THE ENCHANTER FIGURE IN THE NOVELS OF IRIS MURDOCH

by

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ABSTRACT

The novels of Iris Murdoch examined in this thesis fall into two categories, defined by herself as "open" and "closed." The "open" novels are The Sandcastle, The Nice and the Good, An Unofficial Rose, The Red and the Green, The Bell and Under the Net. The "closed" novels are The Italian Girl, The Unicorn, The Time of the Angels, The Flight from the Enchanter, A Severed Head, Bruno's Dream and A FairlyHonourable Defeat. The terms "open" and "closed" are defined, as well as other terms important in the study of Iris Murdoch's novels, such as "journalistic" and "crystalline" novels, "ordinary language man," "totalitarian man," "enchantment," "fantasy," "form," "contingency," "myth," "love," "normal reality," and "symbolic reality." In each novel there is an enchanter who is a figure of power and an object of fantasy to other characters. This figure is described in terms of references to myths, fairy tales, fables, folklore, or philosophical concepts. The enchanter figure is of two kinds, "ordinary," or "exotic," and is seen by the reader as existing on two levels of reality in the novels, the "normal" and the "symbolic." On the normal level, the enchanter figure is seen as a person in a set of
circumstances. On the symbolic level, he or she is seen as an allegorical figure. The techniques Iris Murdoch employs in presenting this figure on both levels of reality are the chief concern of this thesis, although the enchanter figure's importance in terms of the main themes of the novels are also discussed. These themes are primarily concerned with love as the highest good and as a process through which fantasy is overcome and a perception of reality is achieved. Through the enchanter figure, Iris Murdoch's ethical views, her literary skill, and the wide range of her sources of knowledge are revealed.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

A logical starting point for a discussion of Iris Murdoch's novels is her theory of personality, for it is the pivot from which swing both her literary criticism and her ethics. Her theory, in all probability, is the result of her dissatisfaction with the modern concept of personality, a dissatisfaction she expresses in two articles in particular, "Against Dryness" and "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited." The present idea of personality, she says in these essays, is too shallow and flimsy, for it presents man as either "ordinary language man" or "totalitarian man."

"Ordinary language man" is developed from materialistic behaviourism, modified by linguistic philosophy, and may be explained thus:

My inner life, for me just as for others, is identifiable as existing only through the application to it of public concepts, concepts which can only be constructed on the basis of overt behaviour.

"Ordinary language man" is not overwhelmed by any structure larger than himself, he is "too abstract, too conventional; he incarnates the commonest and vaguest network of conventional moral thought." This concept of man, she says,
represents "the surrender to convention." 4 "Totalitarian man," on the other hand, is solitary, "monarch of all he surveys and totally responsible for all his actions. Nothing transcends him." 5 He is like "a neurotic who seeks to cure himself by unfolding a myth about himself." 6 In his solipsism, "totalitarian man" is "too concrete, too neurotic." 7 Not surprisingly, she calls this concept of man "the surrender to neurosis." 8

Neither the conventional nor the neurotic view of man, in her opinion, describes accurately the human personality. What is needed, in the present, is a "satisfactory Liberal theory of personality" 9 which will provide "a standpoint for considering real human beings in their variety." 10 This idea of "real human beings in their variety" is at the core of her own idea of personality. Man, in her view, cannot be classified and defined, because he is unique, "unutterably particular," 11 "substantial, impenetrable, individual, indefinable and valuable." 12 He is above all "opaque," that is, mysterious, unknowable, unpredictable, or "contingent," a term that is important in the consideration of her ideas and her fiction, for it is a term which she uses often in her critical discussions. Not only is contingency an important element in the human personality, but it is, in fact, "the essence of personality." 13 Her concept, then, sees man as "free and
separate and related to a rich and complicated world.  

The modern conventional and neurotic ideas of personality, in her view, have unfortunate effects on modern novels, which also tend to be either conventional or neurotic. "Ordinary language man" is associated with "journalistic" novels, which are large, shapeless and documentary, "offering a commentary on current institutions or on some matter out of history." In these novels, man is seen in his social aspect only, ("my inner life ... is identifiable as existing only through the application to it of public concepts"), not also as an individual who is "contingent." "Totalitarian man" is associated with "crystalline" novels which are small and allegorical, "a tight metaphysical object which wishes it were a poem and which attempts to convey, often in mythical form, some central truth about the human condition." In these novels, man is seen as completely alone, alienated from his social environment. He suffers from angst, a lack of belief in universal reason. He mistrusts, on the one hand, his inner life, finding it insubstantial, or on the other, he dramatizes his situation into a myth. Thus, though he presents "an interesting and touching symbol of the plight of modern man," he is not a unique individual, for he, like the fictional world he inhabits, is "too transparent," a world "without magic or terror" or "the enticing mystery of
the unknown."19 He and his world, in other words, are not contingent, and therefore, in her opinion, not satisfactorily rendered.

Neither the "journalistic" nor the "crystalline" novel fulfills her ideal of fiction, which is most fully realized in the Nineteenth-century novels of the realistic tradition. These novels of characters, which are victims of neither convention nor neurosis, are concerned with "real various individuals struggling in society."20 There is, in them,

a plurality of real persons more or less naturalistically presented in a large social scene, and representing mutually independent centers of significance which are those of real individuals.21

The social scene itself is "a life-giving framework and not a set of dead conventions or stereotyped settings inhabited by stock characters."22 These novels reveal their authors' "display of tolerance"23 which is "a god-like capacity for so respecting and loving their characters to make them exist as free and separate beings."24 This is a display of

a real apprehension of persons other than the author as having a right to exist and to have a separate mode of being which is important and interesting to themselves.25

These characters thus, are not just social beings, or solitary and solipsistic neurotics, or merely "puppets in the
exterioization of some closely locked psychological conflict of ...[the authors'] ... own.  

They are "real various individuals" because of their authors' respect, tolerance or love, for them. This "love" of an author for his characters is explained by John Bayley, Iris Murdoch's husband, whose view she obviously shares:

What I understand by an author's love for his characters is a delight in their independent existence as other people, an attitude towards them which is analogous to our feelings towards those we love in life; an intense interest in their personalities combined with a sort of detached solicitude, a respect for their freedom.

In Iris Murdoch's opinion, modern novelists lack this "display of tolerance," this love for their characters. This is the main reason why their novels do not conform to her ideal of fiction. She does not exempt her own works from this criticism. She says in an interview in 1963 that her novels oscillate rather between attempts to portray a lot of people and giving in to a powerful plot or story ... between achieving a kind of intensity through having a very powerful story and sacrificing characters and having the characters and losing the intensity.

This "oscillation," she explains in a later interview in 1968, is a kind of alternation between a sort of closed novel, where my own obsessional feeling about
the novel is very strong and draws it closely together, and an open novel, where there are more accidental and separate and free characters.29

"Open" novels, she explains further,

start with experience. That is, I start with two or three people in some kind of situation ... experience in some quite ordinary sense --- and people, without thinking of them as playing any special roles.30

It is apparent that "open" novels resemble the Nineteenth-century novels of character of which she approves. Of the thirteen novels I shall discuss in this thesis, six may be considered "open." These are The Sandcastle (1957), The Nice and the Good (1968), An Unofficial Rose (1962), The Red and the Green (1965), The Bell (1958), and Under the Net (1954), her first novel. This last, though properly in the picaresque mode, has more resemblance to her "open" novels than to the "closed" ones, and for the sake of convenience, will be considered with the first group.

The "closed" novel is in fact, as she says of the "crystalline" novel,

a closely-coiled, carefully constructed object wherein the story rather than the people is the important thing, and wherein the story perhaps suggests a particular, fairly clear moral.31
Unlike "open" novels, "closed" novels start, not with experience, but with an idea. Often at the root of the idea there is "a kind of religious or metaphysical conception," (she gives as examples The Unicorn and The Time of the Angels). Once the idea exists, a "myth" is discovered to embody it, and in the process of writing, the "myth" becomes the dominant feature "acting as a guide and a spark to the writer's imagination," as the interviewer of that 1968 interview puts it. It is obvious that "myth" has a special meaning in this context which is different from the conventional one. It refers to the narrative pattern of the novel, or, in her own words, "the structure of the work itself, the myth as it were of the work." In a "closed" novel, the narrative pattern, structure, "myth," or form, makes the novel into "a self-contained and indeed a self-satisfied object. This describes not only the "closed" novel, but the idea of personality that is associated with it, that of "totalitarian man." Seven of the novels I shall discuss are "closed": The Italian Girl (1964), The Unicorn (1963), The Time of the Angels (1966), The Flight from the Enchanter (1955), A Severed Head (1961), Bruno's Dream (1969), and A Fairly Honourable Defeat (1970). These novels are tightly constructed, consisting of, as one critic says of A Severed Head, which is a typical "closed" novel, carefully wrought
"patterns ... artifices ... coincidences and arrangement."\textsuperscript{36}

It is not surprising, in view of her approval of Nineteenth-century novels, that Iris Murdoch prefers to write "open" novels. She states her literary aim in the 1968 interview thus:

I would like to be thought of as a realistic writer, in the sense in which good English novelists have been realists in the past. I want to talk about ordinary life and what things are like and people are like and so on, and to create characters who are real, free characters.\textsuperscript{37}

This does not suggest, however, that she wishes to make the "myth" of the novel subordinate to the characters. For she says that a novel, like all art, must have form. Her aim is to harmonize form and the free development of characters, or as she puts it, to achieve a kind of "synthesis between people and myth."\textsuperscript{38} A novel, she says:

must be a house fit for free characters to live in; and to combine form with a respect for reality with all its odd contingent ways is the highest art of prose.\textsuperscript{39}

This synthesis, though, is not easy to achieve. Modern novelists, in her opinion, have a tendency to yield too readily to form.\textsuperscript{40} She includes herself in this statement. In the 1968 interview she says:
What I feel my work needs, what makes it less good is that I'm not able to present characters with enough depth and ordinariness, and accidentalness. This has always been a problem for me --- my characters get cramped by my story. 41

Critics tend to agree with her own modest evaluation of her works. Their opinions veer towards two extremes. One set considers her characters mere puppets whose sole function is to further the plot. For this reason, they do not evoke empathy from the readers. 42 Another set of opinions regards her characters as "comic grotesques," 43 who are too eccentric so that they are without a "centre of self," 44 that is, some explicable pattern of behaviour. The first set of opinions may have some justification when applied to a few of the characters in some of her "closed" novels, for example, David and Elsa in The Italian Girl. If, according to the second set of opinions, her characters are too eccentric, it is because she has given them an independent existence. For, she says, when one has the privilege of knowing one's friends more intimately, one learns that people are eccentric. 45 Thus, she has created her eccentric characters with love, and has displayed that tolerance which she says only the great novelists possess.

There is a remarkable similarity between her literary theory and her ethical views. This is not surprising, for
she says that art (this includes all the arts, and not only literature) and morals are one; "their essence is the same. The essence of both is love." The process of love requires a denial of self, in order to perceive others objectively. Love is "an absence of self," the "non-violent apprehension of difference" between oneself and others. It is "an exercise of justice and realism and really looking." In so "looking," one apprehends reality, the "loving respect for a reality other than oneself."

This idea of love is quite contrary to her view of both courtly and romantic love in which the lover, instead of forgetting his own psychological peculiarities, imposes them on the loved object. He does not apprehend the reality of the other's existence, but idealizes her or him. An example is Effingham Cooper's love for Hannah Crèan-Smith in The Unicorn, in which he thinks of her as his "Castle Perilous," his "Beatrice," a "belle dame sans merci," "an image of God," "a doomed figure," "a Lilith," "a pale death-dealing enchantress: anything but a human being." This is the crux of Iris Murdoch's criticism of courtly love, and it is equally applicable to romantic love: the lover does not see the loved object as a real, free human being, unique and contingent, but as an idea of his own making.

In Iris Murdoch's self-forgetting ethics of love, when
one is able to perceive a reality outside oneself, one experiences "a release of the spirit," an enlargement and enrichment of one's own personality. This is freedom. Freedom comes as a result of "the disciplined overcoming of self." Freedom, as well as love, is a virtue, for goodness is the "attempt to pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is." The world as it really is is "complicated," full of terror, mystery and formlessness. It is contingent. Goodness is therefore an acceptance of this contingency in the world and in other people.

The self-effacing nature of her ethics is opposite to that expressed in most modern fiction, which emphasizes the self. Her criticism of Sartre and Freud, the two important influences, in her opinion, in modern novels, is applicable to much of modern fiction itself. Sartre and Freud, she says, see life as an "egocentric drama," and man "still at the stage of thinking perpetually of himself." Because of this, he cannot, in her sense, love others. Thus he forms relationships with others that are "instances of imperfect sympathies." For the Sartrean man, love is "an assertion of self," a demand by one to be adored by the other. This idea of love, she says, represents "a battle between two hypnotists in a closed room," each seeking to enslave the other.
This view of human relationships unfortunately reflects, in her opinion, situations in life where loving is more often than not "an assertion of self." This is because man is basically selfish, possessed of a psyche that is "relentlessly looking after itself." Its chief preoccupation is to protect itself from pain, and this it does by not facing unpleasant realities, such as contingency. Thus, it seeks consolation in daydreaming. It views the world, not through a transparent glass, but through "a cloud of more or less fantastic reverie designed to protect the psyche from pain." It is difficult to form loving relationships with others, for we cannot see them because we are completely enclosed in a fantasy world of our own into which we try to draw things from outside, not grasping their reality and independence, making them into dream objects of our own.

In the discussion of her fiction that follows, the people "enclosed in a fantasy world" will be called the enchanted, and the "dream objects" the enchanters. She uses the term "enchanter" herself in her second novel, The Flight from the Enchanter, to describe just such an object of others' fantasy, Mischa Fox. Though the enchanted have the tendency to fantasize about the enchanters, attributing to the enchanters qualities that they may or may not possess,
and generally consider the enchanters to be superior people
to themselves, there are also characters who do possess un-
usual qualities or abilities that make them natural objects
of others' fantasy. She speaks of this in an interview:

I think ... that there is a great deal of
spare energy racing around, which very often
... focuses a situation and makes a person
play a commanding role. People are often
looking for a god or ready to cast somebody
in the role of a demon .... I think people
possessed of this kind of energy do come in
and generate situations. One's seen it
happen in life. But then too, there are
always victims ready to step forward.63

People with this "spare energy," are often natural leaders,
active people who initiate things and "generate situations."
Their excessive energy is often translated by the enchanted,
who are generally passive themselves, into charisma, a charm
that makes the enchanters attract others.

In each of her novels, there is one character who is
regarded as someone special by others. This person may be
male or female, young or old, and may or may not possess
that "spare energy" that generates situations. He may also
be an exponent of Iris Murdoch's philosophy, as are Bledyard
in The Sandcastle, the Abbess in The Bell, Hugo Belfounder in
Under the Net, John Ducane in The Nice and the Good, or Nigel
Boas in Bruno's Dream. This character is the enchanter
figure and there is always, in his description, an extra
mythical dimension --- myth is here used in the conventional sense. He is seen on one level as a person in a set of circumstances, and on another level as an allegorical figure.

The enchanter figures in the thirteen novels are of two types, the "ordinary" and the "exotic." The "ordinary" enchanters, Bledyard, Ducane, Emma Sands (An Unofficial Rose) and Millie Kinnard (The Red and the Green) are not conspicuous as enchanter figures. They appear to be perfectly ordinary people with what A.S. Byatt calls "carefully placed backgrounds of normality,\(^6\) for they are very much rooted in the society which they inhabit. In appearance and behaviour they also seem ordinary. They do not possess obvious symbols of power such as great wealth or influential positions or exceptional intellects. Beneath the seemingly normal surface, however, the "ordinary" enchanters are invested with special qualities. Some, like Emma and Bledyard, have keen insights; they are able to perceive the illusions other people weave around themselves. This illusion-breaking quality however, is not necessarily the reason for which others regard them as enchanters. Rather, their power as enchanters rests in other people's belief, real or imaginary, that they are able to satisfy others' emotional needs.

The "ordinary" enchanters occasionally behave in a most unusual manner; examples are Ducane's participation
in a "black mass" and Millie's attempt to seduce a young nephew. Such strange acts are usually committed in secret, and known, if at all, at least initially, to only a few. These acts are also isolated incidents rather than part of a generally strange behaviour pattern, so that on the whole, to others, these enchanters appear to be normal people who lead ordinary lives.

The mythical dimensions in the characterizations of the "ordinary" enchanters are often very subtly revealed. Bledyward, for example, has a unique characteristic, an impediment in his speech which he had partly overcome by the expedient of repeating some words twice as he talked. This he did with a sort of slow deliberation which made his utterances ludicrous.65

This repetition of certain words is seen when he says to Rain: "I am a great admirer of your father's work" (p. 73), and when expounding his theory of art: "It is a fact ... that we cannot really observe our betters ..." (p. 77). This speech impediment is, on one level, an ordinary surface fact in the description of Bledyward. Viewed on another level, however, it has a mythic context and suggests that Bledyward is a human oracle, an "incarnate human god"66 who speaks with the voice of god. On this mythic level, Bledyward's role takes on another
dimension. He becomes a prophet. Similarly, Emma Sands is frequently compared with snakes. She sits "curled like a snake in a hole," and speaks with a "viperous satisfaction" (p. 96) to Hugh. On one level, these images describe Emma's appearance and mannerism. On another, they evoke the pythian myths, and Emma's role, like Bledyard's, takes on a mythic dimension. She is allegorically the pythian priestess, who, again like Bledyard, is a truth-speaker, a prophetess.

The "exotic" enchanters, the Abbess, Hugo Belfounder, Maggie (The Italian Girl), Hannah Crean-Smith, Carel Fisher (The Time of the Angels), Mischa Fox (The Flight from the Enchanter), Honor Klein (A Severed Head), Nigel Boas (Bruno's Dream), and Julius King (A Fairly Honourable Defeat), are immediately recognizable as enchanter figures for several reasons. They are mysterious. Mischa's obscure origins and the vague central European backgrounds of Hugo and Julius contribute to their mystique. They behave strangely, almost all the time, as Hannah, Carel and Nigel do. They are associated with obvious symbols of power, such as great wealth and what are generally considered as glamorous occupations. Hugo, Mischa and Julius, for example, are fabulously rich, Hugo is a film producer, Mischa owns a chain of newspapers and Julius is a renowned scientist. The "exotic" enchanters
may also have exceptional intellects which others hold in awe. Honor, for example, is considered by others to have super-intellectual power, one of the reasons why they fear her. Most important of all, the mythical dimensions in their characterizations are presented usually in a fairly explicit manner. Honor, for example, is referred to directly as "the severed head," and "a Medusa," allusions to the Medusa myth which is central to *A Severed Head*.

The enchanter figures, as well as playing a role in the plot and theme of the novels in which they appear, have another important function. They are the lenses, so to speak, through which one sees two levels of reality in the novels. One is normal reality, in which things are as they appear on the surface. The other is symbolic reality in which surface facts have another, allegorical significance. For example, the vaults in *The Nice and the Good* are, on the level of normal reality, old bomb shelters. On the symbolic level, however, they represent the underworld. In all except four of the novels discussed here, the level of normal reality is the world of form, which is created by man, and the symbolic level the contingent world, which is dark, mysterious, and usually beyond man's control. The four exceptions are *Under the Net*, *The Unicorn*, *The Time of the Angels* and *The Flight from the Enchanter*. The reverse is true in these
novels in which normal reality is the contingent world and symbolic reality the world of form. The two levels of reality, which are usually represented in the novels by different physical settings, are described in terms of imagery, allusions and references to myth, certain patterns of events, and the shifting of characters, particularly the enchanter figures, from one location to another. The enchanter figures exist on both levels, on the normal level as people and on the symbolic level as allegorical figures. The method Iris Murdoch employs in presenting them on the different levels varies with the novels, not only, as one might expect, between "open" and "closed" novels, but also within the two kinds.

In the remaining chapters of this thesis, I shall examine these various techniques. Chapter Two will consider, in three sections, the enchanter figures in the "open" novels. In Section I, I shall discuss Bledyard and Ducane, who are presented in a similar manner in The Sandcastle and The Nice and the Good. They are seen, first in one setting in which they are simply people, then in another in which they are allegorical figures. A different technique is used in the descriptions of Emma Sands and Millie Kinnard, whom I shall discuss in Section II. These two enchanter figures in An Unofficial Rose and The Red and the Green
are often seen as both people and allegorical figures at the same time, rather than alternately as one or the other. Section III examines the Abbess and Hugo Belfounder, for they are both "exotic" enchanters in "open" novels, although Iris Murdoch employs quite different techniques in presenting them. In *The Bell*, the Abbess is never seen outside the Abbey, in fact, not outside the confessional booth, and then only by Michael, while in *Under the Net*, Hugo appears in a large number of places which symbolize both the world of form and the contingent world.

