of these sensations. He comments: "She moved in a fashionable society, more fashionable than that which I frequented, and became, through her protracted refusal to marry, one of its scandals. Her marriage to me, when it came, was a sensation" (p. 16).

Honor Klein makes her appearance at a very crucial period in Martin's life, when he has recently discovered his wife's association with Palmer. Honor can be said to bridge the gap for Martin between the modern permissive world of Palmer and the primitive, remote world of wild tribes and their taboo rituals, whom she frequently visits as an anthropologist. Georgie describes Honor as having "something primitive about her" (p. 7). Martin echoes this statement in a conversation with Honor herself about the culpability of Palmer and Antonia. He tells Honor, "I am not one of your primitive savages . . . and I do not believe in vendettas." The word "primitive" comes to mind as he sees her: "Strained back against the door . . . she seemed something black and untouchable" (p. 64). Martin is implying that unlike the wild tribesmen Honor visits, who go out on punitive expeditions against their foes, he, being civilised, proposes to go on

being gentle with his wife's seducer. Honor, in keeping with her description as one of these savages, replies, "You cannot cheat the dark gods", meaning that people must be made to pay for their actions. The reference to "untouchable" suggests remoteness from Martin's idea of civilisation, therefore.

Honor's jet black hair, her partiality for the dark gods and her unusual combination of Jewish/Celtic ancestry suggest influences alien to those of Rome and Christianity predominating in the West. Seen through Martin's eyes she is described on various occasions as "perceptibly Jewish" (p. 55), "troll-like" (p. 72), and "a subject for Goya" (p. 95). The unexpected reference to Goya would seem to connect Honor's physical characteristics with those depicted by the artist in his series of paintings entitled Fatales consecuencias de la sangriente guerra de España con Bonaparte y otros caprichos enfáticos.[10] This would also form a link with Martin's reference, as a military historian, his reading at this time includes Napier's History of the Peninsular War (p. 21). The Goya allusion is also apt, in the light of criticism of the artist's depiction of human problems at this particular period in history:

> Goya's realism implies a refusal to conform, a stubborn protest against the accepted idea of beauty . . . its cause lay in the fact that Goya had clearly become aware how arid and unreal the old values were . . .[11]

Honor's outward appearance also suggests a contempt for Western standards of femininity.

The other influences alien to Roman and Christian domination

are indicative of Honor's Celtic connections. According to Anne Ross:

> We cannot accept the view that, with the coming of the Christians, paganism died. In Britain as in Ireland, the old faiths, the old remedies, and the old names spelling comfort and protection must have continued to be resorted to long after the spreading of the message of the one God, and this can be demonstrated by the penitentials which refer to dark practice, and by the castigations of the militant saints denouncing the pagan pursuits of their sometimes unwilling adherents".[12]

Honor the educated, cultured woman on the surface, calmly analysing the practices of the wild tribes she visits, is just as pagan as any of her subjects of study. Her relationship with Palmer is described by Martin as a "dark love" (p. 138). She herself appears to be fully aware of the power of "the dark gods" when she is advising Martin that as a violent man he must use violence to regain Antonia from Palmer (p. 64). Anne Ross continues: "Ireland alone was unconquered by Rome and preserved her traditional way of life unaffected by the social and religious standards of an alien world."[13] Honor unlike Antonia and Georgie, does not easily allow herself to be united with Martin. Her dress, hair style, and behaviour again demonstrate her refusal to conform to the contemporary or normally accepted code. She turns away from it, in fact, by absenting herself in strange, remote places. Honor's sombre mien, her fog-bound entrances and exits make her a creature of darkness. After her silent combat with Martin in the wet cellar, she seems to vanish into her foggy lair and Martin is powerless to recall her name. Honor's brusque divergence from doubtful ethical standards is paralleled by a similar divergence from generally accepted standards of conduct. The primitive forces

alive within her lead to a ruthless approach to fundamental problems which alarms and infuriates Martin who is equipped with a different set of rules.

Primitive and ruthless exercise of power by Honor is in keeping with the salient points of the Medusa legend, partially echoed in the title of the novel. The horrid female head fascinates and then inevitably petrifies the onlooker. While Honor is not monstrously hideous, she is definitely unprepossessing. She also appears to be as devoid of femininity as is the Medusa head bereft of its female body; in fact, Martin's humorous description of her as a female don resembling a haystack, though harmless, is sexually unflattering. The Medusa-like nature of her glance is noted on several occasions; when she first appears at Liverpool Street station, her glance is described as "animal like and repellant" (p. 55), as she ironically refers to Martin's role of cuckold. The reader as well as Martin becomes immediately and uncomfortably aware of Honor as the shrewd, relentless observer with penetrating insight.

As the novel progresses, Honor becomes increasingly ominous to Martin as a power in his affairs. In fact, by the time that she describes herself as "a severed head", that is after the Samurai sword episode, the scene in the cellar, and the Cambridge incident, both she and Martin realise that she has gradually become an object of dreadful fascination for him as well as a mysterious source of erotic attraction. She tells Martin:

> Because of what I am and what you saw, I am an object of fascination for you. I am a severed head such as primitive tribes and old alchemists used to use, annointing it with oil and [illegible]ing 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 strange knowledge (p. 182).

There is a close connection between this statement and Freud's description of the rites practised by primitive head-hunters of Borneo who paid the greatest respect to their head trophies, addressing them "with the most endearing names in their language".[14] Burmese legend also provides an example of a tragic queen who leapt on to her brother's funeral pyre after he had been murdered by her husband. The heads only remained; they became powerful spirits dwelling in a Magnolia tree, descending at intervals to kill people. In their memory, two golden heads enshrined in a temple were exhibited annually in propitiation ceremonies.[15] Interestingly, among the titles originally considered by the author during the throes of composing the novel, was The Golden Head.[16] This choice of title would have emphasised the wrong theme, considering Honor's dark colouring and the constant references to Antonia's golden hair. Moreover, Antonia's influence over Martin weakens as Honor's finally dominates both him and the novel. The reference to prophecies may be a partial explanation of her role; she has a seer-like quality in her advice to Martin about the necessity of changing his tactics. Her actions also lead to a new order. In any event, Honor's self-description and its affinity with the Freudian and Burmese references together with the Medusa connection, points to the widely held belief in the magical qualities of severed heads.

An anthropological text published almost contemporaneously with the novel, hints at a probable communication between their respective authors on the subject of the head cult.[17] In this article on the significance of the human head among the Celts, published in 1959 and later included in her work Pagan Celtic Britain Anne Ross suggests: "The human head was regarded by the Celts as being symbolic of divinity and other world powers".[18] She also describes Etruscan burial urns bearing an ornament in the form of a human head. Cult stones from Germany are phalloid in shape, with decorations of Etruscan origin, and are surmounted by a single head suggesting a uniting of the symbolic head as representing the entire person, and the phalloid element. It is surmised that this union of the head and phallus is a Celtic development. Anne Ross further states: "The fact that for the Celts the head was seemingly the centre of the life force capable of continued independent life after the death of the body, strengthens this supposition".[19] Alexander's discussion with Martin about the sculpted head of Antonia in his studio evokes this idea expressed by Anne Ross; "All the same, heads are us most of all, the apex of our incarnation. The best thing about being God would be making the heads." Martin is ill at ease; Antonia's "swaying body" is missing. He feels that the head alone is "an unfair advantage, an illicit and incomplete relationship." Alexander concludes, "Yes, perhaps an obsession. Freud on Medusa. The head can represent the female genitals, feared not desired" (p. 44). Freudian theory suggests that the chopping off of Medusa's head symbolises the castrated female which in turn provokes male fears of emasculation.[20] When Honor

describes herself as a severed head to Martin, she also means that while she fascinates him, he also fears a potential threat to his masculinity.

In view of Honor's frequently stressed unfeminine appearance, it may be difficult to imagine her as exciting physical desire. For instance, when she meets Martin at the station, her body is described as "a headless sack" her head being outside the car window. The only sign of femininity is "the plump curve of her calf clad in a thick brown and white knitted stocking traversed by a dark seam". That curving seam reminds Martin for an instant "that she was a woman" (p. 57). Henceforth, Honor's physical attributes are stressed; she is made to appear exotic, unlike either Antonia or Georgie with their more conventional standards of beauty. Martin sees her thus: "Her short, straight oily hair, a lustrous black, sat like a cropped wig about her pale, rather waxen Jewish face. Her narrow eyes were like two black chips" (p. 63). In the Cambridge bedroom scene her attractions are made to appear uncanny: "Upwards she was as tawny and as naked as a ship's figurehead. I took in her pointed breasts, her black shaggy head of hair, her face stiff and expressionless as carved wood" (p. 128). Her impact on Martin is the more forceful because he has never reached true sexual development in his marriage to Antonia, a mother figure. Honor, therefore, has the role of disengaging Martin from his Oedipal feelings for women to enable him to come to full sexual maturity.