Another kind of grouping occurs in Chapter Three which examines the enchanter figures in "closed" novels. Here the basis of comparison of the three sections is the extent of remoteness of setting in the novels. The worlds of *The Italian Girl*, *The Unicorn* and *The Time of the Angels*, for example, appear to be completely isolated, with no connection with a larger society outside. Section I of this chapter will discuss Maggie, Hannah Crean-Smith and Carel Fisher in their isolated, remote environments. In Section II, I shall discuss Mischa Fox and Honor Klein, for both *The Flight from the Enchanter* and *A Severed Head* are set in an environment that has some link with the world outside the novels. A final section analyzes Nigel Boas and Julius King who appear in the latest of the novels discussed here, *Bruno's Dream*. 
and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. These two novels are set very much in a larger society, that of London. The technique Iris Murdoch uses in presenting these two enchanter figures are also alike. Like Emma and Millie, Nigel and Julius are often seen simultaneously as people and as allegorical figures, providing the reader with a kind of "double vision" of the two levels of reality. In Chapter Four, I shall attempt to draw and state some conclusions about these techniques.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE


2 "Against Dryness," 16.

3 "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," 255.

4 Ibid., 254.

5 "Against Dryness," 17.


7 Ibid., 255.

8 Ibid., 254.

9 "Against Dryness," 18.

10 "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," 255.


12 Ibid., 20.


14 "Against Dryness," 18.


16 Ibid., 264.

17 Ibid., 255.

18 Iris Murdoch, "The Existentialist Hero," The Listener, 43 (March 23, 1950), 524.

19 Ibid., 524.

20 "Against Dryness," 18.

23Ibid., 257.
24Ibid., 267.
25Ibid., 257.
26Ibid., 257.
28Frank Kermode, "The House of Fiction," Partisan Review, 30 (Spring, 1963), 64.
30Ibid., 65-66.
32Rose, "Iris Murdoch, informally," 66.
33Ibid., 65.
34Kermode, "The House of Fiction," 64.
37Rose, "Iris Murdoch, informally," 65.
38Kermode, "The House of Fiction," 64.
40Ibid., 271.
41Rose, "Iris Murdoch, informally," 65.
42Among this first group are James Hall, The Lunatic Giant in the Drawing Room, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968), pp. 181-212, William Van O'Connor, "Iris Murdoch:


45 Ruth Lake Heyd, "An Interview with Iris Murdoch," University of Windsor Review, 1 (Spring, 1965), 143.


47 Ibid., 54.


49 "The Sublime and the Good," 54.


51 Heyd, "An Interview with Iris Murdoch," 139.


53 Ibid., p. 93.


55 Ibid., p. 99.

56 Ibid., p. 51.

58 [Sartre, *Romantic Rationalist*, p. 96.]
60 [Ibid., p. 78.]
61 [Ibid., p. 79.]
63 Rose, "Iris Murdoch, informally," 68.
68 The snake imagery is relevant to Emma's role as prophetess. It alludes to the pythian myths in which the pythian priestess drinks the fumes of prophecy as described in Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* (2 vols., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), I, p. 178.
70 [Ibid., 435.]
CHAPTER TWO
THE ENCHANTER FIGURE IN "OPEN" NOVELS

I. Bledyard and Ducane

In The Sandcastle and The Nice and the Good, the enchanter figure is presented in a fairly direct manner. The two levels of reality in these novels are quite distinctly symbolized by particular locations and the enchanter figure's movements from one place to another signify a definite change of roles. The role-changing however, is not abrupt, for each enchanter possesses a personal trait that is a clue to his allegorical role and which serves as a link between his two roles, as ordinary person and allegorical figure. In Bledyard, as I have mentioned in Chapter One, it is his stammer, a human characteristic that has allegorical implications. In Ducane, it is his lefthandedness, which suggests that he has magical powers and that he is a magician on another level of reality.

In The Sandcastle, the two levels of reality are symbolized by places in sharp contrast with one another. The world of form, as always in the novels of Iris Murdoch, is created by man, and is seen as confining. This world is represented by the housing estate where Mor lives and by St. Bride's
School where he teaches. The housing estate is "a sprawling conglomeration of bright red boxes" (p. 158) which are neat, semi-detached houses that face each other like mirror images. The school consists of a number of buildings grouped around a large square of asphalt (presumably precise in measurements). Its function, as well as its exact physical shape, represents form, for it is a man-made system which operates according to a specific set of man-made rules. Its purpose is to dispense knowledge in a systematic manner to a definite number of young minds. Both the housing estate and the school are results of man's attempt to make something, whether architectural or human, into a shape.

The contingent world, by contrast, is dark, cool and mysterious, almost magical in atmosphere. It is symbolized by Demoyte's garden and by the wood bordering the school, both places significantly outdoor, outside of man-created, restricting buildings. The almost magical quality of this world is seen on the night Mor and Rain enter the garden. It is cool and dark, "strange, pregnant with trees and bushes, open to the dew and the stars" (p. 34). In it, Mor feels alarmed. His experience in the wood is similar. Driving through its entrance with Rain, he feels that it is like an "enchantment": 
It was as if since they had passed the white gate they had entered another world. The spirit of the wood pressed upon them, and Mor found himself looking from side to side expecting to see something strange (p. 87).

The contrast between form and contingency is dramatized by Mor's conflict on the day of the House match, when he is torn between the two:

He looked across the field where the housing estate lay spread out along the far boundary .... He looked back over his shoulder towards the wood. It looked cool and dark. Mor wondered if he could decently escape and decided that he couldn't (p. 158).

His dilemma signifies a larger conflict: to stay with his wife in the dry world of the housing estate, or to go off with Rain (whose name, incidentally, is an obvious symbolic contrast with the dry world) to her contingent world.

A similar contrast between the two worlds is seen in The Nice and the Good, where the world of form is structured and well-shaped, and the contingent world mysterious and unpredictable. Form is symbolized by two places, Whitehall and Trescombe in Dorset. Whitehall, like St. Bride's School, represents a system erected by man. More than the school, Whitehall suggests bureaucracy, hierarchy, and patterns. Patterned also is Dorset itself, which is described as round.
Everything in Dorset is round .... The little hills are round, these bricks are round, the yew trees that grow in the hedgerows are round, the veronica bushes, the catalpa tree, the crowns of the acacia, the pebbles on the beach, the clump of small bamboos beside that arch.

Unlike the school or Whitehall however, this world of form suggests an ideal balance, for it is a natural rather than man-made phenomenon. In this naturally harmonious world of Dorset, Kate and Octavian create their own artificial world of form in their home Trescombe. Theirs is a "big golden round world" (p. 138). "Gold," in Iris Murdoch's scheme of things, is subject to suspicion, for it symbolizes illusion, and suggests, as well, moral ambiguity. Many of her morally ambiguous characters are described in golden imagery, among them Antonia (A Severed Head), Hannah Crean-Smith (The Unicorn), Lindsay Rimmer (An Unofficial Rose), and here Kate. She, along with her husband Octavian, are also round. She has a "bright round face" (p. 18) which is constantly beaming out of the "golden" and "fuzzy ball" (p. 20) of her hair. Octavian is fittingly named --- his brother Theo calls him "that perfect O" (p. 130), for he is fat and has a "big spherical bald head" (p. 20). Like Dorset, they too appear to Ducane, in his enchantment with them, to be "just the right size" (p. 47).
Unlike the contingent places in *The Sandcastle*, which are similar to each other in that they both evoke a magical atmosphere, the two places that symbolize the contingent world here are moral opposites. One represents evil, the other good. The vaults beneath Whitehall, with its mazes of corridors, darkness and stifling air, is evil because it is the domain of Radeechy, self-styled Lucifer, who used it for the practice of black magic. Entrance to it is like "the entrance to an ancient sepulchre" (p. 217), for it is a place of death. There are rats and corpses of pigeons that Radeechy sacrificed in his black magic, cobwebs in profusion, slimy steps. The sharp angles of descent of the steps remind Ducane of kings' tombs he had visited in Greece and Egypt. Most repellent of all is a suffocating smell which causes him to experience dizziness and faintness.

A quite different place is Gunnar's cave, which is also dark and mysterious, but it is a natural creation, uncorrupted by man's evil deeds. Though the air is odoriferous, it is not caused by decaying bodies, but by vegetation from the sea. It is a place of birth, not death, for there is present water, the source of life as well as cleansing agent for man's body and symbolically, for his spirit.

Though each of the two levels of reality in *The Sandcastle* is symbolized by a place, Bledyward is seen in only
one place in each world. In this sense, he is more simply presented than Ducane. For he is a minor character who appears indoors only at the school or at Demoyte's house, and outdoor in the wood. He does not appear in Mor's home nor in the garden.

As a character in the world of form, Bledyard is "placed" not only as a master at St. Bride's School, but also as a member of an elite group, having gone to a public school with the prominent governors of St. Bride's. In appearance, Mor thinks that he would be handsome if he did not look so odd:

He had a great head of dark hair which was perfectly straight and worn a little long. It soughed to and fro as he moved and talked. He had a large moon-like face and a bull neck, big luminous eyes like a night creature, and a coarse nose. His mouth was formless and sometimes hung open. His teeth were good, but were usually concealed behind the massy flesh of his lips. He rarely smiled (p. 71).

This portrait, as Howard German points out, resembles Boswell's description of Samuel Johnson. This resemblance is significant, for Johnson, as the epitome of Eighteenth-century rationalism, represents values that are in direct opposition to those of romanticism. Bledyard, as an advocate of realistic values who practices a self-effacing, objective philosophy, is also anti-romantic. His theory of art reveals best his
philosophy. The painter's task, he says, must be approached with humility:

'When confronted with an object which is not a human being we must of course treat it reverently. We must, if we paint it, attempt to show what it is like in itself, and not treat it as a symbol of our own moods and wishes. The great painter ... is he who is humble enough in the presence of the object to attempt merely to show what the object is like. But this merely, in painting, is everything' (p. 76).

The same principle applies to portrait painting, but it is an impracticable principle. For, he says:

'Who is worthy to understand another person? ... Upon an ordinary material thing we can look with reverence, wondering simply at its being. But when we look upon a human face, we interpret it by what we are ourselves. And what are we?' (p. 77).

Since it is impossible to look reverently enough upon another human face, Bledyard has given up portrait painting.

If Bledyard's theory of art seems familiar, it is not surprising, for it is a paraphrase of Iris Murdoch's literary theory. Bledyard's belief that a painter must show objectivity, and not treat the object as a symbol or extension of his own moods and wishes, echoes Iris Murdoch's belief that a novelist must attempt to portray free characters who exist independently, and who are not symbols of his own psychological
conflicts. Great artists, whether novelists or painters, must be self-effacing, for art, she says, "is not an expression of personality, it is a question rather of the continual expelling of oneself from the matter in hand."^4

Bledyard's belief in obliterating his own personality when perceiving others is consistent with his total lack of self-consciousness. Unlike most people, he is not concerned with projecting a particular kind of image of himself. In his behaviour, he is not governed by the need to conform to socially acceptable manners. For example, at Evvy's dinner party, he is unmindful of conventional social customs; he does not participate in small talk, but sits at his ease saying nothing,

abstracted from the scene, as if he were a diner at a restaurant who had by accident to share a table with three complete strangers. He got on with his meal (p. 72).

Similarly, at his art lecture, when his audience is reduced to hysterical laughter, brought on in part by his speech impediment, he remains unruffled. Unmoved by embarrassment, he is unconcerned at being the object of laughter, intent only on pursuing his subject matter.

His lack of self-consciousness is symbolized by his lack of a first name, and by the bareness of his room. Name is identity, from which one derives one's sense of self, or
ego, if one wishes to call it that. The bare room, with no colours and no pictures, reflects his desire not to impose his personality on anything. Taste, after all, is self-expression.

His lack of self-involvement also results in a genuine concern for others. This is seen in his compassionate response to Rain's distress. At the same dinner party, where he sits in silence, Rain recalls her childhood and the recent death of her father. The memory prompts tears. Evvy and Mor are at a loss for words. Bledyard, however, stops eating, and throws down knife and fork to say that he is an admirer of her father's works. This not only consoles Rain, but also ironically --- ironically because Bledyard is characteristically unconcerned about the superficialities of social conventions --- saves an embarrassing social situation. This sensitivity to other's feelings reveals his ability to see other people, in Iris Murdoch's sense, and thus to love them.

Other people recognize this quality of compassion in him, for they regard him as someone special. Demoyte, who tolerates very few people, respects him, and considers him "undoubtedly a man" (p. 72). Mor agrees with this: "There was something exceedingly real about him. He made Evvy seem flimsy by comparison, a sort of fiction" (p. 72). Mor values his good opinion, and is wounded when treated coldly by him.
Rain admires his work, is anxious for his judgement of her portrait of Demoyte, and accepts his criticism earnestly. She accepts also his advice to leave Mor, for she recognizes his ability to see the reality of the situation. Bledyard's lack of self-involvement is also an indication that he is a free man (freedom is "the disciplined overcoming of self"). He says to Mor, again paraphrasing Iris Murdoch: "real freedom is the total absence of concern about yourself" (pp. 213-214). As freedom is "concerned with really apprehending that other people exist .... Freedom is knowing and understanding and respecting things quite other than ourselves," and as this knowledge "connects us ... with reality," Bledyard, being free, is also able to perceive reality. He sees Mor's love for Rain as romantic love, and therefore as a form of fantasy. Consequently, he tells Mor:

'There is such a thing as respect for reality. You are living on dreams now, dreams of happiness, dreams of freedom. But in all this you consider only yourself. You do not truly apprehend the distinct being of either your wife or Miss Carter' (p. 213).

That this last statement is true is confirmed by Demoyte's earlier speech to Mor: "I just wonder whether you can really see her (Rain)" (p. 110). In Iris Murdoch's world, seeing is the prerequisite to love. Mor therefore does not really
love Rain. She represents to him only an escape from his dreary marriage.

His marriage, however, is a reality. As Bledyard says to him prophetically,

'You are deeply bound to your wife and to your children, and deeply rooted in your own life. Perhaps that life ... will hold you in spite of yourself. But if you break ... these bonds you destroy a part of the world' (p. 212).

This does not imply, however, as A.S. Byatt suggests, that conventional morality is the ultimate value in Iris Murdoch's world; only that in this particular instance, it is synonymous with reality, as represented by Mor's family. Bledyard is thus cautioning Mor against losing sight of that reality by going away with Rain.

It is typical of Bledyard, and a manifestation of his freedom, that he does not shrink from interfering in the affairs of others, when he feels it his duty to do so, no matter how reluctant he may be. After he has sent Rain away, he faces Mor's wrath. Mor accuses him of interfering and of presuming to judge. He replies:

'Sometimes ... it is unavoidably our duty to attempt ... some sort of judgement - and then the suspension of judgement is not charity but the fear of being judged in return' (pp. 211-212).
Not being concerned with others' good opinion of him, he is not afraid to risk his reputation by doing what he considers his moral duty.

Far from being a morally ambiguous character who is a "lonely, unhappy man" as Peter Wolfe considers him, Bledyard, as Iris Murdoch's spokesman and practitioner of her ethics, represents goodness. He is not sentimentalized however, for he is presented as an object of comedy with a speech impediment that makes him human as well as making all his speeches ludicrously funny.

This speech impediment, as I have explained in Chapter One, is the link between his role as schoolmaster and that of prophet. His allegorical role as prophet is seen in his association with the wood. For the priest/prophet of primitive societies is also the king of the wood. Thus on the day of the House match, he emerges from the cool, contingent world of the wood. On another occasion, Mor finds him in the wood, indisputably the master, presiding over an art class, with Rain serving as model. It seems to Mor, however, that it is a different Rain, for she is "transformed," and "a prisoner" in this world ruled by Bledyard:

Master of the scene and overlooking it with a powerful eye was Bledyard, who was leaning against a tree on the far side of the clearing. Before his attention was caught by Mor,
he was looking fixedly at Miss Carter. He was in his shirt sleeves and had his hands in his pockets. His longish hair fell limply as far as his cheeks. He looked to Mor in that moment like Comus, like Lucifer (pp. 153-154).

No longer an advocate of morality, he is now, from Mor's point of view, the tempter, personifying evil. As Comus, he is the master of revelry, tempter of chaste maidens. As Lucifer, the brightest of angels, he is the tempter of other angels. He has Comus' power to bewitch, and now holds Rain as captive. For Rain says to Mor later: "You came and released me from a spell" (p. 175). This allusion to Bledyard's magical power occurs again later in Felicity's impression of him, an impression that reinforces his role as priest/prophet king of the wood. To Felicity, he is a sinister enchanter whom she sees, as she is walking through the wood, as

a man sitting on the ground with his legs drawn up in front of him. He seemed to be alone ... and was staring straight ahead of him, his arms clasped round his knees. She watched him for a long time, nearly five minutes, during which his attitude did not vary. He was a strange-looking man with hypnotic eyes and rather long hair (p. 129).

Recounting her experience to her brother and Jimmy Carde later, she says that he looked like a "fakir in a sort of trance" (p. 130). Jimmy replies flippantly, "Bledyard will put the
evil eye on you" (p. 130), whereupon Felicity shivers.

The suggestion that Bledyard, in his allegorical role, is a sinister figure contrasts distinctly with his role as a schoolmaster who lives by a strict moral code. This contrast accentuates the difference between the two levels of reality. This kind of contrast between an enchanter figure's two roles does not exist in *The Nice and the Good*. Here Ducane is, on both levels, a seeker of knowledge, a man on a quest to achieve a better understanding of the events surrounding him, and of himself.

In the world of form, Ducane appears to be an ordinary man. He is middle-aged (forty-three and looks forty-three), a lawyer and a conscientious civil servant in Whitehall, a friend to a large number of people, and a platonic lover to Kate in the other setting, Trescombe. Like most people, he is very much concerned with preserving a certain image of himself in the eyes of others. He thinks of himself as a good man, a "strong self-sufficient clean-living rather austere person to whom helping others is a natural activity" (p. 187). His desire to help others makes him a natural object of fantasy to them. They see in him the ability to satisfy their psychological needs. To Jessica, he is a father figure from whom she seeks stability after a purposeless existence. She regards him as a spiritual master, and
in fact thinks of him in terms of religious imagery. She is willing to be sacrificed for him as a martyr for a god; she had been "crucified" for him and has risen again (p. 150). Consequently, her visit to his home becomes a "pilgrimage" (p. 171); his bedroom an altar, and his wardrobe "the ark of some unfamiliar faith" (p. 195). She does not see him as an independent, separate being, thus her claim of love is not real love in Iris Murdoch's sense, but a fantasy that enslaves both of them. With tears, entreaties and hysteria, she holds him in bondage.

Kate also holds Ducane in bondage, but with platonic love, which, as I have made clear in Chapter One, is fantasy in Iris Murdoch's world. Ducane is "a very necessary man" (p. 11) to Kate who needs his love, as she needs everyone's, to feed her egotism. He plays an important part in her world of "harmonious pattern." When that pattern is threatened, when her relationship with him becomes a muddle, she immediately ends it. It is characteristic of her that her only concern is that she had made "an awful ass" (p. 352) of herself over him. To Octavian she says, "We thought he was God, didn't we, and he turns out to be just like us after all" (p. 352).

Others regard Ducane as "father confessor" (p. 191), for he possesses a talent that prompts others to confide in
him. Mary recognizes that particular coaxing intentness in Ducane's manner, his way of questioning people with close attention so as to make them tell him everything about themselves, which they usually turned out to be all too ready to do so ... [sic] (p. 213).

This talent causes her, immediately after she has decided not to tell him anything, to disclose the circumstances of her husband's accidental death. His reply reveals him to be another of Iris Murdoch's spokesmen:

'Chance is really harder to bear than mortality, and it's all chance my dear, even what seems most inevitable. It's not easy to do, but one must accept it as one accepts one's losses and one's past' (p. 215).

By accepting contingency, one comes to terms with life, and frees oneself for loving others.

Like Bledyard's stammer, Ducane's lefthandedness suggests his other role on another level of reality. Lefthandedness intimates something dark and otherworldly; it implies deviousness and possession of magical powers as well as association with the devil.10 This allusion is important when taken together with his appearance in the vaults beneath Whitehall. In his investigation into the death of Radeechy, he is led to the vaults, the other world, by the office messenger.
McGrath, who ran errands for the self-styled Lucifer, Radeechy. In the vaults, Ducane is a Faust figure who is led to the land of the dead by the devil's messenger Mephistopheles. His lefthandedness suggests that he is a conjuror, like Faust, and his journey to the vaults is also made in search of knowledge. In the vaults, he encounters evidences of the practice of black magic, and himself participates in a black mass. In this symbolic hell, he experiences a moment of truth. He had paid blackmail to McGrath in order to preserve his reputation as an honest man to the two women in his life whom he had deceived. Now, with sudden insight, he asks:

Could not evil damn a man, was there not blackness enough to kill a human soul? It is in me .... The evil is in me. There are demons and powers outside us ... but they are pigmy things. The great evil, the real evil is inside myself (p. 223).

With this realization comes the determination to accept the consequences of his deceit. He refuses to pay further blackmail.

Ducane, as Faust, has several encounters with "Helen of Troy," otherwise Judy McGrath, the wife of the devil's messenger. These meetings are comic, for on two occasions, Judy is not only stark naked, but assumes various sexually alluring postures. As she also has a face (and body) that
may possibly launch a thousand ships, her presence represents a real temptation to Ducane, whose ability to resist her testifies to his strength of character. It is perhaps not without reason that Kate thinks he resembles the Duke of Wellington, who was known as "the iron duke." Though he is able to resist her, Judy's beauty moves him to Faustian speculation:

Ducane felt, this is a moment outside my ordinary life, a moment given by a god, not perhaps by a great god, and not by a good one, but by a god certainly (p. 203).