Peter Wolfe calls Honor "the scourge of the novel . . . the destroyer of her society's sham rationality".[21] Honor while ridiculing Martin's sheep-like sufferance of his wife's philandering with her analyst, effectively unveils the hocus-pocus practised by Palmer. In disclosing the shabbiness of Martin's affair with Georgie to all concerned, she makes it impossible for him to retain his former standards; progress therefore becomes inevitable.

As one observes the way Honor operates as a power figure, one is conscious that her plans materialise with military precision; no time is lost between observation of the adversary's moves and her own counter attack. As soon as she learns of Martin's liaison with Georgie, she informs Palmer and Antonia. Her conduct towards other characters and particularly towards Martin, recalls details of a Celtic divinity or formidable woman named Medb:

> Her divine origins are suggested . . . by her strange dominance over the male . . . she can run faster than the swiftest horses, and the sight of her is sufficient to deprive men of two-thirds of their strength. . . . She takes part in battle with weapons instead of influencing the outcome by magic and incantation. Her consorts are many and she discards them at will. . . . She has insatiable sexual capacity. She is, in fact, the complete Celtic personification of the mother-warrior deity.[22]

Before Honor makes her entry into the events, she is alluded to by Martin as if she were merely a domineering female. Of the Palmer/Honor relationship he remarks, "I suspect he's a bit frightened of his sister too, though he never actually says so" (p. 7). On a much later visit to Palmer to settle Antonia's affairs, Martin again describes

Honor: "She stood behind Palmer like a captor and the voluptuous curve of his relaxed body spoke the word 'victim'" (p. 167). The first quotation seems to indicate that Palmer is merely hen-pecked by his sister; on the later occasion both Martin and the reader are conscious that Honor has grown considerably in stature. After the Cambridge incident particularly, Martin feels that Honor dominates Palmer completely.

Medb and Medusa alike have a pernicious effect on male vigour; Honor's verbal broadsides shock Martin's male ego effectively. When Martin tells Honor that Palmer is in bed with Antonia, she replies, "You are heroic, Mr. Lynch-Gibbon. The Knight of infinite humiliation. One does not know whether to kiss your feet or recommend that you have a good analysis" (p. 110). A strong resemblance to Medb in battle may be seen in Martin's description of Honor's instant transformation from a dowdy spinster to the militant she really is, when she first sees Palmer and Antonia together: "She appeared . . . for a second like some insolent and powerful captain . . . confronting the sovereign powers whom he was now ready if need be to bend to his will" (p. 58).

Honor, whose name recalls the most outstanding military virtue, fittingly demonstrates her skill with the Samurai sword; she admires the sword because it is an object of reverence and a symbol of power to its disciplined user.[23] This episode serves to emphasise Honor's credo. When asked by Martin if she connects spirit with the power of the dark gods she is supposed to believe in, she replies, "I believe in people" (p. 97). Honor's belief in people as individuals who must be judged as well as loved applies particularly to Palmer. She

explains to Martin on an earlier occasion: "I believe you love my brother, but you do him no good by letting him off. All I say is that only lies and evil come from letting people off" (p. 65). This sentiment contrasts sharply with Palmer's formulas about "civilised and intelligent people" (p. 28) who, like him, see "little point in talking of guilt" (p. 29) since it is possible to rationalise one's actions, however questionable they are.

The sword scene shows Honor in the role of judge and executioner. Martin has not been let off; he tells Honor with reference to her exposure of his affair with Georgie, "You didn't waste much time in having me brought to justice" (p. 95). Further discussion they have about the use of the sword, however, indicates a conflict in their mental attitudes. Honor connects the use of the sword with the religion of a military caste, she emphasises the strong relationship between the moral aspect and the military prowess of the warrior: "An[illegible] the use of them is not merely an art but a spiritual exercise" (p. 96). She assumes quite wrongly that Martin's Christian heritage will enable him to understand this explanation, bearing in mind perhaps, the sacred nature of the Knight's sword in chivalry.[24] Martin, however, being yet morally immature, merely takes Honor's remark literally, saying, "I am not attracted by the idea of decapitating people as a spiritual exercise" (p. 96).

Nevertheless, the manifestation of Honor's warlike qualities links her more closely with Martin after he sees her powers with the sword and when he is conscious of the weapon's sinister qualities as he touches the blade. Iris Murdoch's allusive linking in Martin's case comes

fittingly from Celtic sources. Martin resembles in several instances Celtic war gods. His name suggests war, and the Roman Britons often associated their native war gods with the Roman Mars. Anne Ross identifies "the traditional association between war and intoxicating liquor and thus between gods of war and alcohol".[25] Martin suits this description in his addiction to alcohol; he is hardly ever completely sober, being extremely intoxicated when he tussles with Honor in the wet cellar. Though he has avoided conventional forms of military service, he is inclined by nature to outbursts of pugilism as he remarks: "I used to be a good boxer, and passed when I was younger as a raffish, quarrelsome violent fellow" (p. 15). However, Martin's most important connection with the god of war is seen in his interests as a military historian educated in the Gibbonian tradition.

Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire had a great influence on the training of military historians of the type who were concerned strictly with the recorded facts of a situation and not with the fanciful approach of writers such as Herodotus. Martin refers to Sir Eyre Coote, himself of Irish descent, and his splendid campaign which resulted in the downfall of the French in India in 1760. He also chooses to write about Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden who like Sir Eyre Coote was a distinguished and high-minded leader, having the best interests of his soldiers at heart. Martin explains that for some time he has been engaged on a monograph on the Thirty Years' War, comparing the competence of two great leaders, Gustavus Adolphus and Wallenstein. His marriage to Antonia has, however, brought activities of this nature "to a standstill" because as he says, "I was absorbed

completely into the delightful task of being Antonia's husband" (pp. 15-16). Martin's intellectual qualities are neglected by Antonia; he is encouraged to fritter away his time in their charming antique shop of a house paying more attention to possessions than to people.

This attitude on Martin's part is destined to change as further light is thrown on the relationship of Honor and himself, in what Anne Ross has to say about the Celtic languages: "An ability to handle the Celtic languages is fundamental in attempting any real appreciation of the oblique, indirect, circular approach of these peoples' to art, literature, religion and social transactions".[26] Honor and Martin though both belonging to the Celtic tradition do not at first speak the same language. Martin has to study Frazer's Golden Bough and read about "brother and sister marriages particularly among royalty and gods which reveals to him "the figure of Honor, aloof, frightening, sacred, and in a way which I now more clearly understand, taboo" (p. 153). Honor tries, on her part, to understand his Gibbonian approach to history. She quotes (p. 204) from Herodotus to him about Gyges and Candaules[27] thinking that it is appropirate to quote from history books to a historian, even though Herodotus as a historian does not fit into the Gibbonian tradition.[28] Finally, both realise that they must meet each other as human beings not as creatures of myth or demons.

Before he can actually meet Honor on equal human terms Martin has to break through the mysterious barrier of her restrictive taboo; he has been increasingly conscious of this in their encounters since the moment he touched the blade of the Samurai sword. On that occasion he describes his meditations: "The blade felt as if it were charged with

electricity and I had to let it go" (p. 98). Freud refers in similar terms to the alarming powers possessed by rulers: "They are the bearers of that mysterious and dangerous magic power which communicates itself by contact like an electric charge, bringing death and destruction to anyone not protected by a similar charge".[29] After his punitive struggle with Honor in the cellar, he finds it impossible to relate to either Antonia or Georgie. It is almost as if Martin himself must relinquish all other human contacts by touching a taboo object. Freud also explains this situation: "We also know that anyone who has violated a taboo by touching something which is taboo, becomes taboo himself and no one may come into contact with him."[30] Martin now feels urgently drawn to Honor whom he has touched without really achieving physical contact in the accepted sense. He explains: "It was as if the extreme untouchability, which with a kind of repulsion I had earlier felt her to possess, had cast, on this sacrilegious occasion, a cloak about her. It was as if I had not really touched her" (p. 122).