The counterpart of the vaults in this contingent world is Gunnar's cave where Ducane swims to rescue his future stepson Pierce, stranded there by the rising water. Upon entering the cave, Ducane initially experiences sensations like those he experienced in the vaults. The air is also odoriferous, "a faintly rotten sea smell, as if the water itself were decomposing" (p. 305). He feels a similar sense of claustrophobia, and at the same time of being "removed from reality" (p. 302). Wraiths and apparitions appear before him. It is more than Faust encountering the dead of the past; it is Aeneas in the underworld. In fact, the Aeneid is specifically referred to just before Ducane's excursion to the cave. In discussing Book Six, concerning Aeneas' descent to hell, Willy tells Mary that, in his opinion, knowledge cannot be
gained in hell:

'Very few ordeals are redemptive and I doubt if the descent into hell teaches anything new. It can only hasten processes which are already in existence, and usually this just means that it degrades. You see, in hell one lacks the energy for any good change. This indeed is the meaning of hell' (p. 283).

Ducane, however, does learn in hell. He experiences another moment of truth that leads him to decide:

'If I ever get out of here I will be no man's judge. Nothing is worth doing except to kill the little rat (his image of his selfishness), not to judge, not to be superior, not to exercise power, not to seek, seek, seek. To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only this matters. All power is sin and all law is frailty. Love is the only justice' (p. 314).

Ducane's experience in the cave is an example of the archetypal experience of the epic hero in his quest through life. The cave symbolizes "the belly of the whale" and the entrance to it the magical threshold. In the hero's quest, he must pass this threshold into a sphere of rebirth. This passage is a form of annihilation; he goes inward to be reborn again. The annihilation here is the annihilation of self. In the vaults, Ducane recognizes evil in himself, the evil which he purges on his emergence from them by accepting the consequences of his deceit. In the cave, he goes a step further; he learns, in Iris Murdoch's words, to
"pierce the veil of selfishness." Thus, when he emerges from the cave, he is a different man. He has moved from "conventional niceness to a higher plane of good." The difference between "nice" and "good" is vast in Iris Murdoch's ethics. To be nice, in her view, is to be good according to conventional morality. Octavian and Kate are considered good by other people, for they are kind and generous to their friends. But they are merely nice in Iris Murdoch's terms, for their acts of charity bring to them self-gratification. They are conscious of self in their goodwill. To be good in Iris Murdoch's terms requires an obliterating of self. Theo realizes this:

Theo had begun to glimpse the distance which separates the nice and the good, and the vision of this gap terrified his soul. He had seen, far off, what is perhaps the most dreadful thing in the world, the other face of love, its blank face. Everything that he was, even the best that he was, was connected with possessive self-filling human love. That blank demand implied the death of his whole being (pp. 359-360).

The abandonment of self leads not only to love and freedom, but also to happiness. Willy expresses this view:

'Happiness ... is a matter of one's most ordinary everyday mode of consciousness being busy and lively and unconcerned with self. To be damned is for one's ordinary everyday mode of consciousness to be unremitting agonizing preoccupation with self' (p. 187).
Ducane in the end will be happy; he marries Mary, the most likeable of the women in the novel.

The Nice and the Good is a more complicated novel in terms of plot and number of characters than The Sandcastle. For this reason, Ducane is presented in a less simple manner than Bledyard. Ducane, moreover, is a major character, if not the chief character. He not only appears in more places, but is seen under a variety of conditions, working, at leisure, with his mistress, as a victim of blackmail and so on. The places representing the contingent world in this novel are not ordinary everyday places like a garden or a wood, but unusual, less frequented places. The vaults are remnants of wartime conditions, suitable, it seems, only for nefarious activities. The cave is known to be a place of danger, unsuitable for ordinary explorations. Thus, while Bledyard's presence in the wood requires no explanation --- the wood is after all in the proximity of the school --- Ducane's presence in the vaults and the cave needs to be prepared. This preparation Iris Murdoch offers in an intricate, often ingenious plot pattern. This more complicated method of describing an enchanter figure is more characteristic of her usual method, for she has not repeated, in any other novel, the relatively simple and straightforward approach she uses in describing Bledyard.
II. Emma Sands and Millie Kinnard

Physical settings are not as important in *An Unofficial Rose* and *The Red and the Green* as they are in the two novels discussed in the previous section, in determining the enchanter's roles on two levels of reality. Here it is the enchanter's appearance, her actions and the responses she evokes from others, that suggest her allegorical roles in the contingent world. In these novels, the world of form is symbolized by particular locations, but not the contingent world which in both serves as a background to contrast with the places in the world of form. In *An Unofficial Rose*, form is represented by Grayhallock and by Seton Blaise. Grayhallock was appropriately built in the Eighteenth-century, the age of rationalism and a desire for form. Here roses are carefully cultivated and nurtured, according to a specifically designed pattern. The mistress of this world is Ann, who, like her predecessor and mother-in-law Fanny, is a woman "without mystery" (p. 19) and without "darkness" (p. 2). Seton Blaise is

low-lying, surrounded by water-meadows. But the little park afforded its own vistas: the avenue through the chestnut grove to the lake, the turn of the river, a miniature reach, between the cedar tree and the bridge, the lawn sloping, with little copses of feathery shrubs, towards
the main gates. The place was small, but beautifully composed; and seeming to have everything it appeared neither large nor small but merely perfect (p. 36).

This last is reminiscent of Dorset, which appears to Ducane to be "just the right size." The emphasis on the smallness, though beautiful, indicates the confinement of form, as opposed to the immensity of the sublime, which represents contingency. To Hugh, Seton Blaise is "a haven of innocence and warmth" (p. 36), a lost garden of Eden which he had coveted once.

In this world of form, Emma appears to be an ordinary old woman who is "placed" as Fanny's childhood friend, Mildred's college friend, Hugh's mistress, and a successful writer of mystery novels. She is unmistakably aged, is also deaf, and stricken with a fatal heart condition. This, as well as her quite ordinary appearance, manner of dress and behaviour, makes her seem quite exceptional. Like Bledyard, she also possesses a clarity of vision, though others do not perceive it in her case as they do in Bledyard's. This clarity of vision is demonstrated when she discourages Hugh from attempting to recapture the past by saying to him:

'Hugh, stop believing in magic. You are just like poor Randall after all, who thinks he can conjure up pleasure domes and caves of ice just by boarding a plane and sending off a few letters' (p. 270).
The allusion to Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" evokes romanticism and the dream that is the nature of Hugh's wish. Emma also has a keen sense of humour, which is the outcome of a realistic vision. She asks Hugh, "Wouldn't we be ridiculous, two old people shouting endearments at each other?" (p. 270). Her unromantic statement, however, fails to discourage Hugh.

To Hugh, she is a romantic image from a nostalgic past, a past that is in retrospect idealized out of proportion to reality. Their affair, in his present frame of mind, began with "a burst of illumination" (p. 15), like an epiphany, when he had, with a "prophetic groan, taken her into his arms" (p. 15). So it remains in his mind "as if some god designed that he should not forget" (p. 25). When their affair ended, their subsequent accidental meetings are "appointed by the gods" (p. 25). This nostalgia with which he regards Emma and his past is symbolized by a "haze." His imaginings of their reunion are "hazy" (p. 93); he tells Mildred, "I have been in a haze of expectation like a boy" (p. 86), in anticipation of his meeting with Emma. Appropriately, Emma is always seen "lost in a haze of cigarette smoke" (p. 62). "Haze" suggests a clouded vision, for Hugh's vision of her is veiled by his fantasy. In his mind, she belongs, not in a real world, but "with that other shapely world of the imagination" (p. 50), the world of his
Tintoretto. The painting, in fact, is often linked with Emma, for it too, "symbolizes a lifetime of suppressed desire" for Hugh. When talking about her, he passes back and forth before the Tintoretto, occasionally touching it gently with his fingers. In his first revisit to her, he invites her to see the picture, which, significantly, he had acquired after they separated. Finally, he sells it, hoping by so doing to be reunited with her. The association of the painting by Tintoretto with Emma is significant. Tintoretto belonged to the Mannerist school of painting, whose works are considered melodramatic, characterized by sudden flashes of light and inky shadows. Furthermore, Hugh's particular Tintoretto, an earlier version of Susannah in "Susannah Bathing in Vienna," is enveloped in golden colouring. It lights the room, "like a small sun" (p. 82). Looking at it well might a spectator think of honey, looking at that plump, delicious, golden form, one leg gliding the green water into which it was plunged. A heavy twining compilation of golden hair crowned a face of radiant spiritual vagueness which could only have been imagined by Tintoretto. Golden bracelets composed her apparel, and a pearl whose watery whiteness both reflected and resisted the soft surrounding honey-coloured shades (p. 82).

The colour "gold," as I have mentioned earlier, is a suspicious quality in Iris Murdoch's world, for it symbolizes
illusion. Tintoretto's melodramatic approach to art, the kind of artistic creation that is opposed to Bledyward's and her own view of art, resembles Hugh's fantasy of Emma in that both are "hazy" and deny the objective reality of the existence of the object viewed. Not surprisingly then, his Tintoretto and his image of Emma are related in his mind, for both represent his "golden dream of another world" (p. 82).

In his fantasized vision of their reunion, Hugh sees himself, as in a dream, romantically "as it were waltzing away with Emma" (p. 146). When actually confronted with her, however, he is shocked: "She was very much older. He had not, in the apparitions he had had of her, seen her ageing" (p. 93). More than her age, it is the realization that she exists independently that startles him further: "It was not Emma related to him but Emma existing which was the shock which so almost threw him back into a greater solitude" (p. 93). Enclosed in his fantasy world, Hugh cannot perceive Emma as a free, separate being. Consequently he becomes afraid when she expresses a desire to visit his home:

And it was almost as if he felt that if he allowed Emma to come there she might put a spell on them all. The people at Grayhallock, what was left of them, were after all his family (p. 99).
It is as if he fears that such a confrontation would deprive him of his consolation, his fantasized version of Emma.

Randall regards Emma as an enchanter capable of "witch-like" (p. 171) actions such as changing Lindsay into a doll. He feels towards her an ambiguous mixture of "fear, attraction, puzzlement and hostility which ... together composed a sort of enchantment" (p. 170). Her world seems to him to be a magical one, consisting of "cushions and ... sherbert, the tinkling bells and the gay-plumaged birds, the golden collars and the curving blades" (p. 121). This imagery evokes the magical world of the *Tales of the Arabian Nights* with its genies, tyrannical rulers, slaves and dancing girls, the world of ultimate make-believe. In this enchanting world, Randall thinks of himself as the favourite slave who "has been kept on cushions and fed on sherbert" (p. 118). He enjoys the enslavement, but at the same time resents it because of his fear of Emma. She represents contingency; she "existed, and with what authority, with what horrible contingent power ..." (p. 170). She threatens his desire for form, to live in "a world which has some sort of structure" (p. 31), to be in control of his own destiny. With Emma he is never sure whether any action which he instigates does not in fact originate with her. He is uncertain even of his falling in love with Lindsay.
It was as if Emma had produced the situation in which he had desired Lindsay. Emma had been, as it were, the impresario of his passion (p. 261).

When, with the proceeds from the sale of the Tintoretto, he has the means to elope with Lindsay, Emma leads him to believe that she had initiated this enterprise:

He knew that he had been defeated .... How deftly, how cleverly had not Emma sowed the seeds of doubt in his mind. He would never understand, he would never know the truth, he would never be at peace (p. 174).

As he is enclosed in his fantasy world, he, like his father, cannot see Emma as an independent person. Again like his father, he resents her visit to Grayhallock. Echoing Hugh:

More simply and immediately he feared and detested the idea of Emma's visiting Grayhallock in his absence or indeed at all; and the thought of her presence there wrung from him a cry of: but those are my people! (p. 119).

Others react to Emma with similar mixtures of attraction and awe. Felix considers her an "exotic and slightly dangerous figure" (p. 136). Ann is stimulated by her, for Emma's vitality invigorated her: "It was as if Emma made her exist more, and cast upon her, out of her own more vivid personality, a certain light and colour" (p. 129). Being passive, she is drawn by Emma's "spare energy." Emma is thus
fashioned according to the fantasy of others. They see her only as an enchanter, but not as what she also is, a clear-sighted old woman facing imminent death with courageous resignation.

The fear that others have of Emma is not totally unjustified, for she does enjoy manipulating people. She uses wealth as a bait for Lindsay's servitude, preys on Randall's fear of life, and tricks Felix into committing what to him is an indiscretion. This manipulation of others indicates a lack of love for others in Iris Murdoch's sense, for it shows that she regards others as objects, not as separate, free beings to be respected. However, Emma is not completely lacking in humanity as Wolfe suggests. She does possess positive qualities, such as her insistence on facing reality and a sense of humour, qualities which, in Iris Murdoch's world, are not insignificant virtues. Emma is more ambivalent than evil.

Her moral ambiguity is reinforced by the use of two kinds of animal imagery in the description of her. One kind evokes animals generally considered unpleasant, if not repulsive, and another kind evokes animals that are regarded as man's best friends. The first kind of images are those of animals that live in darkness, such as bats, below the surface of the earth, such as snails and moles, and reptiles.
Like animals who live in darkness, Emma has the "dark and luminous eyes of a nocturnal animal" (p. 191). At Fanny's funeral, she and Lindsay are "clinging grotesquely together" (p. 50), "like bats" (p. 17), evoking a most sinister picture. Hugh in fact thinks of her presence there as "almost sinister" (p. 25). Not so sinister is Randall's image of her - an image that suggests her sensitivity - at Grayhallock leaving her "snail's traces" (p. 173) all over. She herself refers to that visit as that of an "old mole leaving its burrow" (p. 124). Snails and moles have one thing in common in that they both live underground. Less pleasant are comparisons of Emma with reptiles. She refers to herself as a "stuffed alligator" (p. 95), and "an inquisitive old reptile" (p. 135). She sits with her shoulders humped, "toad-like" (p. 98), while her hand rests on the chair like a "wary lizard" (p. 94). She sits "curled like a snake in a hole" (p. 96), speaks with "viperous satisfaction" (p. 96), watching "beady-eyed" (p. 96) for the effect of her speech on Hugh. Randall sees himself, Lindsay and Emma coiled like three muscular snakes at the centre of the edifice (their relationship) (p. 63).

Animals that live in darkness or underground are associated with a world that is the opposite to that of the bright, above-ground world. Theirs is symbolically the unconscious,
dark, mysterious --- contingent. With this world, Emma is associated. Hugh thinks of her as belonging with the "dark free things" (p. 50), and Randall sees her as where "the darkness was" (p. 62). Unlike Ann, who is without mystery and darkness, and who lives in a world of form, Emma also inhabits the contingent world. Her world is that of the "unofficial rose," which grows wild, untended by human hands. With her, Hugh finds himself confronted with an entirely unfamiliar moral world, a world which seemed to have its own seriousness, even its own rules, while remaining entirely exotic and alien ... and it came to his mind how much of Emma's fascination had lain for him in her moral otherness .... And he had then been aware with a little thrill of excitement that this novelty of vision was related to something in her character which was dark, perhaps twisted (p. 96).

"Twisted" evokes images of snakes wriggling, reinforcing the earlier comparisons of her with snakes. This snake imagery as I mentioned in Chapter One, suggests that she is a pythian priestess, thus a prophetess. Randall's image of the three muscular snakes suggests specifically the tripod on which the pythian priestess sits to inhale the fumes of prophecy.18

The second kind of images are those of dogs, "man's best friends." Mildred recalls Emma's "sharp clever dog-face" (p. 68), and Hugh sees the "dog-mask of her face" (p. 267). At his first revisit to her, he feels that their
bodies "sniffed each other like two old dogs" (p. 94). At Grayhallock, she is "terrier-like" (p. 131). These comparisons stress her intelligence, for dogs are credited with high intelligence. At the same time, these dog images allude to her role in the contingent world. In Egyptian mythology, the dog-star is Thoth, the god of intelligence. His constant companion is Anubis, the god who conducts souls to the underworld and who is dog-headed. This reference is significant, for Emma is in fact the link between the world of form and the contingent world in the novel, and in this sense is the conductor from one to the other.

In the same manner that imagery describing her can be interpreted on two levels, one of her acts serve also as an allusion to her allegorical role. Emma sees, as apparently no one else does, that between Hugh's grandchildren, Penn is a worthier person than Miranda. Consequently, she leaves him her wealth. On one level, this act further indicates that she possesses a clear vision. On another, it suggests that Penn is her rightful heir, for he is a misfit at Grayhallock, the world of form. He belongs with the "outback" (p. 44), the "totally untamed beyond" (p. 44), and has more affinity, thus, with Emma's dark, contingent world.

The world of form in The Red and the Green is symbolized, as it is in An Unofficial Rose, by a private estate,
here Finglas, owned by Christopher Bellman. It is an elegant estate, its huge garden

secluded behind substantial walls of golden stone ... contained two ailing but gallant palm trees. The house, a dignified villa called 'Finglas', with big square windows and a shallow slate roof, was washed a slightly streaky blue. It was both neat and spacious, built in a style of confident 'seaside Georgian' ....21

The square windows and the neatness of the villa suggest pattern and form. In this world, Millie is "placed" as a member of a large Anglo-Irish clan. In appearance she is beautiful but plump, and in manner boisterous and unfeminine. From Andrew's point of view, she is "a plump youngish woman with a radiantly smiling face, elegantly dressed ... and positively, oh very positively, pretty" (p. 59). Pat, less charitably, sees her "plump eager face thrust forward ... her big rather damp eyes glistening and bulging ..." (p. 88). Christopher watches her "plump slightly swaying figure" (pp. 123-124) moving away from him. Her plumpness, and Christopher's image of her as "an overflowing vessel" (p. 68), suggest a fullness of spirit, and generosity. Though pretty, she is not an image of femininity, for she wears trousers, smokes cigars, and is familiar with firearms. This indicates her independence, uncommon with women in that era.
As well as generosity and independence, Millie is honest. This is emphasized by comparisons of her with cats, dogs and animals in general. Animals, in their guilelessness, represent honesty. Barney considers her "so essentially a free animal" (p. 128). Christopher thinks of her as being a wild beast in the process of being tamed (p. 72). She bounces ahead of Pat like a dog as they mount the stairs (p. 155), and he sees her in her lust, transformed into an animal (p. 157). Cornered by her, Andrew thinks of her as "a stalking cat" (p. 254). Cats, particularly, are known for their independence. These animal images indicate that Millie's approach to life is like that of animals, often instinctive.

Because of her own honesty, she is able to penetrate the illusions others have. She sees Barney's desire for the priesthood as romantic role-playing rather than a genuine dedication to the Church. Similarly, she sees Andrew's conception of himself as soldier, greatly influenced by his readings of Malory, as romantic image-making. She teases him by calling him a handsome boy in uniform, which is exactly how he views himself. Though capable of some insight, Millie does not turn it into virtuous action; she is governed by too much self-interest. Some of her acts are deplorable, such as her attempted seduction of her young nephews Andrew and Pat, her conduct towards Barney, and her blackmail of
Andrew, and must be counted against her. Warner Berthoff claims that despite her questionable behaviour, when it comes to an assessment of her character, the "moral balance sheet" is in her favour because the love she offers others is real love. This is not quite true. She does not love others in Iris Murdoch's sense, for in Kathleen's words, "she respects no one. She does not see where another person begins" (p. 66). This certainly implies a condemnation of her character.

Millie's plumpness and aggressive manner intime her role in the contingent world, which is Ireland itself, traditionally "green," as opposed to England with its "red" military power. The contingent world is seen in the landscape by the pier, specifically the rocks which form the landscape:

The blows and caresses of the sea had made no impression upon the shape of the rocks or even upon their colour. They remained senselessly jagged and yellow, a random pile of unalterable many-surfaced solids. Here and there a huge stone, balanced between two neighbours, would tilt to and fro at the touch of the waves. In other places the rocks seemed more closely fused as if some semi-intelligent hand had wedged them together. But mostly they lay like things tossed down, one idly resting upon another. And between them were great holes and crevasses, ugly slits and irregular gashes, within which the sea would roar or come suddenly surging upward to boil over the indifferent surfaces (p. 108).
Within this descriptive passage there are several words that epitomize Iris Murdoch's idea of contingency: "senselessly," "random," "unalterable," and "indifferent." Not surprisingly, Barney fears these rocks, for he, like Randall, desires form in his life:

He feared the deep crevasses down which a man might slide into some awful sea cavern. More perhaps he feared the huge weight, the appalling hardness, the senselessness of them. They were like the great weighty stupid world which had rolled off the lap of God. They were the meaningless things that he knew, as meaningless as death (p. 108).

For those enclosed in their fantasy world, reality in the form of contingency, is, like the landscape, frightening.

Millie, in her plumpness and aggressiveness, is the symbol of Ireland, rich in spirit, poor in economic resources, the victim of opportunists and an enchantress to those who love her. The language used to describe her is sometimes similar to that which often appears in political editorials: "Millie's difficulty would be Christopher's opportunity" (p. 69), "a desperate exposed Millie would be an entirely different person and one who might well find the strength within herself to prefer her freedom" (p. 118).