Iris Murdoch describes Martin's relationship with Honor in exaggerated terms, making it appear that he is powerless to resist her terrible magnetism. As he reaches Cambridge he feels, "The force that drew me now towards Honor imposed itself with the authority of a cataclysm" (p. 124). After seeing her with Palmer he feels "cursed for life like men who have slept with temple prostitutes and visited by a goddess cannot touch a woman after" (p. 138). By comparison, Martin's relations with Antonia seem flimsy and with Georgie pathetic. When he sees Honor in bed with Palmer, the taboo on her is violated,

Martin sees her as a woman. He is appalled at the idea of her already possessing a lover - particularly her own brother: "In any woman this could be, if it existed, no trivial passion, and in such a woman this dark love could not but be something of colossal dimensions" (p. 138). Freud's theory on the breaking of taboos is stated thus: "The result of a violation of a taboo depends partly on the strength of the magical influence inherent in the taboo object or person, partly on the strength of the opposing mana of the violator of the taboo".[31] The feasible means of assessing the strength of Martin as violator of Honor's taboo is to study his developing ability to come to terms with her context of taboos and primitive forces. These latent primitive forces in Martin gain in strength as his association with Honor grows closer. They become dominant over the traditional and conventional ones which have hitherto placed him under the sway of Palmer; he realises that good faith is superior to mere good manners.

Honor Klein recognises the existence of these primitive forces in her early critical discussion with Martin concerning his "soft behaviour" (p. 63) in the Palmer/Antonia situation. This elicits Martin's reply: "If I choose to be civilised it is my own affair". Honor's answer is: "Truth has been lost long ago in this situation. . . . In such matters you cannot have both truth and what you call civilisation. You are a violent man, Mr. Lynch-Gibbon. . . . You cannot cheat the dark gods. . . . Sooner or later you will have to become a centaur and kick your way out" (pp. 64-5). Iris Murdoch shows Martin in compliance with the ugly allusive force of his name "Lynch", taking justice into his own hands by direct physical confrontation with Georgie, Honor and Palmer. It is this basic approach of standing

up for himself which eventually unites him to Honor after she has demolished the insidious social values in her milieu. These values apply to the Palmer/Antonia episodes; both characters are ironically depicted posing together in idyllic scenes suggestive of married bliss (pp. 105-6). During their entire association they are deceiving each other and Martin; Antonia sustains her affair with Alexander; Palmer is on imtimate terms with Honor. In addition to the Palmer/Antonia sequences the novel has many outstanding theatrical scenes such as the studio episode at Rembers and the Samurai sword exhibition. In each of these instances, the force of the allusive material would be emphasised in a dramatised version of the novel.[32]

If, therefore, the novel with its bizarre scenes and histrionic episodes is intended as an attack by Iris Murdoch on the shoddy standards in human relationships among so-called enlightened people, the weight of allusions to military power, primitive, Oriental and Gibbonian, is largely instrumental in making it succeed.

1 Iris Murdoch, A Severed Head (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963) p. 31. All quotations from A Severed Head will hereafter be cited in the text.

2 Peter Wolfe, The Disciplined Heart: Iris Murdoch and Her Novels. (Columbia, Missouri; University of Columbia Press, 1966) pp. 139-40. Hereafter cited as The Disciplined Heart.

3 Howard German, "Allusions in the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch" in Modern Fiction Studies: A Critical Quarterly (Lafayette, Indiana: The Purdue University, Department of English, Autumn 1969), XV, No. 3, 374. Hereafter cited as "Allusions in The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch".

4 Encyclopaedia Britannica (London: William Benton, 1973), 23 957. Hereafter cited as Britannica.

5 Iris Murdoch, The Sacred and Profane Love Machine (London: Chatto and Windus, 1974) p. 13.

6 Ibid., pp. 13-14.

7 "Allusions in the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch" p. 374.

8 Britannica 14, 858.

9 Alice P. Kenney, "The Mythic History of A Severed Head" in Modern Fiction Studies, XV No. 3. p. 390. Hereafter cited as "The Mythic History of A Severed Head".

10 Robert L. Delevoy, Goya (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1954), p. xx

11 Ibid.

12 Anne Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Pagan Celtic Britain.

[13] Ibid., p. 17.

[14] Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1919), p. 47. Hereafter cited as Totem and Taboo.

[15] Louis Hébert, Gray and John Arnott McCulloch ed., The Mythology of All Races (Boston: M. Jones, 1918), XII, 342-48.

[16] William M. Murray, "A Note on the Iris Murdoch Manuscripts in the University of Iowa Libraries" in Modern Fiction Studies. XV, No. 3., 446.

[17] "The Mythic History of A Severed Head" p. 392.

[18] Pagan Celtic Britain p. 61.

[19] Ibid., p. 92.

[20] Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1957), 3, 258.

[21] The Disciplined Heart p. 148.

[22] Pagan Celtic Britain pp. 223-4.

[23] Britannica 19, 986.

[24] Brewer, p. 1049.

[25] Pagan Celtic Britain p. 201

[26] Ibid., p. 3.

[27] Brewer, p. 206.

[28] "The Mythic History of A Severed Head" p. 399.

[29] Totem and Taboo p. 50.

[30] Ibid., p. 38.

[31] Ibid., p. 31.

[32] Iris Murdoch has collaborated with J. B. Priestley in a dramatised version of A Severed Head.

CHAPTER IV

The Unicorn

Iris Murdoch has compared The Unicorn to the novels of Sheridan Le Fanu which it resembles in a number of instances. What V. S. Pritchett writes about Le Fanu's works is true of Iris Murdoch's novel with regard to scenic background and psychology: "Anglo-Irish society . . . was a guilty society. Insecurity and bad memories haunted it. . . . In Le Fanu we are frightened at the sight of effect following cause; we get a glimpse of the iron of nature. Guilt is the ghost in Le Fanu. . . . The secret doubt, the private shame, the unholy love, scratch away with malignant patience in the guarded mind. . . . Self-destruction is the end of these stories; and guilt drives us to kill ourselves."[1]

Gaze Castle and the surrounding countryside somewhere on the Irish coast, are uncanny and hostile; the people at Gaze are strange, secretive creatures with good reason, while Hannah Crean-Smith, the châtelaine with a mysterious past, is known to be a prisoner whose gaolers are her relatives and friends. While Iris Murdoch's horrors and hauntings are hinted at, not visualized, as in Le Fanu's Carmilla for instance, the influence of the supernatural is felt by anyone venturing there from the normality of the outside world, both in the weird shapes of the countryside and in the gloomy rooms of the house itself.

Hannah's abstention from society appears explicable in Freudian terms as an obsessional guilt neurosis, leading to a recourse to fantasy in order to avoid confrontation with unpleasant reality. According to Freud, for those suffering from obsessional prohibitions: "An external threat of punishment is superfluous, because an inner

certainty (a conscience) exists that violation will be followed by unbearable disaster."[2] Hannah's withdrawal from society into an almost contemplative life, recalls Catherine Fawley's circumstances in The Bell while her refusal or inability to leave the grounds of Gaze after the strange incidents relating to her husband's accident, seems explicable in terms of these Freudian principles. Freud also states: "In the neurosis there are distinctly acts of compromise which on the one hand may be regarded as proofs of remorse and efforts to expiate and similar actions; but on the other hand they are at the same time substitutive actions which recompense the impulse for what has been forbidden. It is a law of neurotic diseases that these obsessive acts serve the impulse more and more and come nearer and nearer to the original and forbidden act."[3] The expressions "more and more" and "nearer and nearer" suggest the inexplorable sequence of events at Gaze up to and including the sensual and fatal incident with Gerald Scottow which in itself parallels Hannah's previous relationships with Pip Lejour and/or Peter Crean-Smith. The shooting of Gerald may indeed be the eventually successful culmination of a death wish on Hannah's part towards Peter, since according to Denis Nolan, Gerald and Peter have become one and the same at that point in the novel.