That Millie is the symbol of Ireland is seen in the men's feelings about her, which are remarkably similar to their feelings about Ireland itself. Christopher, who
professes to be a political cynic, feels

a strong romantic sympathy with the whole tradition of rebellion in Ireland and with the Sinn Feiners as the present representatives of that tradition. He loved the history of Ireland as if it were a personal possession ... (p. 202).

His feelings about Millie are similarly governed by a strong sense of possession, and there is also a similar discrepancy between his public view of her and his private behaviour towards her. He feels towards her a mixture of "exasperation, fascination, adoration and fear" (p. 65). She is "one of the world's more significant objects" (p. 67), "a rich prize" (p. 119), a "gorgeous desirable object" (p. 68). The use of "object" and "prize" indicates that Christopher does not really love Millie, but wants to possess her as one wishes to possess a valuable objet d'art. Psychologically, he looks to her to compensate for a lack within himself:

There was some coldness, some shivering, shrewd thinness in Christopher which needed her desperately, which clung to her as to a source of warmth and life (p. 68).

He fails to possess her, as he fails to express his love for Ireland by attempting to penetrate into the Post Office during the rebellion.
Pat's love for Ireland is a complicated mixture of emotions, consisting of fanaticism, indignation at her political status, his own sense of his high destiny, and an underlying sexual neurosis which expresses itself in his loathing of the flesh and in his violent self-discipline:23

His patriotism was not of the diffuse and talkative kind, and though it was certainly romantic it was with some distilled essence of romanticism, something bitter and dark and pure .... His Ireland was nameless, a pure Ireland of the mind, to be relentlessly served by a naked sense of justice and a naked self-assertion. There was in his drama only these two characters, Ireland and himself (p. ??).

His feelings for Millie are also governed by his sexual neurosis. He thinks of her as "a slut," "vulgar," "depraved" and "trash," whose face is "a Roman mask, huge-eyed and open-mouthed, strained and painful and yet at the same time lewd" (p. 158). At best, she is to him silly and frivolous, but she is also brave and "capable of a strength of discretion which Pat somehow connected with her undoubted physical courage" (p. 155). For this reason, he entrusts her with the rebel arms and ammunitions, and relies on her to subdue Andrew during a crucial moment in the uprising. He goes to her bed, not for the obvious reason, but because he feels the need to punish his body:
This would be the last triumph of his will over his fastidious mind, and over the foul animal of his body, for although he now desired Millie, he knew that it was only by pure volition that he could so degrade himself (p. 212).

His neurosis is best revealed by the masculine imagery which he uses to describe her. He often thinks of her as resembling a boy or a man: "depraved and frivolous, a mixture of prostitute and adolescent boy" (p. 88), "a principal boy in an operetta" (p. 156), and when he is coercing himself into going to her bed, she is a "degraded boy" (p. 212). Later, she is like a "schoolgirl acting a man in a play" (p. 252). This transvestite imagery is not only suggestive of Pat's sexual neurosis, but serves to emphasize further Millie's aggressiveness and independence, qualities which, in that era, were associated with masculinity.

To Andrew, Ireland represents his cousins, particularly Pat. It is "a mystery, an unsolved problem" (p. 8) and a source of anxiety, which he disguises with an air of condescension befitting a British soldier towards an inferior, dependent nation. His initial manner towards his glamorous aunt Millie is also one of masculine condescension which in fact disguises an inherent fear of women. Millie flatters him:

His charming aunt had flirted with him. Andrew had never been flirted with in quite this way by an older woman. There came
with it, and with Millie herself, the faintest whiff of wickedness which he laughed to find so attractive. Women were gay and beautiful and he was young and free (p. 144).

Later, when he is rejected by Frances, Millie becomes a consolation, an "interpolation" like a broken arm, between himself and the experience of unhappy love (p. 179). He accepts her incredible proposition to educate him in bed, "in order to have some action, something to fill up the void" (p. 245). He goes to her for an experience and a transformation. The transformation, however, turns out to be of a different nature from that he had anticipated; he becomes impotent in her bed. The unmanning process does not stop there. Later, intimidated by her, he becomes impotent to act in his capacity as a British soldier. Symbolically this implies perhaps that England is ultimately defeated by Ireland, in spirit if not in fact.

For Barney, Ireland is "a dark place, slow, dignified, and mystical" (p. 92). It is "holy," its mystic beauty resides in the Catholic Church. His love for Ireland is inextricably mixed with religious emotions. His love for Millie is also similarly mixed with religious emotions. She is the instrument with which he assuages his religious guilt. Having failed the priesthood because of her, he punishes himself for the failure by seeking humiliation at her hands.
He assumes the position of "lackey, or serviceable buffoon" (p. 75) in her household. He thinks of himself as her "spaniel" (p. 128), "her ass and she should drive him in harness" (p. 99). Millie accepts his "crawling homage" (p. 75), calls him "a dear old sheepdog" (p. 126), and regards him as a "pet to fondle and caress"(p. 93). When angered, she kicks him, upon which he hunches up, "shrinking into himself like a disturbed spider" (p. 89) and then flees "not out of the house but towards the back quarters as if to take refuge, dog-like in the kitchen" (p. 89). At his approach to her house, she whistles shrilly for him as one does for a dog, calling "Come, boy, come boy! ... Good boy, good boy, come, come!" (p. 75).

Millie's treatment of Barney suggests that she plays another allegorical role in the novel, that of Circe in this epic history of Ireland. As Christopher sees it, there is "an epic splendour always latent in the tragedy of Ireland" (p. 203). In this epic, the Easter uprising is the focal point of heroic exploits, evoking the exploits of Homeric heroes. Ulysses and his men encounter antagonists who include beautiful women such as Calypso and Circe as well as monsters and cannibals. The test of their heroism is no less demanding when challenged by enchantresses as by Cyclops. In this Irish epic, the men find that, on the eye of the
uprising, they must first test their strength against the enchantress Millie. It is because she is a Circe figure that only her relationships with the men and not with the women, are explored in full.

Millie's dwelling places suggest Circe's island Aeaea, the island of Dawn where Ulysses' arrival is heralded by a lovely dawn. Similarly, Millie's house in Upper Mount Street is bathed in the colours of dawn as Andrew sees it:

In the watery sunlight the brick façades of Upper Mount Street glowed a rusty pink and yellow, only Millie's house, together with one or two others, had been washed over with a powdery red preparation .... The sagging steps up to the door were immaculately reddened to match. Beneath its magisterial fanlight the door was a radiant newly painted rose pink ... (pp. 57-58).

Circe's house, built of dressed stone, stands in the midst of a clearing of forest, surrounded by oak scrub and trees. Millie's estate Rathblane, "buttress-like at one end, and smooth and balustraded at the other" (p. 163), also lies in the midst of trees. As Andrew cycles towards it, he sees innumerable varieties of trees, many of them rare ones, so that boughs of gingko and catalpa and liquidamar, grown into a dense matrix, now concealed the house in a web of closely woven quietness ... (p. 163).
The image of the web evokes Penelope, but is also an allusion to Circe's loom, on which she is weaving when Ulysses arrives. In Circe's island, animals, once men, roam. In Rathblane, numerous sheep wander, and in both of Millie's houses, Barney, her "spaniel," lurks.

Just as Circe changes men into animals, Millie transforms the men who come into her life. Barney's enchantment with her is "like certain kinds of conditioning in animals" (p. 97), which deprives him of human dignity. Andrew goes to her for consolation, and wonders what sort of new person she might make of him, but "whether she might not like Circe change him into a brute it did not occur to him to wonder" (p. 245). Pat is seen in an image of captivity when in the hall of Millie's house, he looks up through the "dim cage" (p. 155) of the stairs to find Millie watching him.

The imagery used to describe Emma and Millie serves the same function as physical settings do in The Sandcastle and The Nice and the Good in revealing the enchanter's roles. In The Sandcastle, Bledyard's role as Comus is not discernible when he is at the school, and Ducane is not seen as Faust when he is at Trescombe. Emma and Millie however, are almost always seen in their dual roles simultaneously. This technique occurs also in Under the Net, which I shall discuss in the next section, in which Hugo the man is always
seen simultaneously as an allegorical figure in Jake's en-chanted eyes.
III. The Abbess and Hugo Belfounder

Like Dorset in The Nice and the Good, Imber Court in The Bell represents an ideal balance between the world of form and the contingent world. Its architecture is Palladian, for the house was built by a pupil of Inigo Jones. It is set in an estate that is enclosed by a wall, and at its entrance are "two immense globe-surmounted pillars and tall iron gates." The house is large, and very pale grey in colour:

With a colourless sky of evening light behind it, it had the washed brilliance of a print. In the centre of the façade a high pediment supported by four pillars rose over the line of the roof. A green copper dome curved above. At the first floor level the pillars ended at a balustrade, and from there a pair of stone staircases swept in two great curves to the ground (pp. 27-28).

Palladian architecture, with its combination of Classical and Gothic features, suggests a harmonious mixture of form (Classical) and contingency (Gothic). In function, Imber Court is also intended by the Abbess to represent a balance, to serve as "a buffer state" (p. 81) between the contemplative life and the active life of society. As she tells Michael, there are many people who can live neither in the world nor out of it, who cannot adjust to the demands of society, but who lack the strength to withdraw from it.
completely. The aim of the Imber community is to provide these people with the opportunity to live a successful half-contemplative life, but at the same time enable them, in other ways, to contribute to society. The vegetable garden at Imber Court is an example of the latter.

Unfortunately, the inhabitants at Imber Court make the community into a form of consolation. Unable to cope with the muddles of reality, they retreat from it, and at Imber, attempt to organize life into a neat, manageable pattern. Like Kate and Octavian, they create, in the midst of a harmoniously balanced world, a rigid world of form. The many rules they impose on their day to day life reveal their earnestness in striving for a pattern in their lives. Rooms are kept bare, work schedules strict, rituals of worship austere. Entertainment is organized and its nature is seen in the Bach recital during which the Imberites are like people "under a spell" (p. 193). Their choice of Bach reflects their desire for form. Bach's music belongs to the Baroque school, and is essentially harmonic in structure. One of its characteristics is that melodies do not consist of simple phrases, but tend to be more "a pattern of rhythmic figuration which will continue throughout an entire piece with little contrast in motion."\textsuperscript{27} Dora at first thinks of it as "hard patterns of sound" (p. 193). Later, when she
learns to accept form, she learns to appreciate this music. Pattern, thus, characterizes Bach's music as it does life at Imber Court.

To the people of Imber Court, the Abbess is a powerful figure whose word is law. She provides the guidelines by which they live. Her seclusion, and her rare interviews with people outside enhance her position as an enchanter, for her inaccessibility causes others to fantasize about her. When Michael is summoned to her, James and Margaret, who have never seen her, "looked at him enviously" (p. 230). Michael considers himself privileged, for he is the only one at Imber to have met her. From his point of view, she is "a tall figure" (p. 231):

Her bright, gentle, authoritative, exceedingly intelligent face, its long dry wrinkles as if marked with a fine tool, the ivory light from her wimple reflected upon it, reminiscent of some Dutch painting, reminded him of his mother, so long ago dead (p. 231).

Perhaps because of this last fact, he feels towards her a "profound affection ... mingled with respect and awe" (p. 231). For Michael, "who recognized spiritual authority when he saw it" (p. 82), knows that in the Abbess resides the combination of paradoxical qualities, goodness and power. She is the head of that "great storehouse of spiritual energy across the lake" (p. 112), the Abbey. For him, "the
wish of the Abbess was law" (p. 110). Thus he accepts first Catherine, then Nick into the community because the Abbess has suggested it, in spite of his own misgivings about Nick. He thinks her omniscient, for though a recluse, she appears to have thorough knowledge of everything, such as his former relationship with Nick. When initially, he wishes to confess about this, she does not allow him, though he knows that she "certainly knew his desire to tell as well as she doubtless knew all that he had to tell, and more" (p. 82). Later, when summoned by her, he is afraid that what she wishes to tell him concerns Toby:

He felt certain that the Abbess must know all about Toby. It was irrational to think this. How could she possibly have found out? Yet it was astonishing what she knew .... He had not expected this summons. He felt as if he were about to undergo some sort of spiritual violence (p. 230).

The Abbess' concern, as it turns out, is for Nick, a concern which later events prove to be justified.

The contingent world is symbolized by the Abbey which is regarded by the Imberites as "the powerhouse across the water" (p. 117). It lies across the lake from Imber Court, hidden from view by trees, secluded behind "a very high wall built of small square stones, granite and ironstone" (p. 175). The Abbey tower is
a square Norman tower. It was an inspiring thing, without pinnacles or crenellations, squarely built of grey and yellowish stone, and decorated on each face by two pairs of round-topped windows, placed one above the other, edged with zigzag carving which at a distance gave a pearly embroidered appearance, and divided by a line of interlacing arches (p. 63).

It is appropriate that the Abbey should have a Norman tower, for Norman architecture represents a "drift toward the rich, the subtle, and the complicated." These adjectives describe Iris Murdoch's view of contingency as well. One distinctive feature of Norman architecture is the "thick wall" technique, which characterized the original builders, the invading Northmen, with their qualities of "ruthlessness, energy, massiveness, directness and total organization." Thick walls suggest massive strength, and this describes the nuns at the Abbey, particularly the Abbess, whose strength is translated into energy and power, with which she governs the Abbey and the community beside it. The efficiency and directness as well as "total organization" of the nuns are demonstrated in their relationships with the people at Imber Court. Catherine's attempted suicide is efficiently foiled by a nun. The Abbess herself, when the community disintegrates, makes the quick decision to disband it. Imber Court eventually becomes a part of the Abbey, indicating perhaps that the strength of the contingent world prevails over the world of
form.

In the contingent world, the Abbess is an exceptional person in that she possesses goodness, power, wisdom and knowledge of human nature, and is able to use these qualities for the benefit of other people. Her goodness is demonstrated in her compassion for the people at Imber. She is powerful, not only to the Imberites, but within the Abbey, for all final decisions rest with her. She is wise in her understanding of man's "various capacities for the spiritual life." In order to make the most of one's resources, she says, "we must make use of divine cunning. 'As wise as serpents, as harmless as doves'" (p. 81). She is in favour of spontaneous demonstration of joy in the inauguration of the bell, while the Imberites characteristically make plans for a solemn and no doubt formal and dull ceremony. The Abbess' wisdom is most clearly shown in her relationship with Michael. In the early stages of the formation of the Imber community, Michael has the overwhelming desire to confess to her his past:

It would have eased his heart to have told her everything himself. Yet out of some inscrutable wisdom the Abbess did not ask for the confession he was so anxious to make, and after a while Michael wryly accepted his enforced silence as something to be offered quietly and as a sacrifice... (p. 82).
His wish to confess is a consolation, an attempt to purge himself of his muddled past so that he may create for himself a better pattern for his future. The abbess knows this as she knows also that such a confession at that particular time would not help Michael. Consequently, she does not allow him to confess. Later, after his excursion into town with Toby, which brings unfortunate results, confession would have helped ease his emotional turmoil. The Abbess is apparently aware of this, for she says to him, in an attempt to draw from him a confession:

'I feel worried and I'm not quite sure why. I feel worried about him (Nick) and I feel worried about you. I wonder if there's anything you'd like to tell me?' (p. 234).

Michael, who thinks that the Abbess actually knows all about himself and Nick, perversely does not respond, and is thus unable to benefit from the Abbess' wisdom.

As with many of the perceptive enchanter, the Abbess speaks for Iris Murdoch. Her speech to Michael on love is probably the best expression of Iris Murdoch's own view of love:

'Often we do not achieve for others the good that we intend; but we achieve something, something that goes on from our effort. Good is an overflow. Where we generously and sincerely intend it, we are engaged in a work of creation which may be mysterious
even to ourselves -- and because it is mysterious we may be afraid of it. But this should not make us draw back. God can always show us, if we will, a higher and a better way; and we can only learn to love by loving. Remember that all our failures are ultimately failures in love. Imperfect love must not be condemned and rejected, but made perfect. The way is always forward, never back' (p. 235).

The Abbess, the only enchanter who lives in seclusion, is paradoxically the most knowledgeable of the ways of the world.

"There are some parts of London," Jake says, "which are necessary and others which are contingent." The Bounty Belfounder Studio belongs with the latter kind. It is "situated in a suburb of Southern London where contingency reaches the point of nausea" (p. 139). The studio is located between a railway line and a main road, and consists of "a labyrinth of buildings" (p. 141). On the site of this contingent world, within the studio, an artificial city, representing Ancient Rome, is erected and significantly collapses later in chaos.

In this contingent world, which, as I have mentioned earlier, is normal reality in this novel, Hugo is a successful entrepreneur with exotic origins. Belfounder is not his real name, but one which he inherited in a most bizarre manner. His father had come across it on a tombstone in the Cotswolds and had taken it for his own. Some of Hugo's actions are as unusual as the legacy of his name; he
habitually attends a cold-cure centre when he feels in need of a holiday, instead of taking a conventional vacation, he sets a detonator to the film set in his own studio in order to escape during a political riot, he attends another political meeting and has a brick thrown at him. This results in his hospitalization. He subsequently leaves the hospital by stealing away, crawling on all fours along the corridor, carrying his boots by their tongues in his mouth. These strange acts make for much comedy as well as contributing to the portrait of Hugo as an exotic enchanter figure.

Hugo is sympathetically portrayed as a confused though intelligent man whose life seems to be beset by irony. First he inherits an armaments factory at a time when he is an ardent pacifist. He turns the factory into one which produces lights and rockets and himself works as a craftsman in the making of set pieces. He excels in this and enjoys the pieces because they are impermanent; they provide an ephemeral spurt of beauty and a momentary pleasure. This, to him, is the ideal of art; pattern and order that dissolve as soon as they are created, into contingency. "No one talks cant about fireworks" (p. 54), he says. He is ironically wrong, for his set pieces become popular and greatly in demand. Furthermore, to his disgust, they are classified into styles. Consequently, he abandons them and turns to
film-making. Almost in spite of himself, he becomes successful and rich. This is itself ironic for one who professes: "I don't really believe in private enterprise" (p. 223). Not only that, his aim in life, he says, is "to travel light. Otherwise one can never understand anything" (p. 223). For this reason, he proceeds to give away all he owns. Though Jake regards him as a sage, a "theoretician" (p. 59), Hugo thinks that he has been "cowardly and muddled" (p. 223), and that is why his life has been "a ghastly mess" (p. 223), "a perfect chaos" (p. 226). Jake thinks that Anna is "the sort of girl whom Hugo would likely to love" (p. 83), for he prefers the "quiet housekeeping types" (p. 68). Ironically, Hugo loves Sadie because she is more intelligent. Most ironic of all, Hugo does not recognize his own ideas in Jake's written account of their conversations. Similarly, he does not understand that the mime theatre is Anna's attempt to translate his theory into art.

The irony that seems to pursue Hugo makes him an appealing character. Like a lot of people, he too, is a victim of fate. His lack of greed, malice or acquisitiveness, qualities associated with corrupted man, makes him an innocent. He is, in fact, like a child in his ingenuous attitude towards the world. To him, "each thing was astonishing, delightful, complicated and mysterious" (p. 58). In his presence, Jake
begins "to see the whole world anew" (p. 58).

Hugo's ingenuousness is not unlike Bledyard's, for both are unconcerned with self-image or the impression they make on others. They even resemble each other in facial features. Hugo was extremely large, both stout and tall, with very wide shoulders and enormous hands. His huge head was usually sunk low between his shoulders, while his brooding gaze traced around the room or across the countryside a line which lay in his field of vision. He had dark rather matted hair and a big shapeless mouth which opened every now and then, emitting a semi-articulate sound (p. 56).

Bledyard too, has "a great head of dark hair" and a mouth that is "formless and sometimes hung open" (The Sandcastle, p. 71). They are both bachelors who live in simple and bare bedrooms; Hugo's contains only "an iron bed, rush-bottomed chairs, a chest of drawers and a tin trunk with a glass of water on top of it" (p. 92). It also has neither colour nor pictures. Hugo and Bledyard are alike in attitude, for both believe in "an objective that does not classify, in a vision from which one's desires and needs and patternings are purged."32 Not surprisingly, Wolfe considers Hugo a failure as a human being, as he does Bledyard. He says that though gifted with physical and intellectual power, Hugo
rarely accomplishes anything aside from divesting himself of his money and his property. At the conclusion of the novel he has only personal suffering to show for his objectivity.\textsuperscript{33}

This is not an entirely fair or sensible opinion, for Hugo is successful in his various endeavours, including his aim "to travel light." At the conclusion of the novel, he recognizes that "God is a task. God is detail. It all lies close to your hand" (p. 229). His decision to be a watchmaker is part of this acceptance of life, and it indicates a positive attitude, not "personal suffering."

A most significant similarity between Hugo and Bledyard is that both speak for Iris Murdoch. Hugo has Iris Murdoch's "nostalgia for the particular." Everything to him is "unutterably particular" (p. 80). He notices only details, and never attempts to classify things he sees:

\begin{quote}
It was as if his vision were sharpened to the point where even classification was impossible, for each thing was seen as absolutely unique. I had the feeling that I was meeting for the first time an almost completely truthful man. (p. 61).
\end{quote}

Hugo has no desire to make life into a pattern. He is willing to accept the contingent elements of life. He tells Jake:

\begin{quote}
'Some situations can't be unravelled ... they just have to be dropped. The trouble with you Jake, is that you want to understand everything
\end{quote}
sympathetically. It can't be done. One must just blunder on. Truth lies in blundering on' (p. 228).