Despite the fact that the novel owes much to Gothic romance writings of the nineteenth century, particularly to Le Fanu's Carmilla and Freudian situations discernible in the literature of that era, the central allusion, as indicated by the title, is medieval. The medieval influence includes references to courtly love traditions and the legend of the sleeping beauty. However, there is clear textual evidence that the unicorn legend is the dominating influence. This is made clear in

a conversation between Max Lejour the Platonist philosopher and Effingham Cooper, when Max describes Hannah, the central character:

> "In a way we can't help using her as a scapegoat, In a way that's what she's for and to recognise it is to do her honour. She is our image of the significance of suffering."
>
> "I'm not sure that I understand," said Effingham. "I know one musn't think of her as a legendary creature, a beautiful unicorn —"
>
> "The unicorn is also the image of Christ. [replied Max].[4] But we have to do with an ordinary guilty person."

Some discussion of the unicorn legend will be helpful in examining the allusions in the novel. Its physical peculiarities, for instance, demonstrate puzzling contradictions in the beast itself described as: "A mythical and heraldic animal represented by medieval writers as having the legs of a buck, the tail of a lion, the head and body of a horse, and a single horn, white at the base, black in the middle, and red at the tip in the middle of its forehead. The body is white, the head red, and the eyes blue."[5] The physical complexity of the beast parallels the speculative approach of Max and Effingham in their assessment of Hannah. A further interesting contrast of qualities is revealed in a quotation from a medieval source:

> It is the only animal that ventures to attack the elephant; and so sharp is the nail of its foot, that with one blow it can rip the belly of that beast. Hunters can catch the unicorn only by placing a young virgin in his haunts. No sooner does he see the damsel, than he runs towards her, and lies down at her feet, and so suffers himself to be captured by the hunters. The unicorn represents Jesus Christ who took on Him our nature in the Virgin's Womb, and was betrayed to the Jews, and delivered into the hands of Pontius Pilate. Its one horn signifies the gospel of truth."[6]

In medieval times its horn was connected with the horn of the cross and also with sexual virility. The animal was also associated with purity since it could only be captured by a maiden. The mingling of sex with virginity is seen in the unicorn tapestries presented to Anne of Brittany who had previously been married. The same is true of Hannah technically, since though Peter's wife, she has also taken Pip as a lover. In the study of magic and the occult: "The Unicorn's most vital function has been as a symbol whether of power or virility, or purity, or the combination of opposites, of the male horn and the female body. Many modern interpreters regard this last role as the critical one and relate it to the symbolism of the soul as the spark of divine light in the darkness of matter and evil, the body, and to the concept of the hermaphrodite as the perfect union of opposites."[7]

While there are many references to the unicorn in medieval literature and heraldry, one of the most vivid representations of the unicorn theme is found in the famous late medieval tapestries at the Cloisters of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, scenes from which seem to bear some resemblances to episodes in the novel. There are six tapestries and a few fragments of a seventh made for Anne of Brittany (1476-1514) to celebrate her marriage to Louis XII in 1499.[8]

The first tapestry depicts the start of the hunt.[9] A young man moves off with companions while huntsmen check the leashed hounds, waiting for the signal to be given by a small figure in the right hand corner, who beckons his followers, probably to announce the sighting of the unicorn. There is an air of expectancy in this tapestry similar to that at the opening of The Unicorn. Marian is a young person in a

strange place in search of a new employment; she and the reader share a feeling of apprehension before the unknown. When she arrives at Gaze Castle and enters the chilly drawing room: "The room felt watchful and she almost feared to find that she had overlooked some person standing silently in a corner." (p. 19).

The second tapestry[10] shows the unicorn surrounded by the hunters, kneeling and dipping its horn in a stream flowing from a fountain symbolising eternal life. The unicorn is a strangely beautiful animal with a long horn springing from the middle of its forehead. Other animals in the scene are a lion, lioness, panther, civet, hyena, stag, two rabbits, two pheasants, a goldfish and a swallow.

There are four points to note in comparing the novel episodes with the second tapestry. First, the strange beauty of Hannah: "She has a tangle of reddish-gold hair and eyes of almost the same colour." (p. 23). Secondly, Hannah's addiction to whisky; whisky means "water of life" in Gaelic. This is an ironic parallel to the fountain of eternal life depicted in the tapestry. Hannah is frequently seen drinking whisky; it is for her a form of escapism. After Hannah's death Effingham drinks whisky from the decanter in her room: "It tasted of Hannah" (p. 251). Thirdly, there is the notion of captivity apparent in both tapestry and novel. Hannah welcomes Marian, saying: "How wonderfully good of you to come. . . . I do hope you won't mind being imprisoned with us here miles from anywhere" (p. 23). Just as the unicorn is surrounded by hunters, Hannah is surrounded by guards; Denis tells Marian that Gaze is a prison and Hannah a prisoner. According to Denis, the gaolers are Gerald Scottow, Violet and Jamesie Evercreech,

himself and Marian (p. 59). Hannah has been confined in Gaze for seven years ever since her husband discovered her relationship with Pip Lejour. There is also a definite reminder of the captivity/hunter motif in chapter ten when Alice and Effingham encounter first Pip, then Gerald and Jamesie who have been hunting on the moors. Pip carries a brace of dead pheasants, Jamesie two rabbits. When Gerald remarks that Pip has two of Mrs. Crean-Smith's fine birds (p. 85), Pip, as at a pre-arranged signal, immediately hands them to Denis also present with Marian. We are conscious of a clear link between Hannah and the hunters in the novel just as we are conscious of the hunters in the tapestry.

Fourthly, there are frequent references—at least thirty—to gold in association not only with Hannah but also with Denis; these come from a more obscure source connected with the unicorn. In the symbolism of alchemy the alchemist must free "the divine spirit of light from its prison of darkness by transforming base metal into gold by means of the philosopher's stone. . . . Mercury, the 'male-female', the androgyne, was an essential element in the work, and the personification of Mercury proclaiming victory over darkness, was the unicorn."[11]

It seems clear that the symbolic gold colouring links Hannah with Dennis who has also been identified as a Christ symbol or unicorn because of his interest in fish (p. 198), his kingfisher glance (p. 41), his age (p. 201), and his hatred of the Satanic Gerald (p. 229). With regard to Hannah and Denis, the colour varies in strength according to the trend of events or the emotional stress. The first time that we see Hannah she is wearing golden yellow and her golden eyes are frequently referred to. Denis is first seen carrying a goldfish; when he leaves

Gaze forever, he is discernible against a golden yellow hillside. After Hannah's body is brought back from the cliffs the sky is "a dirty light yellow (p. 247). During the bitter discussion about Hannah's estate, Effingham notices Hannah's old yellow gown in a corner; nature itself seems to be in keeping with the personal strife: "The sun was burning the sea, searing it with a long, golden scar" (p. 253). There is "a yellowish light in the room" (p. 253) as Effingham gazing at the three corpses, thinks of Hannah.

Hannah's colour loses its strength as her being recedes while Denis's gains in warmth and brilliance as he travels upwards and away from the influences at Gaze. Marian and Alice watch Denis's departure with Tadg: "A little later, much farther up the hill, they saw the golden dog streaking upward in pursuit of the man until both were lost to view in the saffron yellow haze near the skyline" (p. 264). If Iris Murdoch's use of the aureole in connection with Hannah and Denis signifies a form of beatitude, then Hannah's faded brilliance may well be indicative of her fall from grace, Denis's deepening radiance being symbolic of increased spiritual strength.

In the third tapestry[12] the unicorn tries to escape but spearmen approach on all sides. We know that five years previously Hannah had attempted to escape with Jamesie who was thrashed by Gerald. Effingham after witnessing Hannah's hysterical outburst during the musical soiree is ready to join Marian in rescuing her. Unfortunately, the attempt is foiled by the near collision of Effie's car with Alice's. Hannah returns to even stricter supervision because Marion is made to promise that there will be no more attempts

The fourth tapestry[13] shows us the unicorn at bay. It turns fiercely to defend itself, slashing out with hoofs and horn. A small hound is badly gored but other dogs continue the chase undaunted. Hannah is obviously terrified at the news of Peter's imminent arrival. Gerald dominates the events, treating both Hannah and Denis with violence. There is much confusion; though Hannah is not visible she is obviously at the centre of the conflict. She later explains her conduct with Gerald to Marian: "It made me temporarily mad and the consequences do not pass" (pp. 215-16). Denis feels that Gerald and Peter are one: "Gerald is Peter now. He has Peter's place, he is possessed by Peter, he even looks like Peter" (p. 229). It is now that Hannah finally lashes out at Gerald, shooting him; in doing so, she reveals abruptly for the first time in the novel that she is capable of extreme ferocity coupled with efficiency when under pressure. One critic comments: "Hannah has ferocity in reserve".[14] No other member of the community has been able to overcome the burly Gerald, physically, at any rate. The suddenness of Hannah's action resembles the speedy thrust of the unicorn; ironically, Hannah with Pip's gun despatches Gerald who has previously betrayed Pip and herself to Peter.