His recognition of contingency is seen also in his understanding of the unpredictable nature of love. He tells Jake, who cannot understand why he prefers Sadie to Anna: "Jake, you're a fool. You know anyone can love anyone, or prefer anyone to anyone" (p. 226). That this is Iris Murdoch's view is evident in all her novels.

The world of form is symbolized not only by a physical setting, but by the fantasy world in which Jake has enclosed himself, which is revealed as he tells his story, and also by the philosophical concept which is the central metaphor of the novel. Physical setting is represented by the mime theatre which is located in

a brooding self-absorbed sort of house, fronted by a small ragged garden and a wall shoulder high. The house was square, with rows of tall windows, and had preserved a remnant of elegance (p. 34).

Its squareness suggests a neat pattern, and its self-absorption indicates that it is a part of a fantasy world. Within lies a child's fantasy land, a "vast toy shop" (p. 38):

In my first glance I noticed a French horn, a rocking-horse, a set of red-striped tin trumpets, some Chinese silk robes, a couple of rifles, Paisley shawls, teddy bears, glass balls, tangles of necklaces and other jewellery,
a convex mirror, a stuffed snake, countless toy animals, and a number of tin trunks out of which multi-coloured costumes trailed. Exquisite and expensive playthings lay enlaced with the gimcrack contents of Christmas crackers. I sat down on the nearest seat, which happened to be the back of the rocking-horse, and surveyed the scene (p. 38).

In this fantasy world, Jake, like a child, goes to sleep, secured in a bear-skin, "I thrust my hands and feet into the bear's paws and let the great snarling snout fall over my forehead. It made a snug sleeping-suit" (p. 47). This child's fantasy world corresponds to Jake's own immaturity as reflected in his attitude towards life. Unable to perceive reality, Jake, to use Iris Murdoch's words quoted in Chapter One, sees the world through "a cloud of more or less fantastastic reverie." Jake has the solipsism of a child; he sees himself as the centre of the universe, and others only in relation to himself. This is seen in his view of Finn: "I count Finn as an inhabitant of my universe, and cannot conceive that he has one containing me" (p. 9). Predictably, Jake wants his life to have form, "I hate contingency. I want everything in my life to have a sufficient reason" (p. 24). This hatred of contingency indicates that he lives in a world of form. His point of view is thus a representation of that world.

The third symbol of the world of form is that of "under
the net." The title is taken from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, a treatise on linguistic analysis which is the philosophical concept that informs the novel. Wittgenstein uses the image of the net to refer to the ideas, concepts and language -- the "mechanics," which reveal man's interest in defining himself and his world:

Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots on it. We then say that whatever kind of picture these make, I can always approximate as closely as I wish to the description of it by covering the surface with a sufficient fine square mesh, and then saying of every square whether it is black or white. In this way I shall have imposed a unified form on the description of the surface. The form is optional, since I could have achieved the same result by using a net with a triangular or hexagonal mesh. Possibly the use of a triangular mesh would have made the description simpler; that is to say, it might be that we could describe the surface more accurately with a coarse triangular mesh than with a fine square mesh (or conversely), and so on. The different nets correspond to different systems for describing the world. Mechanic determines one form of description of the world by saying that all propositions used in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a given set of propositions -- the axioms of mechanics. It thus supplies the bricks for building the edifice of science, and it says, 'Any building that you want to erect, whatever it may be, must somehow be constructed with these bricks, and with these alone.'

The net thus represents "the picture of reality we construct to describe the world." It suggests limitation, confinement, and is thus an appropriate symbol of the world of form.
It is characteristic of Jake that when he sees Hugo at the mime theatre behind a mask, he does not recognize him, noticing only a vaguely familiar "hulking form" (p. 63) that seems to be that of a "burly simpleton" (p. 36). Jake does not see Hugo, nor anyone else for that matter, in Iris Murdoch's sense, until the end of the novel. His solipsism is like that of a child's (he is significantly small in stature), thus it is not surprising that he employs a great deal of fairy tale imagery in his story. In his fairy-tale fantasy, there is a princess (Anna) who is described, as fairy tale princesses generally are, as golden. There is a witch (Sadie) who is "a beautiful snake" (p. 53), and whose face has the look of "intelligent venom" (p. 53). Seeing her in the hairdressing establishment, Jake says:

The curious fantasy came to me that if I were to look under the drier at the real face and not at the reflection I should see there some terrible old witch (p. 53).

There is naturally, in this fairy tale, an enchanter, who is of course Hugo. Jake's enchantment with Hugo began at the cold cure centre where they met. Jake realizes, shortly after they became roommates that he "was closeted with a person of the utmost fascination" (p. 57). Soon afterwards, Jake says:"I was completely under Hugo's spell" (p. 61). A long period of separation follows, but Jake remains
enchanted, for the mere mention of Hugo's name "was itself quite enough to upset me considerably" (p. 68). When he hears Hugo's voice on the telephone, he goes into a complete frenzy. I shouted into the phone and hurled it down. I tore my hair and cursed at the top of my voice. I stamped up and down the room scattering the rugs to right and left. It took me a good ten minutes to calm down and start wondering what it was exactly that I was so upset about. I felt that now I must see Hugo at once, instantly, at any cost, within the hour, if possible. Until I had seen Hugo the world would stand still. I was not in the least clear about what I wanted to see Hugo for. It was just essential, that was all, and I would be in anguish until it was done (p. 84).

Jake attributes to Hugo a superior intellectual power. He thinks that as Hugo in the past has taught him much, he might now "have a great deal more to teach me" (p. 89). Because Hugo possesses superior power, Jake feels that there is "a strong tendency in myself to obey him" (p. 230), and that "I would do whatever he wished. I had to" (p. 231). His enchantment with Hugo, to him, is beyond his control. After their long separation, Jake acknowledges "some fate which I would not readily deny was leading me back to Hugo" (p. 69). Hugo, he reasons, "was my destiny" (p. 90), "a sign, a portent, a miracle" (p. 238).

The enchanter in a child's fairy tale is often large, for size, in a child's eyes, is synonymous with power. Thus,
the enchanter is often the powerful giant. In Jake's story, Hugo's size is frequently emphasized. Jake's first impression of him was that of "an enormous shaggy personage" (p. 55) who was large, "both stout and tall, with very wide shoulders and enormous hands" (p. 56). In Jake's mind, Hugo towers "like a monolith" (p. 238). He imagines Hugo brooding over him "like a great bird" (p. 215). Other images of animals are used when Jake thinks of Hugo, for Jake has the child's fascination for animals, particularly large ones. When the set at his film studio collapses, Hugo emerges from the debris "rising like a surfacing whale" (p. 150). He then makes off in the direction of the railway, "leaping across the lines like a stampeding buffalo" (p. 50). When Jake first catches sight of him at Bounty Belfounder Studio, he looks "more than ever like a bear" (p. 148). Later he makes a noise "like a bear, a mixture of grunting and lumbering" (p. 233). The bear image suggests that Hugo possesses great physical and intellectual power.

The emphasis on Hugo's intellectual power is relevant to his other allegorical role as philosopher, specifically, as the figure of Wittgenstein in the world of form symbolized by linguistic analysis. Hugo's biography is remarkably similar to that of Wittgenstein. He has a German ancestry, is descended from a wealthy family of munitions manufacturers,
and is a bachelor. His preoccupation with language, which evolves into a "philosophy of silence," reflects Wittgenstein's concern with language as the definition of reality ("the limits of my language mean the limits of my world").

For Hugo, absolute truth can only be attained in silence, for the "whole language is a machinery for making falsehoods" (p. 60). He says to Jake: "The language just won't let you present it as it really was" (p. 69). Thus, during their discussions, he is constantly asking Jake: "What do you mean?" (p. 58):

What do you mean when you say that you think the meaning 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).

As Annandine in Jake's dialogue, Hugo even uses Wittgenstein's image of the net:

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 (pp. 80-81).

In other words, it is difficult to escape the confinement of
the net, to free oneself from the "mechanics" -- concepts, ideas and language -- which man has constructed to define reality, and assess each situation in its particularity. Thus Hugo is reduced to silence. A philosophy of silence, however, is obviously impracticable; Hugo is caught in a dilemma he cannot resolve. He is, as Iris Murdoch calls him, "a sort of non-philosophical metaphysician who is supposed to be paralyzed" by this kind of conflict.

The Bell and Under the Net, though quite different in organization, have in common an exotic enchanter figure, who, unlike the enchanters described in previous sections, is not seen in a variety of relationships with several other characters. Though this vision the reader has of them is thus limited, the roles of the Abbess and Hugo as figures of power are not diminished. For the Abbess' actual power and the imagery of power used to describe Hugo quite emphatically set them apart from other characters.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO


4. Ibid., 268. Cf. Eliot: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality," and Joyce: "The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."

5. Ibid., 270.

6. Ibid., 270.


10. In Gertrude Jobes' Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols (New York: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1962), II, pp. 980-981. "Left" is described as the inferior or unlucky side, symbolizing age, decay and weakness. It is also the sinister side, and the side of severity.


12. Ibid., p. 90.


16 John P. Sedgewick Jr., Art Appreciation Made Simple (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1959), p. 85. See also Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), II, p. 90, who says of mannerism: "It is impossible to understand mannerism if one does not grasp the fact that its imitation of classical models is an escape from the threatening chaos, and that the subjective overstraining of its forms is the expression of the fear that form might fail in the struggle with life and art fade into soulless beauty."

17 The Disciplined Heart, pp. 170-172.

18 Graves, The Greek Myths, I, p. 178. Dickens uses similar images, though evoking a much more sinister picture, to describe Uriah Heep in David Copperfield: Uriah's finger is "like a snail," he writhes with "snaky twistings," his hand is "like a frog," and he and his mother are "like two great bats."

19 Ibid., I, p. 66.

20 Ibid., I, p. 66 and I, p. 124.


25 Homer, The Odyssey, p. 159.

26 The Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1962), p. 27. All subsequent references are to this edition.


30 Sharon Kaehele and Howard German, "The Discovery of Reality in Iris Murdoch’s *The Bell*," *P.M.L.A.* 82 (Dec., 1967), 562.


32 Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom*, p. 66.

33 *The Disciplined Heart*, p. 49.


35 Rabinovitz, *Iris Murdoch*, p. 11.

36 Wolfe, *The Disciplined Heart*, p. 49. According to Joseph Campbell in *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), pp. 334-336, in Ainu mythology, the bear is a divine visitor. Thus, Jake’s feeling of security when tucked into the bearskin (*Under the Net*, p. 47), is that of being in the protection of divine power.

37 German, "Allusions in the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch," 362.

38 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5, 6, p. 115.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ENCHANTER FIGURE IN "CLOSED" NOVELS

I. Maggie, Hannah Crean-Smith and Carel Fisher.

In the "open" novels discussed in the previous chapter, society at large appears in the background. There is a sense of ordinary, everyday life existing outside of the worlds of the novels. In The Sandcastle, this is seen in the political lecture that Mor gives to the townspeople, a reminder that there is a larger society outside St. Bride's School and the wood. In The Nice and the Good, there are descriptions of London streets and suburban houses. In An Unofficial Rose, there are scenes in Italy, talks of travels to India and Turkey, London galleries. The National Gallery plays an important role in The Bell, which also has descriptions of London streets, and a tavern in the neighbouring town of Imber. Scenes of pub-crawling in London, swimming in the Thames, a hairdressing establishment and suspicious neighbours indicate that the world of Under the Net, as befitting that of a picaresque novel, is very much a part of London life. The Easter rebellion is the central event of The Red and the Green. As this is a real historical novel in which actual people and occurrences are described, society at
large is ever present.

This sense of belonging to a society at large is not present in all of the "closed" novels. In the three novels discussed in this section, ordinary life is hardly discernible. The worlds of these novels appear isolated; life outside is, at the most, only hinted at.

The setting of The Italian Girl is Northern England, but it could have been the north of anywhere, since the significance of its location is symbolic rather than actual. "North" is used to suggest coldness and remoteness from life, a condition that reflects Edmund's attitude. Life outside the Narraway estate is not described. It is mentioned vaguely that there is an Italian community in the town in which Maggie dispenses charitable acts, and there are talks, between Maggie and Edmund, of Italian cities. These are the only reminders that the world of The Italian Girl is not totally isolated.

The world of form in this novel is represented by Edmund's point of view, as it is by Jake's in Under the Net. Edmund, like Jake, has created for himself a patterned world of form in order to protect himself against contingency, which he fears. He says: "I have always been afraid of the dark and of things that happen in the dark." Later, he speaks of the "foxy darkness" (p. 13) of the hall. Darkness is, of course, a symbol of contingency, for it suggests mystery.
Edmund has created a life of form for himself, "simple, solitary" (p. 23). His profession expresses his desire for form. He is a wood-engraver, practitioner of an art which "may be deep but it is narrow" (p. 23). It is with delight that he "transferred to the precious small surface of the wooden block many scenes, figures, objects that I saw or imagined" (pp. 23-24). This indicates his desire to organize life into the confined spaces represented by little blocks.

In Edmund's world of form, Maggie is a mother figure whom he takes for granted. On his homecoming, he confuses her with all the other Italian girls who have served his family. She seems to be, not an individual, but the personification of "a series of Guilias and Gemmas and Vittorias and Carlottas" (p. 18). In appearance she is nondescript. Dressed always in an "anonymous black dress" (p. 70), --- until she becomes an heiress --- she is a "small dark figure" (p. 19) with a "pale framed face" (p. 19) and a "long bun of black hair trailing back like a waxen pigtail" (p. 19). She is even without a voice, "the eternally silent, superior servant" (p. 116), until halfway through the novel. She is unassuming in behaviour; the "true house-serf" (p. 95) who performs all the menial tasks for the family, cooking, washing, sewing, serving. An indication of her near-anonymity is Edmund's description of those present at his mother's funeral. They
are Otto, Isabel, Flora and Levkin, and "that completed our party, except for Maggie, of course" (p. 23). Maggie is a mere afterthought, not an individual significant enough to be reckoned as a person.

Maggie's initial anonymity is consistent with her role as mother figure in the Narraway household. To young children, mother is not a separate person, but simply someone there to fulfill their needs. Maggie is regarded thus by members of the family. Otto remembers, though erroneously, being pushed in his pram by her. Edmund says: "I had always had, as it were, two mothers, my own mother and the Italian girl" (p. 18). Though she is taken for granted by all, they assume nevertheless that she loves them, an assumption Edmund later realizes may be unjustified:

Yet at the same time I could not stop assuming that Maggie - well, that Maggie loved us. It struck me now that it was a rather large assumption and also somewhat unclear (p. 132).

At his stage of his development he is able to question this assumption for he is beginning to see her as a separate person.

Maggie is the mother figure who provides maternal comfort for Edmund in his unfortunate brushes with experience. When emotionally disturbed by Isabel and Flora, he seeks refuge in the kitchen, Maggie's domain, where she is washing Otto's underwear.
I sat down to watch, feeling with a mixture of shyness and familiarity included in the scene, comfortably included in her consciousness although she ... had scarcely looked in my direction (p. 113).

To be included in mother's consciousness is of prime importance to a child.

As a mother figure, Maggie is put on a pedestal by Edmund. She is to him "a chaste figure, now more like a priestess than a nun, a keen severe little priestess" (p. 118), and "a dark, slight tutelary goddess" (p. 133). Signs of an Oedipus complex are obviously present here. As he matures emotionally, Edmund gradually becomes aware of Maggie as an individual. The first sign of recognition occurs when he sees her thus:

Her pale bony face had a rather damp denuded look and her large dark severe eyes were a little dewy from the onion (she is cooking). A strong arabesque at the nostrils was echoed in the curve of the long thin mouth. It was a fierce, intelligent yet unprotected face. Her copious hair, pulled harshly back, fell in the long looped bun, black as onyx, shiny as lacquer. She wore no makeup (p. 95).

Later, when she acquires an inheritance, "she was no longer invisible" (p. 133). She has also acquired "an exterior" (p. 133). Edmund sees

a young woman entered, wearing a red dress. The short black hair had been expertly clipped, the serious dark eyes stared from a lean and youthful face (p. 133).
Still later, when Edmund realizes that he is in love with her, her features assume the beauty of art:

The beam of light fell across her breast and above it I saw the pale bony large-eyed face and the cap of glossy black hair. It was an old face, a new face, a boy by Titian, the maid of my childhood (p. 166).

She becomes then "Maria," an individual, a unique, separate person, no longer Maggie, the embodiment of all the other Italian girls.

Maggie is "Maria," second Eve, mother of mankind in the contingent world of the novel. On this level of reality, the contingent world is represented by the Narraway estate in which the story of Adam and Eve is symbolically re-enacted. The estate, like the Garden of Eden, is a place of "extreme beauty" (p. 47), consisting of a profusion of vegetation, a large variety of birches, bamboos, camellias, "a riot of wild flowers and grasses" (p. 47). There is, in the immense garden,

a little mountainy stream of clear brown water spilt over the far boundary in a long cascade, obedient to the will of some long-dead landscape gardener. The stream meandered for nearly a quarter of a mile between high slopes of camellias and dense thickets of bamboos before it briefly touched the lawn and turned away to flow under the iron bridges into the town. The camelia bushes, indeed most of them were by now trees, unkept and running wild, had grown into
an almost impenetrable tangle of implicated vegetation. The course of the stream was marked by the greener line of bamboo, while high up above a birch grove led away into the open country. For us children it had formed a vast region of romance (p. 29).

Further along the course of the stream

the birches and conifers had receded here toward the top of the hill and their place was taken by the bamboo which fringed the water and the shrubby tangle of the camellias which clothed the slopes. The bamboos had invaded the stream now, their straight strong stems grouped in the water itself, while the stream, more choked than ever with its debris of round gray stones, meandered a blackish brown under the sun-tinged arches. The waterfall distantly murmured. A riot of wild flowers and grasses had covered the bank and made the path invisible and all but impassable. The jumble of campion and ragged robin gave place to briars and ground elder ... (p. 47).

These descriptions convey the impression of nature left to grow unchecked. In this Eden, Edmund learns to accept contingency. When he leaves it, he is, like Adam in *Paradise Lost*, equipped with knowledge to face life outside.

It is Maggie, the Eve of this Eden, who leads Edmund to knowledge. His recognition of her as a separate being evokes the creation of Eve in Book Eight of *Paradise Lost*:

I rubbed my eyes. I did not want to have, yet, so many thoughts .... I saw her now, a girl, a stranger, and yet the most familiar person in the world: my Italian girl, and yet the
first woman, as strange as Eve to the dazed awakening Adam. She was there, separately and authoritatively there (pp. 170-171).

She represents light to Edmund, as Eve does to Adam. Her room is like "a dazzling sun" (p. 115) where she stands, by the window, "lost in the sunlight" (p. 165). There is present, as an obvious reference to the Adam and Eve story, a dish of apples from which Edmund, a vegetarian, helps himself. He sees her for a moment, but only for a moment, as a temptress. Then, "I took the apple from my pocket and began to eat it" (p. 171), thus committing himself to life. He leaves Eden with Maggie, like Adam and Eve with "the World before them," towards the south, where there is warmth and life.

As mother figure and Eve, Maggie, it would seem, is meant to be a sympathetic character. Wolfe, in fact, considers her the essence of goodness. She has for years given herself to serving others, performing menial chores with humility. Her humility is underlined by Edmund's image of her: "With her little black feet, she seemed like a little donkey" (p. 28). The emphasis on "little" suggests that she is unassuming in her good works. She also lends money to Flora for an abortion, presumably because Flora begs her. Flora reacts ungratefully, by attacking Maggie with a pair
of scissors and cutting off her hair. During this hysterical act, Flora accuses her of having had "a horrible, horrible thing with Lydia. It was beastly and it made the whole house horrible" (p. 123). Maggie's "severed hair" (p. 123) unravels on the table, where it is dropped by Flora, "into a black snake" (p. 123). The imagery here evokes another enchanter, Honor Klein (A Severed Head). This allusion is further underlined by Edmund's description:

It must have seemed a strange scene: Flora now lifting the severed hair with an almost ritual gesture, Maggie metamorphosed into some quite other being, hiding her face as if from the gaze of the Medusa ... (pp. 123-124).

The Medusa is the predominant image in the description of Honor, as I shall discuss in the next section. This fearful figure does not suggest the essence of goodness, and Maggie's association with it implies an element of ambiguity in her character, in spite of her mother-figure role.

The setting of The Unicorn is an isolated and indeterminate location, remote from civilization. Though accessible by train and car, its geographical relationship to London, where Marian and Effingham originate, is unclear. This vagueness of location emphasizes its nearly complete isolation from society. The only hints that there is a larger world outside lie in the letters Marian and Effingham receive,
the occasional airplane that flies by, and the rumour that Hannah's husband Peter lives in New York.

The normal level of reality in this novel is the contingent world, which is symbolized by the foreboding landscape which Marian terms "extreme," and "sublime rather than beautiful" (p. 84), consisting of

great cliffs of black sandstone. In the hazy light they seemed brownish now, receding in a series of huge buttresses as far as eye could see, striated, perpendicular, immensely lofty, descending sheer into a boiling white surge (p. 11).