In the fifth tapestry[15] the unicorn is captured by the maiden in the enclosure. Marian, who by this time has made love with Denis, is no longer a virgin, but this makes little difference according to the laws of courtly love. Moreover, the virgin in the tapestry is identifiable with Anne of Brittany. Marian therefore, is able to play the part of guardian, sleeping within call of Hannah.

The sixth tapestry[16] reveals the unicorn as slain and brought to Anne and Louis standing arm in arm in front of the castle. In the novel Jamesie and Marian open the door to Hannah's room; she disappears into the rain and dies violently. Up to this point, the novel keeps pace with details in the sixth tapestry; then the novel's plot becomes more complicated. Though Denis has already stated that Peter and Gerald are one, Peter still remains to be dealt with after Hannah's death. It is fitting, therefore, that Denis as the other unicorn figure, should disposé of Peter who has been identified with Gerald. This situation is clarified in Denis's final explanation to Marian as he leaves Gaze: "The guilt passes to me. That is why I must go away by myself" (p. 262). Marian replies: "Yes, you are becoming Hannah, now" (p. 262).

Denis's acceptance of the guilt and his identification with Hannah suggests a form of resurrection. Denis now replaces Hannah as scapegoat. Max describes this aspect when discussing Hannah's role with Effingham on a previous occasion:

> Ate is the name of the almost automatic transfer of suffering from one being to another. Power is a form of Ate. The victims of power, and any power has its victims, are themselves infected. They have then to pass it on, to use power on others. This is evil, and the crude image of the all-powerful God is a sacrilege. Good is not exactly powerless. For to be powerless, to be a complete victim, may be another source of power. But Good is non-powerful. And it is in the good that Ate is finally quenched, when it encounters a pure being who only suffers and does not attempt to pass the suffering on (pp. 98-9).

The seventh tapestry therefore, seems representative of the part Denis will play.

> "It shows the unicorn alone, which can be interpreted as a symbol of the risen Christ. Alive but with his wounds apparent, he sits within an enclosure probably intended for the hortus inclusus, or enclosed garden, symbol of the Blessed Virgin and the Incarnation. Since the unicorn is leashed with a golden chain, symbol of marriage, to a tree bearing pomegranates, symbols of fertility, this tapestry is also to be interpreted as the consummation of marriage. [17]

The references to marriage and fertility again reveal the sexuality inherent in the legend; this is also applicable to Denis who has had sexual relations with Marian. Technically, therefore, Denis is not a "pure being"; apart from his adultery, he has drowned Peter. His acceptance of guilt however, makes Marian realise: "He had wound it all inside himself and was taking it away. Perhaps he was bringing it for her, for the others to an end" (p. 263). In this respect, therefore, "Ate is finally quenched".

Both in the medieval legend and in the novel, the religious and the sexual attributes of the unicorn are maintained; the horn being symbolic of the unique quality of Christ and the phallus in the virgin's lap. Hannah has the singular beauty and the ferocity of the unicorn. The religious aspect of the legend is brought out in her acceptance of confinement at Gaze as a form of expiatory suffering. In addition, the sexual influences are discernible in her toleration of courtly lovers and finally in the Gerald Scottow episode. Perhaps the author's handling of the violence—there are four deaths from unnatural causes—tends to distort the grave dignity of the medieval tradition.

In her treatment of the unicorn allusion, Iris Murdoch is again indicating her tendency to allot qualities from one source to more than one character, though less obviously so here. In Hannah are embodied the more sensational physical attributes and the violence of the mythical beast. Expressions such as "grovelled (p. 41) and "the possessive savagery" of Hannah's "I think he would let me kill him slowly" (p. 43) are obviously indicative of an abnormal physical domination on Hannah's part. Physically, Denis's unicorn qualities are more restrained; his attempts at violence are belittled by Gerald; his drowning of Peter is not so dramatic as the shooting of Gerald by Hannah.

Whilst Denis obviously lacks the physical attributes of the unicorn, it is its Christ associations which are pertinent to his characterisation. He is the faithful servant in the relationship between Hannah and himself. For instance, he has been accustomed to cutting Hannah's hair. This servile activity makes Marian an uncomfortable observer "as if she were being forced to be present at too intimate a rite" (p. 41). However, her embarrassment is not simply at Denis's servility; "intimate rite" suggests that the author was also thinking of Denis in the role of priest ministering exclusively to the personal needs of the ruler who is taboo to the rest of his subjects. As a person of linguistic and musical ability, Denis is no mere chattel and is certainly more than Hannah's characterisation of him as "my page" (p. 43). But the relationship between them is further complicated by the hint of a sexual link as in the unicorn legend. Moreover, "One form of hair fetishism involves the cutting off of hair and the act of cutting seems as pleasurable as the possession or handling of it."

In Freudian terms, "the act is seen as a symbolic rape involving some element of sadism."[18] There is a curious incident in the scene which lends support to the sexual link when Marian observes with some embarrassment that: "Hannah reached back and took hold of Nolan's tweed jacket. Her hand nuzzled into his pocket" (p. 41).

A pointer to the spiritual unity of Hannah and Denis is in the allusion to the salmon which exerts a curious fascination over both of them. Hannah in a reference to Denis taking Marian to the salmon pool, describes to her the leaping salmon struggling up the rocks: "Such fantastic bravery, to enter another element like that. Like souls approaching God" (p. 43). Denis alludes to the fish in similar terms when at the pool with Marian: "But they have great strength and cunning. Both are needed to move upward against such a power coming down. It is nature against nature. . . . They are brave fish" (p. 198). Whatever mystery suggested by allusive references is contained in the Hannah/Denis relationship, it results in hidden strength which prevails against the Satanic qualities in Gerald and Peter.

The theme of courtly love which also provides many allusive references in the novel, belongs to the same period as the unicorn sources. One writer describes the power of women in the medieval world: "One of the principal civilising influences upon the medieval court was the increasing power of women. . . . Their social status gained considerably by the long absence of husbands and brothers on Crusades, so that the lady became for long periods the representative of a noble family whose favour was to be sought by those desiring

patronage."[19] There is a general similarity between Hannah and the medieval lady in that her husband has been absent for a lengthy period. She is left free, in a sense, to her own devices though in Hannah's case we learn that she is under guard.

The same writer also states: "The lady is the patroness, the poet her liege man or servant. She is thus able to dictate her wishes, to demand obedience. . . . She brings out the noblest qualities in him; she arouses him to heights of valour and nobility otherwise unattainable. . . . Her social position renders her difficult of attainment."[20] We are nearer the mark here though in a purely negative sense considering Hannah's relationship with Pip and Effingham; her influence does not bring out the best qualities in either of her followers. Effingham's attempts to rescue Hannah are ineffectual; on a later occasion when he is most needed by Hannah, he is lying in a drunken stupour at Riders. Pip fails on both occasions to rescue Hannah from Gaze; he is finally dismissed ignominiously by Gerald after Hannah's rejection of him. Hannah's influence is therefore not ennobling despite her servants' weaknesses.

It has been argued by many critics that only married women could move freely in medieval courtly society and that love must necessarily be adulterous. In support of this the writings on love by Andreas Capellanus are cited. In the eighth dialogue of his De Arte Honesti Amandi the man presents the argument to the lady: "that love cannot exist between the members of a married couple, that service has the right to reward, that love dignifies a woman. He also raises the question of amor purus [love short of physical intercourse] and amor

mixtus [love of body and spirit combined]. The lady, showing more sense than many contemporary and later writers, rejects amor purus as impossible."[21] There is little evidence that Hannah and Peter were ever in love; they married young and are first cousins, in keeping with the traditions of old families. Hannah's relationship with Pip has been an adulterous one; he is no longer allowed access to her. Adulterous love is uncommon in the medieval romances with the exception of the Lancelot-Tristan group. Hannah's circumstances prevent her from achieving a sublime love death like that of Iseult because there is no Tristan. Pip does not meet these requirements: Hannah and Pip die by their own hands, estranged and apart. Effingham's relationship with Hannah is a mixture of pawing adoration and ineffectualness which, along with his egoism, prevents him from achieving credibility as a devotee of amor purus.

The courtly love element, in which Hannah, as châtelaine of Gaze, is the central figure, extends to Alice and Marian who are also treated like feudal mistresses. Their knights are variously Effingham, Gerald and Denis. One critic writes:

> "None of these people, their passions apart for the moment, is truly very remarkable. . . . In one respect at least, however, they can all be said to be truly and outstandingly remarkable; and that is the ease, the bewildering facility with which they all fall in and out of love with each other, changing both their personal allegiances and their broad sexual orientations from day to day, sometimes in the course of the same day, nearly always without prior warning to the reader."[22]

If one analyses the physical relationships, they are seen to be transient in the case of Gerald with Hannah and Denis with Marian, while Effingham's

role whether he is fawning over Hannah, embracing Marian or courting Alice in the sea-weed pool is absurd. The same critic continues: "It is really impossible to believe that such a collection of not very attractive people, verging on middle age, could be swept by such deep romantic tides of longing for each other . . . It is as if we were at one of those drunken parties where declarations of love by almost complete strangers and ordinary people were the order of the night."[23]

It is impossible to take this warped image of courtly love seriously. While Effingham is thinking of Hannah as "his great phoenix" (p. 88), a few lines further on, he reflects on the "quiet little madhouse" (p. 89) and makes the mental query, "But would he not soon go away again, would he not this time next month be sitting in an expensive restaurant listening to Elizabeth's jokes about <u>la princesse lointaine</u>?" (p. 89). The image is finally shattered when Pip, on bended knee, asks Hannah to go away with him. There is little trace remaining of the noble lady of the castle in Hannah's coarse rejection of his offer, "You mean if someone's going to have me it may as well be you" (p. 223). Hannah by this time is a jaded woman; she appears to Marian, "a great courtesan . . . a woman infinitely capable of great crimes" (p. 223).

There are signs that at certain points the courtly love theme merges into the legend of the sleeping beauty. While some of the original touches of the fairy tale are preserved, there is much distortion of it in the novel, particularly in the macabre dénouement. At the opening of the novel, Hannah has already been immured at Gaze for the magical seven year period. According to the locals, she is

under a curse; death or some other amazing happening awaits her. Marian mistakenly assumes that her opportune arrival at Gaze will avert the tragedy. Instead, it merely postpones Hannah's doom. Effingham is no fairy prince; when Max urges him to return immediately to Gaze because Hannah may be in peril he proves unwilling: "He had always feared the violence that lay behind the legend of the sleeping beauty. It had hung behind the figure of Hannah like a dark cloth perceptible but not stirring. He now feared dreadfully to find that background suddenly alive with movements, with faces. And what he feared most of all was to see Hannah afraid" (p. 177). Iris Murdoch's derogatory use of imagery ridicules Effingham as a candidate for the role of noble prince. As Gerald passes with Hannah in his arms en route for his own quarters, Effingham is described as "paralysed like a creature bitten by an insect or a snake and waiting to be eaten" (p. 185). Iris Murdoch distorts the legend at this juncture so that Hannah's own resemblance to the sleeping beauty is in question. Hannah's eyes are wide open as she passes. The act of love may already have taken place in Hannah's room where she has spent several hours with Gerald, sent to her at her own request (p. 180). Therefore, she is fully conscious when taken to Gerald's room for the night, while her retainers sprawl about drowning their sorrows in drink. Hannah has been rudely awakened by a villain and former betrayer. The girl in the legend is sweet sixteen when the curse becomes effective and the chaste kiss of the noble prince finally, is the prelude to living happily ever after.

One critic has detected Circean influences in Hannah's characterisation: "It may be that Hannah is in addition to everything

else, a Circe, who has turned or is turning all the inhabitants of the place into beasts, which may be another way of saying that she is making each of them reveal his or her true nature."[24] This is also suggested in Max's definition of Hannah though with certain modifications: "She may be just a sort of enchantress, a Circe, a spiritual Penelope, keeping her suitors spellbound and enslaved" (p. 99). The Circean allusion has possibilities in that one may assess the transformation of all those associated with Hannah. Pip has markedly deteriorated in the seven-year period. He has allowed the years to slip by for Hannah while he has idled his time away. Finally when he summons the strength to ask Hannah to leave Gaze with him, she scoffs at him, calling him "a blackened image" (p. 224). Effingham Cooper is gradually revealed as a sentimental bungler toying with romantic fantasies. Gerald the homosexual, described initially by Marian as "thoroughly nice and ordinary" (p. 27), leads a Jekyll and Hyde existence and is exterminated like a dangerous beast. Marian's chatty naive letters to Geoffrey, her friend, about the Gaze community, conceal an emotional insecurity apparent in her later reactions to Violet's Lesbian advances and Gerald's sophisticated mastery. Only Denis reveals a nature containing the rudiments of nobility. Wrongly assessed by Marian as "a gloomy little clerk" (p. 27), he has found a sense of purpose in his asylum at Gaze; impelled by a higher purpose, he eschews continuance of his unreal relationship with Marian.

The tendency to experiment more tenuously with allusive material is discernible in Iris Murdoch's use of the Vampire theme derived particularly from Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla, as previously stated. The melodramatic treatment of this theme is muted and impressionistic

in the characterisation of Hannah but it is unmistakeable in subtle references to her physical and emotional makeup. Hannah and Carmilla have anagrammatical first names; Hannah is the same spelt backward and Carmilla becomes Mircalla. The duality of their names seems to match the same element in their personalities. Both have had a strange, sinister past whose influences seem to be hovering over them, leaving those they encounter nonplussed.

Hannah like Carmilla is easily tired by physical exertion. When Marian remarks on the new appearance of Hannah's shoes, she learns with a shock that they are seven years old. Hannah's explanation puzzles her: "I don't do much walking" (p. 42). Just before Marian and Effingham attempt to abduct her, Hannah while walking with Marian complains of tiredness and begs the support of her arm. Marian assumes that Hannah must be ill since she seems confined to the house. In Carmilla Laura describes a similar situation: "We then went out for a walk which was a mere saunter, and she seemed almost immediately exhausted."[25]

Both women are unusually beautiful, having strange coercive powers of attraction. Hannah shows the same rapacious need for love as Carmilla for blood, though the latter is far more demonstrative and behaves as if she had lesbian tendencies which reminds the reader of Violet Evencreech, a relative of Hannah, and prone also to vampire qualities. Laura describes Carmilla's behaviour towards herself: "It was like the ardour of a lover . . . and with gloating eyes she drew me to her and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses."[26] Hannah merely thrusts out her hand urgently to be seized by Marian

and asks Marian to forgive her "for so shamelessly crying out for love" (p. 53). Marian's reply, "You know that I love you", makes Marian herself feel that "It was not the sort of thing she came out with usually. Yet it seemed quite natural here as if it were compelled from her" (p. 53).

Iris Murdoch does not give us vampires floating in blood-filled coffins. Her technique is more delicate, a mere suggestion to titillate the imagination. One example is when Marian visits Hannah and sees her contemplating a crippled bat: "It had an almost uncanny degree of presence of being. . . . Without knowing why, she felt that she could hardly bear Mrs Crean-Smith and the bat together, as if they were suddenly the same grotesque, helpless thing" (p. 40). Marian's idea of both the bat and Hannah as "grotesque" and "helpless", indicate her instinctive opinion of Hannah. The bat described in this scene by Iris Murdoch, however, is a pipistrelle which is not invested with the horrific qualities of the vampire type; it is a tiny maimed creature, an object of pity, doomed to perish like Hannah. Marian, though frequently puzzled by Hannah's behaviour, does not herself consciously link vampire tendencies with her employer; the reader is made aware of these traits through references made by others. Marian's sole approach has been that of a rescuer who sees Hannah as helpless and in need of compassion. Hence in this section, the vampire presence is muted.