It is an intractable landscape, having in it a bog in which Effingham nearly drowns and a geological wonder, the dolmen. Seeing it for the first time, Marian is

overcome by an appalling crippling panic .... She feared the rocks and the cliffs and the grotesque dolmen and the ancient secret things (p. 15).

The sea in this landscape instills her with the same sense of panic. On her way to swim in it, she finds that "her heart was beating very hard" (p. 31), and that

the black wall of the cliff rose sheer beside her, glistening a little and seeming to overhang. The sun beat directly upon it but its darkness hung like a shadow overhead. The beach too was black, with gritty sand at the base of the cliff, and black pebbles at the water's edge. Marian had never been afraid
of the sea. She did not know what was the matter with her now .... She found it suddenly hard to breathe, and had to stop and take deep regular breaths (p. 32).

Marian is not alone in her fear of this contingent world, Hannah refuses to venture into it. Her fear of this world, together with her strange pattern of behaviour, suggest that she is a neurotic. Beautiful and rich and suffering from guilt for having attempted to murder her husband seven years previously, she lives in self-imprisonment, surrounded by a group of companions who are enchanted with her condition.

Her home is Gaze Castle, which symbolizes the world of form. Like the mime theatre in Under the Net, Gaze Castle is a "big self-absorbed house" (p. 30),

a big grey forbidding house with a crenellated façade and tall thin windows which glittered now with light from the sea. The house had been built of the local limestone and reared itself out of the landscape, rather like the dolmen, belonging and yet not belonging (p. 15).

It is a world of fantasy, like that of a story. The word "story" indeed, is insisted upon in the description of life within: Pip is "the dupe of the story" (p. 224), Hannah herself is "a story" (p. 91), a "spiritual adventure story" (p. 99) for Effingham, one that he does not wish to end. When told of Hannah's imprisonment Marian wonders:
'Why have I come?'... Her own place in the story occurred to her for the first time. The ghastly tale had become a reality all about her, it was still going on. And it was a tale in which nothing happened at random (pp. 65-66).

Elsewhere, life at Gaze is called "a tragedy" (p. 268), "the play" (p. 253), "a comedy by Shakespeare" (p. 209). The inhabitants at Gaze are the "dramatis personae" (p. 105). The metaphor of the stage, in fact, closes the novel. As Effingham leaves Gaze, he thinks of himself as

the angel who drew the curtain upon the mystery, remaining himself outside in the great lighted auditorium, where the clatter of departure and the sound of ordinary talk was coming now to be heard (p. 270).

On this symbolic level of reality, in which life at Gaze is a story, the "story" has a medieval setting. Hence the enchanter in it resembles a heroine from medieval romances. The medieval atmosphere of this story is emphasized when Marian says: "We're not living in the Middle Ages" (p. 60), only to be contradicted by Denis, who says: "We are here" (p. 60). In her appearance, Hannah is "golden," the colour of medieval heroines. Her hair is "reddish gold" (p. 23), her face a "golden-eyed face" (p. 53), and she even wears a gold chain around her neck. Like medieval ladies, she lives in a castle, has an absent husband/lord, and a number of
retainers, chiefly male. Her attitude towards them is medieval. She regards Denis as her "page" and looks on with "feudal indifference" (p. 41) as he cuts her hair. This particular scene has a religious implication. It suggests that Hannah is "priestly-ruler" and Denis the priest, who alone is allowed to cut her hair, since only he can stand the contact with the taboo.

Hannah recalls another heroine of a story with a medieval setting, the Lady of Shalott, who, significantly, symbolizes the world of fantasy. Like Tennyson's ill-fated heroine, Hannah is under a curse; she believes that she will die if she ventures outside her castle, a belief that eventually becomes a reality. She is also, like the Lady, "much given to looking at herself in mirrors" (p. 43). This suggests a preference for the image of reality rather than reality itself, and also for narcissism. Like her "self-absorbed house," she is self-absorbed. Self-absorption is an enemy of love, in Iris Murdoch's ethics, and thus it is an enemy of freedom. Hannah's self-imprisonment symbolizes an imprisonment by fantasy; her life is thus a "story."

As a medieval heroine in this story, Hannah is appropriately the object of Courtly Love. The "questing knight," however, is the improbable Effingham Cooper to whom she is "the castle perilous" (p. 71), his Beatrice" (p. 172), "an
image of God" (p. 265), and who is "shut up, reserved and sequestered" (p. 73), "a chaste mother goddess, the virgin mother" (p. 233) - the Oedipus complex looms largely here. To him, Hannah is not a real person, but an object in his fantasy, a suitable heroine in his "adventure story" (p. 99).

Stories, however, are not real, and the most unreal stories are fairy tales in which improbable things happen and are accepted by the characters in them as perfectly natural occurrences. Life at Gaze in this sense is "like a fairy tale" (p. 214). The sterile daily routine, the excessive drinking and sleeping, furtive conversations and sexual perversions, are not activities of a normal household, but they are accepted by Marian, the newcomer, with little wonder. Furthermore, this life has gone on for seven years, a fairy tale number, as Marian herself remarks (p. 64). In this fairy tale, Hannah is the beautiful princess of the enchanted castle who is under the domination of the beast (Gerald). Hannah's habitual expression is "dreamy," as though she is in a semi-conscious state. This evokes the Sleeping Beauty, who is under the spell of the bad fairy. There are many references to her Sleeping Beauty role. Effingham sees the bees and birds around Gaze as "creatures
round the castle of the sleeping beauty" (p. 104). Marian, while waiting for Effingham to kidnap Hannah, thinks that it is the "last drowsy moment for the sleeping beauty" (p. 144). Later, Pip says to Hannah that he is "waiting for you to wake up .... Come, move, act, before you fall asleep again" (p. 223).

References to waking and sleeping occur with significant frequency, reinforcing the idea that life at Gaze is a fantasy, like a dream as well as a story. The preamble to dreaming is sleeping, a much-favoured activity at Gaze Castle. The incredible amount of sleeping, as well as the poem of Alcman about sleep that Max quotes to Effingham, suggest that life at Gaze is indeed "a sinister enchanted siesta" (p. 103). The "story" then, is also a dream, and Hannah, the enchanter, is the "provoker of dreams" (p. 136), the "dispenser of dreams" (p. 266), whose "many shadows fell round her in the fantasies of others" (p. 136). The people around Hannah seem to be all part of a dream --- Hannah's dream. After having given herself to Gerald, she tells Marian:

Ah, Marian, it is possible to go on and on and to suffer, to pray and to meditate, to impose on oneself a discipline of the greatest austerity, and for all this to be nothing, to be a dream (p. 218).
Dreams sooner or later disappear; reality asserts itself upon awakening. When first told of Hannah's story, Marian asks: "Oughtn't she be wakened up?" (p. 65). Not receiving cooperation from the people at Gaze, she formulates a plan herself, with the reluctant help of Effingham. She realizes, however, that the plan could result in violence which will produce the "vanishing of the dream" (p. 141), and thus "the end of the legend" (p. 141). Central to this idea of sleeping, dreaming and awakening is the song Denis sings at the musical evening, a song consisting of the refrain, "awaken, my blackbird, awaken, awaken" (p. 138).

Like dreams, fairy tales and romances, legends are a source of fascination. In another role as the unicorn of the medieval allegory, Hannah is thus a source of fascination for others. The unicorn is the symbol of purity, "the image of Christ" (p. 98). It is thus that Denis views her. To him, she is a religious person who has faith, like the holy nuns in convents. He therefore discourages Marian from disturbing her "calm," believing that her way of life (self-imprisonment) is a sign of her obedience to God. She symbolizes for him the Christian experience of guilt and pain. His enchantment with her arises from his own religious temperament.

The unicorn, however, is an ambiguous symbol, for it
is also regarded, in some sources, as wild and untameable, and is thus the symbol of profane love. This interpretation explains Violet Evercreech's view of Hannah. To Violet, she is not a religious person, but "a woman infinitely capable of crimes" (p. 223), an adulteress and a murderer.

The unicorn as a vulnerable, harmless and spiritual figure is Marian's view of Hannah. She sees Hannah as a romantic figure, a fey, beautiful young woman who is psychologically paralyzed and who must be rescued. At the same time, Marion is under the enchanter's spell. When Hannah says that she is thinking of sending them all away, Marian is affected:

The enchantment is beginning again. The first words of the spell were being hoarsely murmured; and it was the more terrifying since Marian realized obscurely but at once that this was a far stranger and dangerous spell than the old one. This was a spell which had absorbed the old one; it was a higher, more majestic, more terrible spell. She almost wanted, like someone in the presence of a moving, whispering enchanter, to freeze Hannah to stone before her own wits should be stolen away (p. 218).

Symbolically, Marian plays the role of the virgin on whose lap the unicorn lays its head. But the virgin leads it to the hunters who then kill it. Marian, whom Hannah trusts, does in fact lead Hannah to her death.

Each of the enchanted sees Hannah as an enchanter.
according to his or her own temperament, and the classical scholar Max is no exception. She represents to him the Platonic concept of Ate. He explains Ate thus:

'Ate is the name of 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 .... 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. 98-99).

Hannah, he says, is their Ate, their scapegoat: "She is our image of the significance of suffering" (p. 98). Ate, however, is the goddess of infatuation, who blinds men to the consequences of their actions. Infatuation is a form of fantasy in Iris Murdoch's world, for like romantic and courtly love, it prevents one from perceiving reality. Hannah, as the goddess of infatuation, blinds others to reality. Her passiveness and moral inertia serve as encouragement to others to fantasize about her. Her name, a palindrome, suggests duplicity or ambiguity. Max, who has never met her, recognizes his own enchantment, for he realizes that she is also an "ordinary guilty person" (p. 98). To Effingham he says:

'I may be suffering from my own form of what you call romanticism. The truth about her
may be quite other. She may be just a sort of enchantress, a Circe, a spiritual Penelope keeping her suitors spellbound and enslaved\(^8\) (p. 99).

As an enchanter, Hannah is certainly the most dangerous kind, "a dispenser of dreams" who does not dispel others' fantasy, but fosters it. Wolfe calls her "a demoralizing force" because she prevents the formation of direct relationships among the others. Too passive to be considered an evil person, she is merely morally ambiguous. The gold imagery surrounding her emphasizes her ambivalence. Thus, she is, in the final pages of the novel, "a beautiful pale vampire fluttering at his (Effingham's) night window" (p. 268), "a Lilith" (p. 268), both ambiguous figures.

The setting of The Time of the Angels, though in London, is as remote and isolated as that of The Unicorn. Little is seen of life in London, except in rare glimpses of Norah Shadox-Brown's warm and cheerful room, and even that cannot be considered representative of society at large. Normal reality in this novel is also the contingent world, symbolized by the river near the rectory:

Here the fog seemed lighter in colour and slightly less dense as if it dreamed that somewhere the sun shone. Muriel could see fifteen to twenty yards of swift flowing water, a dark luminous amber, which was whisking along with it a strewing of wood fragments and long weeds resembling hair. Again very near a fog horn sounded and
Muriel felt the same emotion of which she could not say whether it was fear or love.  

Like Hannah, Carel refuses to venture out into this world, preferring to shut himself up in his rectory. On the level of this reality, Carel is also a neurotic, a man on the verge of insanity, if not already insane. He is a minister who has lost his faith and his hold on reality, and has completely withdrawn into his own world. He shows many symptoms of mental instability; he is anti-social, he refuses all visitors and does not leave his house, he suffers from hallucinations, frequently seeing non-existent animals, particularly of the black, darting variety. He throws paper darts at Pattie from the top of the stairs and dances alone in his dark room to music by Tschaikovsky, notably "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker Suite," both of which he plays incessantly. His fondness for Tschaikovsky's music is important. Tschaikovsky's music is characteristically emotional, expressing his own state of mind, for he belongs to the romantic school of music.  

This subjective form of artistic creation is one that Iris Murdoch has called an "intrusion of fantasy, the assertion of self, the dimming of any reflection of the real world." Carel's fondness for Tschaikovsky's music, therefore, indicates that he prefers fantasy to reality. It is with some justification that Norah, who possesses a
"dreadfully robust common sense" (p. 99) considers him an eccentric, a "neurotic" (p. 99), a "crackpot" (p. 142), "both mad and wicked" (p. 91). For Norah's view is representative of that of normal reality.

In the world of form, Carel's wickedness suggests that he is a Lucifer, but a special kind of Lucifer. The world of form is symbolized by Carel's rectory which belongs to a parish that is in reality virtually non-existent. It is permanently shrouded by fog. Seen from Pattie's point of view:

The fog had enclosed them, and she still had very little conception of the exterior of the Rectory. It seemed rather to have no exterior and, like the unimaginable circular universes which she read about in the Sunday newspapers, to have absorbed all other space into its substance. Venturing out on the second day she had, to her surprise, been unable to discover any other building in the vicinity. The fog hummed intermittently with mysterious sounds, but there was nothing to see except the small circle of pavement on which she stood and the red brick façade of the Rectory, furred with frost. The side wall of the Rectory was of concrete, where it had been sliced off from another building during the war. Pattie's gloved hand touched the corner where the concrete met the brick, and she saw a shape to her right which she knew must be the tower built by Christopher Wren. She could just see a gaping door and a window in the dark yellow haze.

Walking along a little farther she found herself in a wasteland. There were no houses, only a completely flat surface of frozen mud,
through which the roadway passed .... Frightened of the solitude and afraid of losing her way she trotted hastily back to the shelter of the Rectory. She passed nobody on the road (pp. 21-22).

This description of the desolate, isolated wasteland of the rectory evokes the existentialist picture of the universe in which there is nothing. Man in this nothingness is an anguished, lonely individual, as Carel is. The landscape indeed mirrors the desolation of Carel's state of mind. In this "dark unvisited cavernlike environment" (pp. 40-41), Carel is "totalitarian man," solitary, neurotic.

In a philosophical essay, "On 'God' and 'Good,'" Iris Murdoch poses the question: "What happens to morality if there is no God?" In the present situation of moral philosophy, she says, the alternatives to a morality based on the existence of God seem to be either linguistic philosophy, which has already begun to join hands with scientifically-minded empiricism, or else existentialism. Of the latter, most of it is either "optimistic romancing" or else "positively Luciferian." The "optimistic romancing" strand is presumably represented by Sartre, whereas the other, "Luciferian" existentialism, is derived from Heidegger, who is, in her view, possibly "Lucifer in person."

The ethical positions presented in The Time of the Angels are these two, a weak "atheistic humanism" ("optimistic romancing"),
represented by Marcus Fisher, and Satanism (Luciferian existentialism) personified by Carel.

That Iris Murdoch considers Heidegger's existentialism a non-vital, non-dynamic force is evident in the manner in which Carel is presented. His fog-enclosed rectory is seen as a wasteland, a dead world, a tomb. Carel's room, always dark, cold and stuffy, is thus the coffin within this tomb. Carel, the inhabitant of this coffin bears certain physical resemblances to a corpse. His face appears to his daughter Muriel as "a trifle glazed and stiffened" (p. 35), stiffened as though it had undergone rigor mortis. Marcus sees that stiffness as gleaming "like enamel, like porcelain ... with metallic features" (pp. 168, 176). Like an enbalmed corpse, in the very bright light the smooth surface of his face seemed decomposed a little, white and powdery. Only the eyes glistening like damp blue stones and the lank hair gleamed as if it were wet (p. 182).

When he is actually in the process of dying, he looks as if he were already reposing in a coffin:

The enamel skin which had glowed with whiteness was like grey wax now, the colour of trodden snow which had lost its glitter. The features seemed to be sinking into the bone. Even Carel's hair, spread a little upon the cushion, has lost its glossiness and looked like a relic, some scarcely recognizable stuff found in a tomb or a casket (p. 219).
This tomb-like rectory is symbolically a hell, an appropriate dwelling place for Carel, "Lucifer in person." Carel is surrounded by darkness as God is by light. His room is habitually dark, he dresses in a black cassock, his voice and the sounds of his movements are always coming from the dark. Pattie senses "somewhere up above a head and shoulders moved in the dark" (p. 85), sees him as "tall and dense in his black cassock as a tower of darkness" (p. 34). His presence subjugates her whole being with a "dark swoop" (p. 155). Marcus thinks of Carel's "dark figure" (p. 121) looming beside him. Appropriately, Marcus's first entry into Carel's house is via a coal bin, at a time when the electrical power failure causes the house to be in total darkness. His meeting and conversation with Carel take place entirely in the dark --- a meeting in hell. Like Satan in this hell, Carel has his "dark angel" (p. 157), Pattie, whom he calls his "counter-virgin" (p. 157), his "anti-Maria" (p. 157). His seduction of her suggests an inversion of a sacred rite, with "macabre unrobing" (p. 29), and a recitation of an inverted version of "Hail Mary, full of grace" (p. 159).

Pattie's enslavement by the enchanter began when, starved for affection, she entered Carel's house as a domestic and received signs of love from him. She thinks of
that entry into his presence "as into the presence of God" (p. 27). From then on, he becomes for her "the Lord God and she was the inert and silent earth which moves in perfect obedience" (p. 208). She fears him, for he appears to be not of this world, but "a perceptible inhabitant of some other dimension" (p. 82). Her surrender to him brings not the joy as to one who surrenders herself to God, instead, it destroys her fitness for a world of innocence: "She felt that she was irrevocably soiled and broken and unfitted now for ordinary life" (p. 31). She is enslaved by the devil: "A darkness entered her like a swarm of bees" (p. 28), and Pattie is doomed.

His daughter Muriel regards Carel as the "troll king" (p. 35) who may, at any moment, be carried into hell by the devil in person. She fears his evil power but is unable to resist it. In his presence she is mesmerized:

She had always felt guilty before him .... Muriel felt her father's eyes upon her like a steady pressure upon her face .... Muriel felt a point of sleepiness in her mind like a little cloud. It buzzes. More like a swarm of bees perhaps coming nearer, nearer (p. 130).

She thinks him omnipotent, or would not be surprised to discover that he were. When Eugene's icon unexpectedly appears on his desk (brought there by Marcus, unknown to her), she
thinks for a moment that he has performed a miracle, and has restored it to Eugene. She thinks him also omniscient, and that he is able to read her thoughts. Her fear of him is not a fear of God, but

she was frightened of disobeying Carel. But she was even more frightened of something else, of an isolation, a paralysis of the will, the metamorphosis of the world into something small and sleepy and enclosed, the interior of an egg. She felt as if Carel had tried to recruit her for some diabolical plot, or rather to hypnotize her into a sense of its inevitability (p. 138).

Like Pattie, she sees in him an alien, in the sense of non-human, quality:

He had never quite, for her, belonged to the ordinary human scene, and although he was quite a stranger and the strangest thing that she knew, he was so intimately a part of her own consciousness that she was almost surprised that he was visible to other people (p. 179).

In the end, the choice between his life and death rests with her. She chooses the latter, but his death does not release her from enchantment. Like Pattie, she has become lost to the world of innocence. Because of his diabolical acts, she is bound to Elizabeth and must, for the rest of her life be

condemned to be divided forever from the world of simple innocent things, thoughtless affections and free happy laughter and dogs passing by in the street .... There would be no parting
from Elizabeth now. Carel had riveted them together, each to be the damnation of the other until the end of the world (p. 222).

Carel has always been "a source of power" (p. 14) and "a man of power" (p. 225) to his younger brother Marcus who both loves and fears him. Marcus refuses to accept the commonsense verdict that Carel is an insane man, choosing instead to interpret his anti-social behaviour as arising from a cosmic despair, the result of his knowledge of truth. Marcus thinks that Carel has insight into something he himself cannot possibly understand: "He had never even sighted that spiritual ocean upon which his brother was seemingly suffering shipwreck" (p. 195). In his knowledge of cosmic truth, Carel becomes "Godlike" to Marcus, a highly ironic conclusion as Marcus professes not to believe in the existence of God. His meeting with Carel has a religious implication, it is a "mystical experience" (p. 19). Thus, Carel's parting blow to him is "an enlightenment" (p. 191), "a mark of love" (p. 191). In his enchantment with his brother, Marcus thinks that whatever Carel's failings, they are not those of a mundane, human nature, but something colossal, of cosmic proportion.

Carel's despair reinforces his role as Lucifer figure. For fear, or dread (angst) is the fundamental mood of
Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger believes that at the very core of the human personality lies grave guilt, anxiety and fear. Man is lost in utter loneliness, he is totally isolated. Pattie senses that Carel possesses a great fear, a fear which afflicted her with terror and with a kind of nausea. It seemed to her now that, for all his curious solitary gaiety, she had always seen him as a soul in hell. Carel was becoming very frightened and he carries fear about him as a physical environment .... Pattie knew that what frightened Carel did not belong to the material world even in the sense in which pink elephants did (p. 32).