Nevertheless just as Carmilla was in constant need of human blood to survive, Hannah needed the devotion of her admirers. She finally discloses her secret to Marian: "Ah, how much I needed you all! I have battened on you like a secret vampire. . . . I needed my

audience" (p. 219). The Evercreech pair are both conscious of the vampire theme though in different ways. Violet harangues the party with Gothic intensity after Hannah's death: "You've lived like vampires on the sorrows of this house and now you are even come to gape at the dead" (p. 252). Jamesie's assessment of the situation as a play, is in keeping with his capricious behaviour and his theatrical poses; Iris Murdoch gives him a dramatic final exit: "The play is over, the Vampire Play let us call it. The blood is all shed that we used to drink. We shall go away now and you will hear no more of us at all and you'll clean the house of our traces. We leave them all to you, the dead ones" (p. 253). Effingham, only, sees fleeting beauty in Hannah's vampire power, he thinks of her as a "beautiful pale vampire fluttering at his night window" (p. 268). Finally, when he learns of Pip's untimely death, he feels that Hannah has claimed her last victim. But Effingham's approach to Hannah has always been impractical and romantic. Hannah herself told him, "I let you have your dreams. And of course I'm still romantic too. You are my romantic vice" (p. 92).

Effingham, the outsider, refers to the circumstances at Gaze as "a macabre pageant" (p. 89) when he first visits Hannah. As he finally leaves Gaze, he feels, "He was the angel who drew the curtain upon the mystery, remaining himself outside in the great lighted auditorium" (p. 269). Sitting in the train he thinks, "If what was over had been a fantasy of the spiritual life, it was its fantastic and not its spiritual quality which had touched him. . . . He would try to forget what he had briefly seen" (pp. 268-9). Effingham's egoism has kept him an aloof and unscathed spectator; he represents those who will

marvel at a strange, weird, tale.

Marian's reaction is different, though she, too, has come from the outside and, like Effingham, is returning there on the same train: "All her life she would with differences be re-enacting that story. And . . . she had an eerie sense of it all beginning again, the whole tangled business, the violence, the prison-house, the guilt. It all still existed" (p. 262). Marion is caught up in a blood guilt in allowing Hannah to walk to her death despite having been impelled to do so "in her sense . . . of Hannah's sovereignty of her royal right to dispose of herself as she would" (p. 247). Because of her attitude of involvement, Marian has been touched by the ethics of Hannah's situation.

It is never quite clear how little or how much Hannah has suffered from this unreal situation. "She has her physical luxuries, her charmed attendants, the knowledge of her power, so that her suffering whether it is created by remorse or desire is certainly tolerable."[27] At any rate, in the unquiet world of Gaze, Hannah's role is that of the enchantress imposing her will on those who pander to her predicament. She is the unicorn in the garden, desired because of its strange magical powers which destroys violently when at bay. She becomes the courtly lady in the castle favouring and rejecting at will a bevy of courtly wooers. Hannah is also a Circe who enchants in order to impose her will on her companions. She is particularly the female vampire who feasts on the imagination of her subjects. These four main allusions structured round the characterisation of Hannah reveal one common quality; they show her as an agressor,

satisfying her desires regardless of the consequences to the subjects who become involved in her exhibitionism and introspection.

Though Hannah's agressiveness is not generally evident, particularly when one considers her physical debility, it is nevertheless present just beneath the surface. In this respect it resembles the sudden thrust of the unicorn, the physical passion behind the ceremonial of the lady and her courtly lovers, the evil touch of Circe and the secret rapacity of the vampire. It is suspected that Hannah attempted to murder her husband; she effectively despatches Gerald after her stormy episode with him. This particular set of allusive figures is significant in that the violence innate in each one is also latent; we do not know when or how it will flare up which adds to the mystery. Obviously, it is indicative of much internal stress which like volcanic forces inevitably finds an outlet.

Footnotes to The Unicorn

1
Degrees of Freedom p. 149.

2
Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1919), p. 37.

3
Ibid., p. 40.

4
Iris Murdoch, The Unicorn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1963), p. 98. All quotations from The Unicorn will hereafter be cited in the text.

5
Brewer p. 1106.

6
Ibid.

7
Man Myth and Magic (London: Purnell for BPC Publishing Ltd., 1970), VII 2910. Hereafter cited as Man Myth and Magic.

8
James J. Rorimer The Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1962) p. 5. Hereafter cited as The Unicorn Tapestries.

9
Ibid., p. 7.

10
Ibid., p. 11.

11
Man Myth and Magic VII 2910

12
The Unicorn Tapestries p. 15.

13
Ibid., p. 21.

14
Peter Buitenhuis "The Lady in the Castle" New York Times Book Review. May 12, 1963 p. 4. Hereafter cited as "The Lady in the Castle"

15
The Unicorn Tapestries p. 27

16 Ibid., p. 29

17 Ibid., p. 39.

18 Wendy Cooper, Hair: Sex, Society and Symbolism (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), p. 220.

19 W. T. H. Jackson, The Literature of the Middle Ages (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 94.

20 Ibid., p. 96.

21 Ibid., p. 97.

22 "Fable Mates" The Times Literary Supplement September 6, 1963, p. 669.

23 Ibid.,

24 "The Lady in the Castle" p. 4.

25 Sheridan Le Fanu Carmilla in Novels of Mystery from the Victorian Age (London: Pilot Press Ltd., 1954), p. 589.

26 Ibid., p. 588.

27 Robert Detweiler, "Iris Murdoch's 'The Unicorn'" Religious Dimensions in Literature, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), p. 16.

Iris Murdoch has written sixteen novels; in this thesis a detailed study has been made of four of them in an attempt to assess the contribution of allusive material in her works. The four novels selected for closer criticism are among her early works published between 1955 and 1963, leaving a period of more than ten years up to the present. However, the method of discussion employed in the thesis may be profitably extended to many of Miss Murdoch's other works.

A study of allusive material in the novels of Iris Murdoch can be useful in illuminating both her thematic preoccupation and narrative technique. The themes which have emerged in our consideration of four novels are extended and repeated in others.

Under the Net is concerned with the quest for self-knowledge, the hazards of attempting to live according to narrow ideological formulas, and the dangers of solipsism. The main theme in The Flight from the Enchanter is the abuse inherent in the exercise of social and personal power. Like Under the Net but even more forcibly, it stresses the dangers of egoism. A further aspect of the power theme is dominant in A Severed Head where the professional uses his discipline, psychoanalysis in this instance, to dominate the lives of patients and others. Joined with the power theme is again the idea of self-centredness. The Unicorn also explores the theme of egocentricity in that a group of characters, trying to live their lives according to their own fantasies, become destructive to themselves and to one another.

The Sandcastle repeats many of the ideas expressed in these four

novels. Mor, a middle aged man, in his infatuation for Rain Carter, a very young artist, must come to terms with the implications of passion and social responsibility in the process of seeking maturity. As in the case of Bradley Pearson in The Black Prince and Martin Lynch-Gibbon in A Severed Head, Mor's conduct leads to deceit and disregard for others which he, along with other characters, must reconcile with his self-image for the benefit of his ultimate self-knowledge. But even in such deceptively simple mannered societies as those of The Nice and the Good and A Fairly Honourable Defeat evil may lie close to seemingly trivial forms of individual moral short-sightedness.

This becomes more apparent in treatments of the issues of freedom and enslavement, so complexly explored in The Flight from the Enchanter and The Unicorn, which also appear elsewhere. Social conventions can imprison. Just as they mirror the initial limited vision of Martin Lynch-Gibbon, they prevent Edmund Narraway in The Italian Girl from seeing as individuals the family's succession of maids; they lock Ann Peronett in An Unofficial Rose into a dead marriage. But rootlessness, the opposite pole of social order, can also produce aberrant and bizarrely destructive human behaviour. Elsa and David Levkin, the Russians given refuge in The Italian Girl, like the Lusiewicz brothers in Flight with no clear future of their own, sexually ensnare members of the family.

The characters of Iris Murdoch's novels may be enslaved by society and by the will of others stronger than themselves. But they are also figuratively enslaved by their passions and their obsessions. Pat Dumay's political fanaticism in The Red and the Green, Carel's Satanist obsession with the works of Heidegger in The Time of the Angels and ninety year old

Bruno's obsession with the past, expressed through his fascination with spiders, enable the novelist to explain how intellectual preoccupations bring about destructive neglect of others and disintegration of self. By exploring allusively the singleminded interests of such characters, she enriches the reader's understanding of them. Without her thorough development of the implications of history, theology, and zoology in these cases, our understanding of the characters would be less complete. Thus the thematic material of the novels is developed through a narrative technique which makes frequent use of allusion.