Carel's fear is of nothingness. He conceives of no God, no good, "only power and the marvel of power, there is only chance and the terror of chance" (p. 172). The universe is a void; goodness is not possible for man, for he is made "too low in the order of things" (p. 174). Therefore, he tells Marcus: "The single good of the philosophers is an illusion and a fake" (p. 172). This is, of course, contrary to Iris Murdoch's view. For goodness, she says, can exist in a world without God. It requires, however, individual self-discipline, a focussing of one's attention outwards, away from self. It is by no means an easy task, but it is a possible one. Thus Carel, in her view, suffers not from a grandiose malady such as cosmic despair, but from solipsism, leading to "personal fantasy: the tissue of self-aggrandization and consoling wishes and dreams which
prevents one from seeing what is outside one."¹⁹ As an example of "totalitarian man," Carel is indeed "a neurotic who seeks to cure himself by unfolding a myth about himself."²⁰

Because the settings of *The Italian Girl*, *The Unicorn* and *The Time of the Angels* are isolated, the enchanter figures are only seen in one location, Maggie in the symbolic Garden of Eden of the Narraway estate, Hannah and Carel in the fantasy worlds they have created within Gaze Castle and the rectory. It is interesting that these three enchanters are the only ones who are restricted in movement in this manner. This is an indication that in Iris Murdoch's novels, setting plays a large part in determining the functions of characters, particularly of the enchanter figures.
II. Mischa Fox and Honor Klein

The atmosphere of remoteness that is present in The Italian Girl, The Unicorn and The Time of the Angels is less evident in The Flight from the Enchanter and A Severed Head. In both of these novels, there are frequent reminders of ordinary life in a larger society. The working world of London is depicted in The Flight from the Enchanter in the description of city streets, a factory, and a tenement building, among other scenes. In A Severed Head, Martin's travels from one London address to another, his visit to a train station, his walk along the Thames, as well as his excursions to Oxford and Cambridge, suggest that the world of the novel is part of a larger society.

As I have mentioned in Chapter One, normal reality in The Flight from the Enchanter is the contingent world. It is symbolized by the sea which makes a "deafening" and "strange roaring sound,"21 and is, to Annette, a frightening phenomenon:

Annette was completely dazed. She came down to stand beside Mischa, picking her way carefully across a line of crackling shells and yielding seaweed. It was a beach of large flat stones which crunched awkwardly underfoot. Annette felt suddenly in danger. The mist hemmed them in .... She looked towards the sea. She could just see as far as the place where the waves appeared out of the
grey wall, already beginning to curl over and fall. They crashed violently upon the stones, came foaming forward in a great sheet of water, and then withdrew, drawing the beach after them with a rattling grinding sound. The endless rhythmical noise covered Annette and held her for a while motionless and appalled (p. 201).

Her emotion when confronted with the sea recalls Marian's panic, in The Unicorn, on her way to the sea to bathe.

On the level of this reality, Mischa Fox is an exotic enchanter and a romantic figure. He is a famous man, fabulously wealthy, with obscure origins, a factor that contributes greatly to his exotic mystique. Vaguely European and of indeterminate age, he is a man of mystery. As Rainborough says:

'No one knows Mischa's age. One can hardly even make a guess. It's uncanny. He could be thirty, he could be fifty-five. Have you ever met anyone who knew?... 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' (p. 35).

Though not famous for anything in particular, he is, as he tells Annette, simply famous. As the owner of a chain of newspapers, he is influential as well as immensely rich. Not surprisingly, he is a legendary figure, the object of much speculation, gossip and stories. He is reported to have at his disposal dozens of enslaved beings of all kinds
whom he controls at will. He is heard of frequently "jumping on a plane to New York" (p. 144). Even his dwelling places are sources of fantastic conjecture. His villa in Italy is the source of "various fables" (p. 268), and his house in London is "fabulous and much-discussed" (p. 142).

As with many of the exotic enchanter, Mischa has a striking appearance. He has one blue eye and one brown eye:

The blue one was not brownish, nor was the brown one bluish. Each one was its own clear unflecked colour. There was a brown profile and a blue profile, giving the impression of two faces superimposed (p. 79).

This double profile suggests a paradox or ambiguity, which indeed is the operative word in the description of his character. He supposedly cries over what he reads in the newspapers and is moved to tears when recalling how chicks were given as prizes in fairs in the village of his childhood, and then subsequently died. He expresses sorrow at seeing a one-footed sparrow and worries that it would not survive a storm. He tells Rainborough: "I love all creatures," (p. 135), and proves it by his gentle treatment of the moth that lands on his hand and of the lizard that Rosa picks up in his villa. Animals, he says, are "so poor and defenceless" (p. 208) that they fill him with "an intolerable compassion, a sort of nausea" (p. 208). To save them, he kills
them, as he did a kitten he was once given. This kind of ambiguous compassion is a neurosis, as anyone with an inkling of modern psychology would hazard to guess. Wolfe, in fact, attempts a psychoanalysis of Mischa's character. He says:

The motive force behind all his conscious acts is a terrified pity for the finite world. Mischa unconsciously transforms his obsessive compassion for the fragility and evanescence of contingent life into a sadistic cruelty. His own outward display of mildness and affectionate charity is a ruse for his frankly morbid psychic impulses.

This "obsessive compassion" for helpless things extends to the inanimate. He wishes to own the Artemis, an unprofitable periodical, suffragette in origin, because, as Rosa puts it:

'The Artemis is a little independent thing ... it's very small, but it goes around on its own. There aren't many completely independent periodicals these days. 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. 33).

Mischa's ambiguous motives are the results of a failure of love. A.S. Byatt puts it thus: "Mischa's relations to other individuals are either those of pity or those of destruction; he cannot meet them in love." This failure leads to his own enchantment. Himself an object of fantasy, he is imprisoned
by his own fantasy. Thus, he enslaves Rosa by having in his possession a photograph of her with the Lusciewicz brothers, but is himself entrapped by memories of his childhood symbolized by the photographs of his village; to these he turns for consolation.

Mischa's enigmatic behaviour reaffirms the ambiguity in his character. The intense emotion he displays by the sea is an example of this strange behaviour. Annette sees that

his lips were parted and his eyes seemed to start from his head. He was staring at the waves like a man cornered by a strange animal. Terror and fascination were upon his brow. When Annette saw him she was yet more afraid. He was breathing hard and every now and then his mouth moved as if he were saying something the sound of which was lost in the roar of the sea. Already the water was covering his shoes. Then he bent down, plunged his hand into the foam at his feet, and put his fingers to his lips. He licked his lips, tasting the brine (p. 201).

Oblivious to her frightened cry, "he shook himself and moved away from her, his lips still moving, without turning his head" (p. 202). When Annette breaks his communion with the sea by plunging into it herself, Mischa becomes transformed: "Mischa leaned over her with the face of a demon. He pulled her to her feet and dragged her to the car" (p. 202).

His enigmatic behaviour and social position make Mischa a most suitable object of fantasy for others. Rosa thinks
him "the very figure of evil" (p. 103). She recognizes in him the quality of the outlaw, "a spirit which came out of the same region beyond the docility of the social world" (p. 235) as that of Stefan. Consequently, only he can get rid of Stefan. Though it was she who had terminated their relationship ten years before, her enchantment with him has not ceased. She finds herself "still, however partially and however obscurely, fascinated by the idea of Mischa" (p. 102). On her way to his villa in Italy, she is in "a frenzied state of mind" (p. 267). To Calvin she says: "It's odd ... in the past I always felt that whether I went towards him or away from him I was only doing his will" (p. 281).

Nina's enchantment with Mischa began as love and is gradually transformed into "a strange emotion which had in it more of terror and fascination than tenderness" (p. 143). She is completely dependent on him for her existence and is isolated because of this dependency. She lives alone in misery in an artificial world that he has created for her, and her release from his spell is attained only through her suicide.

To Peter, Mischa is "a problem which, he felt, he would never solve --- and this although he had got perhaps more data for its solution than any other living being" (p. 206). Mischa appears to him to be "the very spirit of the Orient,
that Orient which lay beyond the Greeks, barbarous and feral, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon" (p. 209). Mischa seems almost prophetic at times, to the extent that Peter thinks he understands the hieroglyph that has baffled Peter for a long time. Strangely, Mischa's offhand prediction of the imminent discovery of a bilingual stone turns out later to be true.

Annette, the "unicorn girl," puts herself under the enchanter's spell with the mistaken impression that she can liberate his tortuous soul (all famous men, to the romantic, have tortuous souls). Unlike Nina, however, Annette escapes from her enchantment without a scar, just as physically she is scarless, despite vaccinations and an accident. Her scarless condition suggests that she is untouched by experience, like the maiden in Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn." Like that maiden, Annette, as well as her parents, represents the world of romanticism, without the muddles of reality.24

Like Annette, Rainborough is also a romantic adolescent, though an overaged one. Mischa's fame appeals to Rainborough, who, as Wolfe suggests, has the typical middle-class aspiration to social prestige.25 To be associated with a glamorous figure is an attainment of this aspiration. His emotions regarding Mischa are mixed --- fear and distaste with little fondness. He declares that Mischa is "a
man capable of enormous cruelty" (p. 31), and expresses
disgust at Mischa's manipulation of people. He professes
cynicism at Mischa's fame, declaring that "the heavens
don't turn red when Mischa lands; comets don't burn the sky"
(p. 30). Yet he is gratified when considered by others to
be Mischa's intimate friend. He cherishes Mischa's good
opinion of him, and is anxious for the continuance of their
friendship. Thus he is jealous, when at Mischa's party,
it is Peter who is the recipient of the host's attention.

In the world of form, Mischa is a figure from mythol-
ogy, fables and fairy tales. His double profile suggests
that he is Janus, the Roman double-headed god of beginnings,
protector of arches and doorways. According to legend,
the gates of Janus are opened in times of war. Appropriately,
the gates of Mischa's house open for a party that disintegrates
into a brawl between Rosa and Annette. Janus is also reputed
by some sources to be the first of the gods; this parallels
Mischa's undisputed social position, and similarly, the
controversial fact that Janus is related to Diana explains
allegorically Mischa's fanatical compulsion to own the
Artemis. Mischa's "fabulous and much-discussed residence" (p.
142) in London is composed of four houses on two adjoining
blocks, joined together back to back. Within, there are
numerous rooms, and according to rumour, there are no corridors or continuous stairways. The centre construction has few windows, promoting wild speculations that it houses a laboratory, that chamber of horrors in supernatural tales in which weird creatures are produced. This, and the maze of rooms, suggest the labyrinth in which dwells the monster Minotaur. "Labrys," according to Graves, means double-headed axe. The shape of Minos's palace, like a waxing and waning moon joined together back to back resembles this. As does Mischa's palace with its houses on two blocks joined together back to back. Mischa himself is the Minotaur of his labyrinth. This is hinted at in the first pages of the novel when Annette sympathizes with the Minotaur in the Inferno: "Why should the poor Minotaur be suffering in hell? ... It was not the Minotaur's fault that it had been born a monster" (p. 7). Later, she is attracted to Mischa, whom she sees as a lonely misunderstood creature, like the Minotaur. Mischa's last name suggests the world of fables which is evoked in the room in which the party is held. Three sides of the walls are covered with tapestries, depicting "an extraordinary variety of animals, birds and insects" (p. 187) in various acts of movement—running, flying, crawling, fleeing, pursuing or idling. In the middle of the room stands a large round bowl containing tropical fish.
Mischa himself belongs with this myriad of animals, for he is the "animal or nature god."\(^30\) His last name is an allusion to the animal often depicted in fables. In appearance he resembles a fox, with his "long tenderly curving mouth" (p. 79), and long black hair covering his shoulders and chest which, when drenched, cling to his body in damp streaks; suggesting a wet animal. His movements are agile and spry, like those of a fox. He often appears lazy and relaxed, like an animal in repose. At other times, his eyes are "wide and serene, like those of a happy animal" (p. 190). He is accustomed to sitting on floors, and on the occasion of his party, Rainborough notices the relaxed grace of his posture and the extraordinary flexibility of his feet and ankles. The human foot, which is usually a stiff and jointed object, quite unlike the smoothly bending limbs of an animal, appeared in Mischa to have lost its rigidity (p. 190).

Foxes are regarded as predators; in his relationship with Rosa, imagery of pursuit and captivity is often used, suggesting that Mischa is the predator. When they embrace, Rosa feels "her eyelids fluttered under his mouth like a bird" (p. 240), more specifically, a bird that is caught. She imagines being pursued by him when he is blocking all her routes of escape (p. 258). She wonders if he wants to put her and Peter together in a cage (p. 258). As foxes are
also victims of foxhunts, they are thus ambiguously both predators and prey. This ambiguity reinforces Mischa's own ambiguity.

The world of fairy tales is symbolized by Nina's dress shop which is located in a tall house in Chelsea:

The door opened into a forest of clothes. The room was crisscrossed with a number of steel rods, fixed near the ceiling, from which hung garments in various stages of completion. As Annette entered, the draught made a rustle of silks and a murmur of velvets that swept like a sigh along the hanging rows of garments towards the mirror, which was fixed to the wall at the far end. The mirror was very tall and luminous, and in the light that fell from it were grouped the white full-breasted dummies, some clothed and some unclothed, between whom Annette, her eyes big with anticipation, now as she entered saw her own reflection (pp. 76-77).

The mirror, the dummies, and Nina herself, "a small artificial animal" (p. 76), with her dyed hair, suggest an unreal fantasy world, like that in a fairy tale. In this fairy tale world, Mischa the enchanter makes his first appearance "at the far end of the lane of clothes" (p. 79), and later steps back into the shadow of the hanging clothes, and stands there "like a man on the edge of the forest" (p. 80). The reference to a forest suggests the common setting of fairy tales. This is emphasized later when Rosa tells him that she is lost in a forest. He replies:
'Just go on a little way ... and soon you'll hear that clop-clop of the axe. Then go a little farther and you'll come to the woodcutter's cottage.'
'No,' she said, 'to the enchanter's house' (p. 240).

Woodcutters, cottages in the forest and enchanters are all common features of fairy tales.

The world of fairy tales is not evoked in *A Severed Head*, but that of mythology very much so, particularly in the description of Honor Klein. Not as ambiguous as Mischa, she is an equally powerful figure whose power lies, not in material possessions, but in an acute perception of reality. The world of form in this novel is symbolized by Rembers, Martin's family home in Oxford, and by his and Antonia's house in Hereford Square. Rembers is "a solitary place." 31 When in it, Martin feels "enclosed" (p. 39), and "shuttered as in a tomb" (p. 45). In his mind, Rembers is "perpetually clouded over with a romantic, almost a medieval, haze" (p. 32) — a fantasy place, as the words "romantic," "medieval" and "haze" suggest. The house in Hereford Square is, to him, a "rich and highly integrated mosaic ..." (p. 8). It is filled with art prints and knick-knacks, carefully arranged, a

bright multi-coloured shell ... where silk and silver and rosewood, dark mahogany and muted gilt blended sweetly together against a background of Bellini green (p. 21).
The interior of the house reflects its owners' desire for beauty of form. It is also a symbol of their marriage, so that when the latter disintegrates, the house becomes "grey and derelict, after having been half-slaughtered" (p. 151).

In this world of form, Honor is an exotic figure whose German-Jewish heritage is constantly emphasized. When Martin thinks of her, he recalls a "generalized image of a middle-aged Germanic spinster" (p. 54). At the train station, she is hugging numerous small parcels like a mid-European "hausfrau" (p. 55). On one occasion she even speaks in "a slow way which seemed ... in its very laboriousness, a little Germanic" (p. 58). More than her German ancestry, her Jewishness is underlined; her face is "heavy, perceptibly Jewish and dour" (p. 55), a "pale, rather waxen Jewish face" (p. 63), like a "sallow Jewish mask" (p. 125), but also solemn, "the face of a Hebrew angel" (p. 182). Her "curving Jewish mouth" suggests to Martin "a Jewish strength, a possible Jewish refinement" (pp. 95-96).

Like other exotic enchanters, Honor often behaves strangely. She does unusual things such as conducting a drill with a Samurai sword which climaxes in the slicing of a paper napkin in two, and engages in a wrestling match with Martin in the cellar of her brother's house. This latter incident is made more bizarre by her manner throughout. Not
only is she not surprised when attacked by Martin, but she
does not cry out, though she fights "like a maniac" (p. 111).
When the scramble is over, she gets up without haste and
walks away nonchalantly.

Honor, one critic says, is "the goddess of Reality," for
she has a keen insight that enables her to see through
the pretences others have built around situations. She recog­
nizes the violence and force of the unconscious in the nature
of man. Thus she sees the "civilized" relationship between
Martin, Palmer and Antonia as one that requires the suppression
of violent emotions, and of the contingent and irrational ele­
ments of the human personality. Of the "golden pair," Palmer
and Antonia, she says: "They are both persons with a great
capacity for self-deception. They have enchanted themselves
into a belief in this match. But they are both crammed with
misgivings" (p. 64). As to Martin's own role in the relation­
ship, she tells him that he cannot "cheat the dark gods" (p. 64),
that is, the powerful subconscious forces that reside in
him. However much he tries, he cannot overcome his animal
instincts, "lynch" the "gibbon" in himself, that is, suppress
his anger towards the golden pair. She predicts: "Sooner
or later you will have to become a centaur and kick your
way out" (p. 65). The use of "centaur" is apt, for a centaur,
like man himself, is half-civilized and half-bestial, and
therefore irrational as well as rational. Reality does not lie in suppressing the animal but in accepting it and thus coming to terms with it. Martin's repressed violence predictably finds outlets, first symbolically, when he spills wine on Palmer's rug, then actually, when he attacks Honor in the cellar. The locations of these acts are significant. The symbolic violence takes place upstairs, in the higher region, while the actual violence occurs in the subterranean region. The higher region represents man's civilized social behaviour while in the lower region lodges his subconscious, primitive motives. Honor is also responsible for breaking up the enchanted relationship between Georgie and Martin by informing the others of Georgie's existence. Furthermore, she introduces Georgie to Alexander, who, acting habitually, takes Georgie away.

Others recognize Honor's power though they do not understand that it lies in her realistic vision. Georgie, who does not like her, tells Martin that Honor "could inspire awe .... There's something primitive about her" (p. 7). She finds it impossible to lie to Honor because "she carries too many guns" (p. 83). Antonia also fears her and feels "rather nervous" (p. 51) about meeting her. She confesses to Martin: "She gives me the creeps" (p. 142). She seems to Antonia to be omnipresent, like a "sort of black cloud" (p. 141).
Palmer's feelings about his half-sister are not stated, but Martin thinks that he fears her and that she is the instigator of their incestuous relationship, and he merely the victim.

Martin also recognizes "the power in her" (p. 179). At her first confrontation with Palmer and Antonia, he notices that she stands in the doorway,

her gaze fixed upon the golden pair by the fire, her head thrown back, her face exceedingly pale; and she appeared to me for a second like some insolent and powerful captain, returning booted and spurred from a field of triumph, the dust of battle yet upon him, confronting the sovereign powers whom he was now ready if need be to bend to his will (p. 58).

The imagery describing her in this passage is that of a victor, a figure of power. Martin senses instinctively that he must be on guard against her, and "must be very careful what I said to Honor Klein" (p. 63). Her unexpected arrival at his house causes him dismay, and he feels "a certain deep unreasoning fear. I felt her as dangerous" (p. 73). His fears, as it turns out, are justified, for Honor discloses Georgie's existence to the others. When sent by Antonia to Palmer's house, he is anxious about meeting Honor there:

When it came to it I was scared stiff. It was not just that I was positively frightened at
the idea of perhaps seeing Honor again, and that when I picture being in the same room with her my whole body became cold and rigid (p. 156).

She is an ambiguous power which he feels, is hovering over him like "the spread wings of Satan" (p. 124).

Martin's fear of Honor is more than merely his fear of her as a person, but also the symbol of his fear of contingency. For Honor represents contingency, the very opposite of the kind of "civilized" world of form that Antonia, Martin and Palmer attempt to create. Thus, the contingent world of the novel is wherever Honor happens to be, and the dominant image of this world is that of fog. It is an appropriate image from Martin's point of view, for Martin's vision is fogged by fantasy; he is unable to perceive the contingent elements of life.

Honor's first appearance is at Liverpool Street train station, where Martin is sent to meet her. It is a foggy afternoon and the station is "an image of hell" (p. 54), "the inferno indeed" (p. 55). It smells, Martin recalls, of sulphur and brimstone. Thick fog filled it and the great cast-iron dome was invisible. The platform lights were dulled, powerless to cast any radiance out into the relentless haze, so that the darkness seemed to have got inside one's head. Excited, strangely exhilarated by the fog, obscure figures peered and hurried past. One moved about within a small dimly lighted sphere, surrounded by an opaque yet
luminous yellow night out of which with startling suddenness people and things materialized (p. 53).

Palmer's cellar in his house in Pelham Crescent, is similarly another image of hell:

An electric light, unshaded but dim, showed the bleak musty cavern that was Palmer's cellar. The place seemed darker than usual and a sulphurous odour of fog mingled with the smells of rotting wood and cold damp stone (p. 109).

With the smell of fog, Honor appears again, only to be attacked by Martin. After the skirmish, she walks off into the fog, "yellow, opaque, infernal" (p. 112). Palmer's dining room, when Honor is there,

was beginning to seem abnormally dark. Perhaps some of the fog had drifted in from the outside. One of the candles began to flicker, and its flame foundered sizzling in a sea of melted wax. As I saw it go I felt frightened and then wondered if I had rightly identified the thing which clutched at my heart (p. 95).

Martin's fear of darkness resembles Edmund's in The Italian Girl; it is an indication of his inability to accept contingency.