In Bradley Pearson's Foreword to The Black Prince he describes his intended approach to the events he is about to relate: "Although several years have now passed since the events recorded in this fable, I shall in telling it adopt the modern technique of narration, allowing the narrating consciousness to pass like a light along its series of present moments, aware of the past, unaware of what is to come" (p. xi). This rubric may be justly applied to all of Iris Murdoch's novels; they are full of suspense and unusual incident, from Under the Net to The Sacred and Profane Love Machine.

Added to a skilful narrative, in certain works there is a unifying central symbol frequently suggested by their titles. The Sandcastle, for instance, is a reference to Rain Carter's experience of trying unsuccessfully to make dry sand coalesce to form a definite shape; it is the same with people's lives which are subject to all kinds of distracting influences. An Unofficial Rose shows the conflict between well-ordered social convention and wild sexual power as symbolised by the unofficial rose. The Red and the Green whose title symbolises the opposing forces of

England and Ireland, describes the conflicts between members of an Anglo-Irish family, divided as to their national and political loyalties. However, the most outstanding example of this concentration of meaning in a central symbol is The Bell where the title-word itself symbolises different qualities to different individuals, thus revealing their varying standards and moral judgement.

Nevertheless, perhaps the most prominent technique in Iris Murdoch's story-telling is her use of allusion. A close study of four early novels has revealed that the author uses allusive sources to create character and to exemplify her ideas; in this way, character delineation and philosophy become interwoven. A more general examination of allusive material in some other works indicates that Iris Murdoch continues to make use of this technique.

In The Italian Girl, for example, Otto is a creature out of a Gothic world; a wood engraver and stone-carver, his workshop with its half completed tombstones resembles a Druid meeting-place. Carel, rector of a non-existent church in The Time of the Angels who still wears his cassock to preach that God is dead, that the freed angels are terrible and that goodness is impossible, is a Lucifer figure. The irresponsible Austin in An Accidental Man is a comic Odysseus dallying with the nymph Calypso/Mitzi while his patient wife Penelope/Dorina sits spinning dutifully at home. Austin's progress from disaster to disaster is a kind of Odyssey until finally he reaches a happy haven.

A criticism of Iris Murdoch's penultimate novel The Black Prince, published in 1973, reveals that she has produced yet another philosophical

work richly endowed with allusive references: "The title refers, of course, not to Edward III's warrior son but to Hamlet, whom Iris Murdoch's narrator describes as 'the tormented empty sinful consciousness of a man seared by the bright light of art, the god's flayed victim, dancing the dance of creation.' And it may as well be said at once that the reviewer considers The Black Prince to be Miss Murdoch's Hamlet . . ."[1]

Preoccupation with material of such vast potentialities as the Hamlet motif in this, a later work, is indicative of the novelist's sustained absorption in allusion, a form of indirection, as the straightest path to wisdom and truth. Thus we see in Iris Murdoch's fiction a continuing tendency to use allusive material centrally and meaningfully.

[1] Anonymous, "Letting Others Be," Times Literary Supplement, 23 February 1973, p. 197.

Bibliography

A. The Novels of Iris Murdoch

Under the Net. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1955.

The Flight from the Enchanter. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1956.

The Sandcastle. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1957.

The Bell. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1958.

A Severed Head. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1961.

An Unofficial Rose. New York: The Viking Press, 1962.

The Unicorn. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1963.

The Italian Girl. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1964.

The Red and the Green. New York: The Viking Press, 1965.

The Time of the Angels. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.

The Nice and the Good. New York: The Viking Press, 1968.

Bruno's Dream. London: Chatto and Windus, 1969.

A Fairly Honourable Defeat. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970.

An Accidental Man. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971.

The Black Prince. New York: The Viking Press Inc., 1973.

The Sacred and Profane Love Machine. London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1974.

A Severed Head - A play in Three Acts (with J. B. Priestley) London: 1964.

B. Criticism and General Works

Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Little Mermaid." The Golden Wonder Book for Children. London: Odham's Press Ltd., 1934.

Anon. "Fable Mates" Times Literary Supplement, 6 September, 1963, p.669

Anon. "Letting Others Be" Times Literary Supplement, 23 February, 1973, p. 197.

Barrett, William. "English Opposites" Atlantic Monthly, CCXI, (June, 1963), pp. 131-32.

Bleiler, E. F., ed. Three Gothic Novels. New York: Dover Publications, 1966.

Brewer, E. Cobham. A Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. London: Cassell and Co. 1952, passim.

Buitenhuis, Peter. "The Lady in the Castle" New York Times Book Review, (12 May, 1963), p. 4.

Byatt, A. S. Degrees of Freedom. London: Chatto and Windus, 1965.

Carroll, Lewis. Through the Looking Glass. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Cooper, Wendy. Hair: Sex, Society and Symbolism. New York: Stein and Day, 1971.

Culley, Ann. "Theory and Practice: Characterisation in the Novels of Iris Murdoch." Modern Fiction Studies: A Critical Quarterly, Lafayette, Indiana: The Purdue University Department of English, XV, No. 3. (Autumn 1969), pp. 344-5.

Delevoy, Robert L. Goya. London: Heinemann Ltd., 1954.

Detweiler, Robert. "Iris Murdoch's 'The Unicorn'." Religious Dimensions in Literature. Ed. Lea A. Bedford. New York: The Seabury Press, 1969.

Encyclopedia Britannica. London: William Benton, 1973, 12, 933; 14, 858; 23, 957.

Freud, Sigmund. Totem and Taboo. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1919.

German, Howard. "Allusions in the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch." Modern Fiction Studies: A Critical Quarterly. Vol. XV, No. 3. (Autumn, 1969) pp. 361-377.

Heyd, Ruth L. "An Interview with Iris Murdoch." University of Windsor Review. (Spring, 1965), p. 142.

The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Animal Kingdom. ed. P. K. Knauth, U. S. A.: R. B. Clark, 1970. passim.

Jackson, W. T. H. The Literature of the Middle Ages. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Jones, Ernest. The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud. 3 vols, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1957, Vol. 3.

Graves, Robert. The Greek Myths. 2 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955, passim.

Kenney, Alice P. "The Mythic History of 'A Severed Head.'" Modern Fiction Studies: A Critical Quarterley. XV, No. 3. (Autumn 1969), pp. 387-401.

Kermode, Frank. "The House of Fiction: Interviews with Seven English Novelists". Puritan Review. XXX, Spring, 1963, pp. 63-4.

Le Fanu, Sheridan. Carmilla. London: Everleigh, Nash and Grayson Ltd., 1923.

Levin, Harry. "Symbolism and Fiction". Learners and Discerners: Discussions of Modern Literature. Ed. R. Scholes. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964.

Lewis, C. D. trans. The Aeneid of Virgil. New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1953.

Ley, Willy. The Lungfish and the Unicorn: an Excursion into Romantic Zoology. New York: Modern Age Books, 1941.

Malcolm, Norman. Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir, with a Biographical sketch by Henrik von Wright. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Man, Myth and Magic. London: Purnell for BPC Publishing Ltd., 1970, VII, 2910.

Mehta, Ved. The Fly and The Fly Bottle. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963.

Muller, W. H. "Egyptian Mythology" in The Mythology of All Races. Ed. Louis Hébert Gray and John Arnott McCulloch, Boston: M. Jones, 1918. XII.

Murdoch, Iris. Sartre: Romantic Rationalist. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1953.

Murray, William M. "A Note on the Iris Murdoch Manuscripts in the University of Iowa Libraries." Modern Fiction Studies XV, No. 3 (Autumn, 1969). p. 446.

Pears, David. Wittgenstein. London: Fontana/Collins, 1971.

Petersen, R. T. The Birds. New York: Time-Life Books, 1963.

Pobe, Marcel (text) and Roubier Jean (Photography). The Art of Roman Gaul. London: Readers Union, The Galley Press, 1962.

Queneau, Raymond. Pierrot. London: John Lehmann, 1950.

Rabinovitz, Rubin. Iris Murdoch. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968.

Rorimer James J. The Unicorn Tapestries at the Cloisters: A Picture Book. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1962.

Ross, Anne. Pagan Celtic Britain. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. La Nausée. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1938.

Scholes, Robert. The Fabulators. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Wittgenstein Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1922.

Wolfe, Peter. The Disciplined Heart: Iris Murdoch and Her Novels. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1966.