In this dark, foggy contingent world, Honor appears as the awful figure of the Medusa, and as a pagan idol of primitive cultures. The image of the Medusa is not merely evoked
in one scene, as in the case of Maggie in *The Italian Girl*, but dominates the characterization of Honor as it does the narrative pattern of the novel. The title itself refers to the decapitated Medusa with whom Honor is directly compared after Martin has fallen in love with her: "I could ... live with ... the image of Honor: an image which might however become for me at any moment altogether a Medusa" (p. 156). She says to Martin:

'I am a severed head such as primitive tribes and old alchemists used to use, anointing it with oil and putting a morsel of gold upon its tongue to make it utter prophecies. And who knows but that long acquaintance with a severed head might not lead to strange knowledge' (p. 182).

She has the appearance of having been decapitated as she sits in Martin's car with her head outside the window, peering into the fog. Her body seems to him like a "headless sack" (p. 57). She also performs a symbolic act of decapitation when she slices a paper napkin in two with a Samurai sword. Even her profession links her with decapitation; as an anthropologist she is presumably knowledgeable in the customs of head hunters. The image of the severed head, as well as alluding to the Medusa, also reinforces her prophetic quality, for in Celtic belief, the head severed from the body has prophetic powers.34
 Appropriately for her role as the decapitated Medusa, images of the head hover over Honor in droves. Descriptions of her frequently stress the appearance and angle of the head; her head is "lowered" (p. 167), "bowed" (p. 175), "thrown back" (p. 58), "drooping" (p. 202), or she "shook her head" (p. 179), and "jerked her head" (p. 183).

The Medusa is described as having glaring eyes, serpents for hair, huge teeth, protruding tongue, and altogether so ugly a face that all who gaze at it are petrified with fright. Honor too, is ugly. Martin tells Georgie that Honor looks like a "haystack" (p. 7). She has a harsh melancholy profile and narrow eyes that are like "two black chips" (p. 63). Like the Medusa, she glares. Her hair suggests serpents; "black gleaming hair, oily, straight" (p. 95) sits like a "cropped wig" (p. 63) about her face. She is usually hatless, so that when drops of foggy moisture fall on her hair, they give the impression of shiny snakes. Martin recalls her oily hair rolling in the dust as they wrestle in the cellar, suggesting snakes wriggling on the ground. After her histrionic display of swordsmanship, she leans her head on the blade of the sword, which, aptly, has a snakeskin casing. There are also direct references to snakes in association with her. She receives Martin's offer of love by staring at him, "the snake in her looking coldly out through her eyes" (p. 180). Later,
after having discovered her in bed with Palmer, he wonders at his own naiveté for assuming her virginity: "Caught in the coils of such stupidity I could not yet begin to touch with my imagination the notion that she should have had her brother as a lover" (p. 129). "Coils" evoke serpents, which, besides referring to the Medusa's hair, allude to, as they do in the description of Emma Sands in *An Unofficial Rose*, Honor's prophetic quality.

The severed head represents a castration fear in Freud; to Sartre it is a sense of fear of being observed. It is described in *The Golden Bough*, which Martin is appropriately reading, after he falls in love with Honor, as a taboo object in primitive societies, sanctified because it contains the spirit of its possessor. It is an object of fear in any case. Thus, Martin's fear of her is justified.

As her profession indicates, Honor is associated with the primitive. Her mannerisms, expressions and poses are evocative of those of pagan idols, like those worshipped by the uncivilized tribes she studies. Her very person suggests figures in primitive cultures. Not surprisingly, Martin frequently sees her as "a figure." When she arrives unexpectedly at his house, he says: "The appearance, so unexpectedly, of this absolutely immobile figure had something of the uncanny, and she had for a moment the snapshot presence of a ghost
(pp. 72-73). In the cellar, he notices that "a figure had appeared on the cellar steps" (p. 109). Over Georgie's unconscious body, he sees "a figure enter" (p. 174). In bed with Palmer, she is "as tawny and as naked as a ship's figurehead" (p. 128). Her face on this occasion is "stiff and expressionless as carved wood" (p. 128). "Carved wood" suggests wooden idols. She even has "a faint stiff smile" (p. 202) like that of "an archaic statue" (p. 178).

In posture, she is like wood figures. When Martin declares his love, she stands with her feet apart, "and hands behind her back, staring" (p. 182) at him. The position of her hands is important, for it is frequently stressed in her description. Sometimes they hang loosely at her sides, or they are in her pockets, so that she resembles statues in which the hands are carved so closely to the body that they appear to be at one with the body. There is an artificial quality in these poses that is comparable to those of carved wood figures.

A pagan idol compels worship, as Martin is compelled to love her. He believes that in falling in love with her, he is merely obeying the force of fate: "The force that drew me towards Honor imposed itself with the authority of a cataclysm" (p. 124). The same fate also prepares him for sacrifice as the pagans prepare their victims as offerings.
to their gods: "I was, it seemed, to be deprived of consolation. I was to be stripped, shaved, and prepared as a destined victim; and I awaited Honor as one awaits, without hope, the searing presence of a god" (p. 164). Approaching her in Palmer's dining room, Martin feels that he is arriving at the shrine of "some remote and self-absorbed deity" (p. 93). As a votary pays homage to his god, Martin "fell on my knees and prostrated myself full length with my head on the floor" (p. 182).

A pagan deity is also taboo; thus Martin thinks of her as something "black and untouchable" (p. 64). After wrestling with her in the cellar, he is awed by the fact that he has had bodily contact with her:

I kept returning with wonderment to the thought that I had touched her; 'touched' was putting it mildly, given what had happened. But it seemed, perhaps for that very reason, almost implausible in retrospect ... I could not altogether recall any sense of the contact of my flesh with hers. 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 black cloak about her. It was as if I had not really touched her (pp. 121-122).

Martin's presence in the cellar, like Ducane's excursion to the cave, suggests the entrance to the belly of the whale after which the hero is reborn. After this adventure, Martin is a new person in that he begins to recognize the existence
of contingency. He realizes that he loves Honor though he does not understand her, as he does not understand contingency. His change is symbolized by his change of reading material, from military history to The Golden Bough. 38

Obsessed with her taboo qualities, Martin goes to Cambridge to see her: "I preserved the illusion of never having touched her. I had knocked her down but I had never held her hand; and at the idea of holding her hand I practically felt faint" (p. 126). He finds her in bed with Palmer, and all at once she becomes to him "aloof, frightening, sacred, and ... taboo" (p. 153). Later, when he sees her at the hospital, he can no more have touched her than if she were the "Ark of the Covenant" (p. 182). Presumably, when he truly apprehends her existence, the taboo will be broken, and he will be able to overcome his fear:

Though both Mischa and Honor are obvious power figures, their power is seen in different ways. Mischa has all the actual trappings of power (wealth, social position etc.), while Honor is described with a more impressive set of imagery that evokes figures of power. These two enchanters are also probably the most unusual in appearance, one having eyes of different colours which give him two different profiles, and the other being extremely ugly.
III. Nigel Boas and Julius King

Society at large is even more evident in *Bruno's Dream* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* than it is in *The Flight from the Enchanter* and *A Severed Head*. The setting of these two novels is also London, and there are not only numerous and detailed descriptions of London streets and landmarks, but these are actually important to the action of the novels. The river Thames, for example, plays a crucial role in the events in *Bruno's Dream*, as do the embankment along the Thames, the city streets at night and even inside Harrod's, in which an event occurred that transformed Bruno's life. The Tate Gallery and the Prince Regent Museum are important to the plot of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, for in both Julius' diabolical plan is hatched. In this novel too, there are descriptions of London flats, an office in Whitehall, a Chinese restaurant, private houses and country roads, all serving to emphasize that a larger society is in existence.

The world of form in *Bruno's Dream* is symbolized by Miles' and Diana's house. It is a little house "where everything looked formidably neat and clean," and where there are always fresh flowers and "never a petal out of place" (p. 61). It represents Diana's attempt to recreate "an eighteenth-century country house life of peaceful ennui and formal tedium and lengthy leisured visiting" (p. 61). The
reference to the Eighteenth century again suggests the desire for pattern and order. Diana has succeeded in making this world of form "a beautiful and elegant burrow" (p. 87), in which she and Miles live a rabbit-like existence. Daily routine, like that at Imber Court, is regimented:

Meals were punctual and meticulously served .... Diana had her own strict routine, her own invented personal formalities. Entirely without other occupation, she filled her time with household tasks and enjoyments. There was her hour for working in the garden, her hour for doing the flowers, her hour for doing embroidery, her hour for sitting in the drawing room and reading a leather-bound book, her hour for playing on the gramaphone old-fashioned popular music ...
(p. 61).

There is no room in this world of form for contingent elements. Thus, Diana, until her enlightenment, lives an unreal existence:

Making the house had taken her years and within it she had occupied years in posing. She posed in a silk afternoon dress in the drawing room, in a nylon negligee in the bedroom. While doing the flowers she posed as a lady doing the flowers (p. 86).

Diana, in other words, substitutes posing for actual living.

In terms of this normal level of reality, the portrait of Nigel has a convincing psychological realism in view of today's hippie and drug cult. Nigel is a hippie in appearance, with his long hair and his habit of going barefooted. He is
also, very probably, addicted to drugs, which causes his face to become pale and lopsided, and results in his often trancelike condition. Others think him mystical for this reason. Danby says to Bruno that Nigel is "in touch with the transcendental" (p. 29). Adelaide thinks that he lives in another world and is therefore frightened of him. Many of his actions are possible results of drug "trips," as when he prowls the London streets at night. At such times he fancies himself outside the material world. He is then "unpersonned Nigel" (p. 81) who strides among the people in the streets "with long silent feet and the prayer rise about him hissing faintly, like steam" (p. 81). He acts as though driven by a religious compulsion:

Nigel strides noiselessly, crossing the roadways at a step, his bare feet not touching ground, a looker-on at inward scenes. He has reached the sacred river. It rolls at his feet black and full, a river of tears bearing away the corpses of men. There is weeping but he is not the weeper. The wide river flows onward, immense and black beneath the old cracked voices of the temple bells which flit like bats throughout the lurid black air. The river is thick, ribbed, curled, convex, heaped up above its banks. Nigel makes offerings. Flowers. Where was the night garden where he gathered them? He throws the flowers down upon the humped river, then throws after them all the objects which he finds in his pockets, a knife, a handkerchief, a handful of money. The river takes and sighs and the flowers and the white handkerchief slide slowly away into the tunnel of the night. Nigel, a god, a slave, stands erect, a sufferer in his body for the sins of the sick city (pp. 81-82).
During these nocturnal excursions, he commits deplorable acts --- he becomes a peeping tom, lifting himself over window sills and prostrating himself on the ground in order to observe with his "telescopic eye" (p. 82), the goings-on inside other people's rooms. At other times he is a mischief-maker, a tattle-tale, and practical joker whose "joke" almost becomes fatal for Danby and Will during their farcical duel with real bullets.

Though a despicable character in his mischief-making, Nigel is infinitely gentle and kind towards Bruno. Danby says of him: "He's terribly good with Bruno. It's almost uncanny" (p. 21), a statement that Adelaide unconsciously echoes later on. In Bruno's room, Nigel is

many-handed, gentle, as he tidies Bruno up for supper-time ... a pajama button is done up, a firm support between the shoulder blades while a pillow is plumped, the lamp and telephone moved a little farther off, Soviet Spiders closed and put away. The back of Nigel's hand brushes Bruno's cheek. The tenderness is incredible (p. 74).

Nigel's gentleness extends to others as well. He prevents Diana from taking her own life by embracing her, and by his prattle of love, which she at first takes for nonsense, but later repeats to herself without realizing that she is echoing him. He says to her enigmatically that he is God;
'I am God. Maybe this is how God appears now in the world, a little unregarded crazy person whom everyone pushes aside and knocks down and steps upon. Or it can be that I am the false god, or one of the million million false gods there are. It matters very little. The false god is the true god. Up any religion a man may climb' (p. 224).

In his conversation with her, Nigel reveals that he is an exponent of his creator's philosophy:

'A human being hardly ever thinks about other people. He contemplates fantasms which resemble them and which he has decked out for his own purposes' (p. 226).

This is a paraphrase of Iris Murdoch's statement which I quoted in Chapter One:

We are completely enclosed in a fantasy world of our own into which we try to draw things from outside, not grasping their reality and independence, making them into dream objects of our own.40

Nigel also gives Diana advice concerning Miles and Lisa:

"Relax. Let them walk on you. Love Miles, love Danby, love Lisa, love Bruno, love Nigel" (p. 226). This effacing philosophy bears a striking similarity to Iris Murdoch's ethics of love, as I have outlined them in Chapter One. Similarly, in his letter to Danby, Nigel puts into words her ideas of the nature of love as evident in her novels:
Love is a strange thing ... anyone is permitted to love anyone and in any way he pleases. A cat may look at a king, the worthless can love the good, the good the worthless, the worthless the worthless and the good the good .... Love knows no conventions. Anything can happen, so that in a way, a terrible terrible way, there are no impossibilities (p. 269).

This recalls Hugo's statement to Jake in Under the Net: "You know anyone can love anyone, or prefer anyone to anyone" (p. 226).

Nigel thus, is ambiguously a trouble-maker and a true practitioner as well as exponent of Iris Murdoch's ethics of love. Equally ambiguous is his sexual nature. His letter to Danby reveals that he harbours a homosexual love for Danby. Will, Nigel's twin brother who is straightforward in all his urges, including his sexual one, calls Nigel a "crazy pervert" (p. 198). Danby hints to Adelaide that Nigel may have some unusual taste in sexual matters. This suggestion of sex in various forms in association with Nigel is relevant to his allegorical role, as I shall discuss later.

The dark, contingent world is symbolized by the Thames, Nigel's "sacred river" in his nightly prowls. Seen on the morning of the duel:

The expanse of shore, some twenty feet from the base of the wall to the water, was quite clearly lit now by a light still faint but rather lurid which seemed to emanate from the curtain of
mist which hung now at the centre of the river and arched over the shore, enclosing it in a capsule of bright haze. A quietness, which seemed also to be coming out of the mist, held the scene poised . . . . The tide had not yet turned and the river was still running steadily downstream. A sleek line of mud was reflecting the yellowish light. Above it, the surface was more irregular, lumpy, stony, strewn with plastic bags and old motor tyres and bottles of green and clear glass and very pale smooth clean pieces of driftwood which the Thames had long had for her own. The clear glowing light made the littered scene seem over-precise, purposive, as if one had wandered suddenly into the very middle of a work of art (pp. 234-235).

This contingent world, with its rising water, looms over the world of form, threatening always to overwhelm it. Eventually it does intrude violently into the world of form through a flood that sweeps away Bruno's prize possession, his stamp collection. In this contingent world, Nigel is an angel, the figure of the Greek deity Hermes, the figure of Shiva and the Bodhisattva in the Buddha legend.

As a nurse, Nigel is a ministering angel. Bruno thinks of his strong hands with their "angel fingers" (p. 2) massaging away his rheumatism. Nigel himself says to Will, his alter ego: "You need me as the brute needs the angel" (p. 199). In his apprehension over the imminent duel, Danby thinks of Nigel as "a hostile presence, a thin sardonic judging angel" (p. 230). During the duel, Nigel falls to
the ground, turning a "swooning beatific face" (p. 239) to Danby. This, as well as his frequent dreamy, blissful expression, suggests the faces of angels in religious paintings. Nigel has an unusual walk that suggests angels flying. He habitually "glides." On his nocturnal wanderings, he "strides noiselessly, crossing the roadways at a step, his bare feet not touching ground" (p. 81). He also appears to have wings, for in Bruno's room, he "flutters like a moth, filling the room with a soft powdery susurrous of great wings" (p. 75).

The suggestion of wings and flying is relevant to Nigel's role as Hermes, the herald and spy of Zeus and Hades. Hermes is commonly represented as standing on tiptoes and wearing winged sandals to speed him on his flight. Nigel's above-ground motions evoke this pose. Hermes is also an Olympian spy, thus Nigel, the symbolic Hermes, is a peeping tom. Hermes is commonly regarded as a supernatural helper in heroic quests, a role Nigel fulfills by helping Diana find her way towards enlightenment. Finally Hermes is a phallic god, thus the suggestion of different forms of sexual activity surrounding Nigel explains this role. He is also, possibly, a hermaphrodite, a condition that owes part of its definition to Hermes.

The other myth that permeates the novel, serving in
fact as "master reference," is the Buddha myth. In terms of this legend, Nigel's appearance, with his thin face and long dark hair, evokes that of the dancing Shiva, Lord of the Universe, whose "wildly streaming locks represent the long-untended hair of the Indian Yogi, now flying in the dance of life." Nigel's dance in his bare room underlines his role as Shiva:

Nigel in black shirt, black tights, rotates with outstretched arms. The furniture against the wall is sleek and flat. The brown walls fold away into receding arcs above the glimmering sphere where Nigel turns and turns, thin as a needle, thin as a straight line, narrow as a slitlet through which a steely blinding light attempts to issue forth into the fuzzy world .... Nigel has fallen upon his knees. Kneeling upright he sways to its noiseless rhythm song. In the beginning was Om, Omphalos, Om Phallos, black undivided round devoid of consciousness or self. Out of the dreamless womb time creeps in the moment which is no beginning at the end which is no end.(p. 24).

This dance evokes Shiva's creation dance, Omphalos being the world navel.

Nigel's role as the Bodhisattva is the more important one in terms of this myth. The Bodhisattva is described as "the sublimely gentle ... person ... whose being or essence is enlightenment." He is

a person on the point of Buddhahood ... an adept who will become a Buddha in a subsequent reincarnation ... a type of world
saviour, representing particularly the universal principle of compassion. This description fits Nigel, whose gentleness is seen in his treatment of Bruno and Diana and whose enlightenment is evident in his expression, his "smile of ineffable bliss." The Bodhisattva is also described as androgynous and in the Buddha legends of China and Japan, it is represented in female as well as male form. This explains allegorically Nigel's hermaphrodite condition.

The importance of the Buddha myth in this novel has been explained elsewhere. Because it is the central reference, Nigel's role is a significant one. Far from being one of Iris Murdoch's "rebarbative running characters," or a minor character put in for good measure, or a symbol with "no convincing psychological identity and is intended to have none," Nigel is in fact the link between the two worlds of the novel; the first of the exotic enchanter figure in a "closed" novel to be seen as existing on two levels of reality simultaneously. The next is Julius King.

As in Bruno's Dream, the world of form in A Fairly Honourable Defeat is symbolized by a private residence, here Priory Grove, the Fosters' luxurious home which has in its garden

a diminutive swimming pool which made a square of flashing shimmering blue in the middle of the courtyard garden. The garden
was enclosed by an old redbrick wall which was surmounted by a trellis bearing an enlaceraent of Albertine and Little White Pet, all now in outrageous flower.54

It is an ordered, formal world, and the inhabitants themselves, as Morgan says, provide "order, order, order" (p. 78). Priory Grove also symbolizes the Fosters' marriage. Thus, when Hilda sees her marriage on the verge of disintegration, the garden becomes "menacing" and the house "felt hollow and meaningless and sad, like an empty house" (p. 314). This recalls the Lynch-Gibbons' house in A Severed Head which also symbolizes their marriage and which becomes "grey and derelict, after having been half-slaughtered" (A Severed Head, p. 151), when their marriage crumbles.

In terms of this world, Julius King, as his name implies, is an extremely powerful figure. He has all the characteristics of an exotic enchanter figure. Like Mischa Fox, he has vague European origins, is famous, rich and successful in his profession as a biochemist. He is also considered handsome, "terribly good-looking ... with that weird fair Jewishness" (p. 16), according to Hilda. Seen from Simon's point of view:

His curiously colourless hair, not exactly fair, seemed like a pale wig upon a dark man. The hair was fairly curly and fairly short, bringing into prominence the big long rather heavy
face, bronzed by the sun and now a little flushed .... The eyes, of a dark colour hard to determine, a sort of purplish brown perhaps, were rimmed by heavy lids much inclined to twinkle. At this moment, between two radiant candle flames, they appeared to be violet, but that must be an illusion. The nose was very slightly hooked and the mouth, which imparted a certain sweetness and sadness to the expression, long and finely shaped. It was a face that was not noticeably Jewish except perhaps in a watchful heaviness about the eyes. Julius spoke with a faint central European accent and a faint stammer (p. 66).

He has, further, a smile that is often described as "coy," and a mouth that is "extremely long and curly" (p. 260), evoking Mischa Fox with his "long, tenderly curving mouth" (The Flight from the Enchanter, p. 79).

Like Mischa, Julius makes things happen. He is endowed with "spare energy," is easily bored and constantly needs the stimulation of new ventures, including destructive ones. His mischief-making almost results in breaking up the alliance between Axel and Simon, and the actual destruction of Rupert's and Hilda's marriage. He aggravates the already tenuous relationship between Rupert and his son Peter, so that Peter commits an act of violence against his father by tearing to pieces Rupert's philosophical work. Julius suffers no remorse from his vicious acts which result in Rupert's death, but goes on to Paris to continue to pursue his interest in food and music. At the conclusion of the novel, he reflects
that life is good.

Julius' destructive behaviour indicates that he lacks compassion for others. "Morgan perceives "an immense coldness from which she had recoiled shuddering and it was to save herself from the icy contact that she had at last fled ..." (p. 132). For Julius has a hatred for mankind which he expresses to Rupert: "I have no general respect for the human race. They are a loathsome crew and don't deserve to survive" (p. 194). Furthermore, he says: "The human race is incurably stupid" (p. 203). Human beings, to him, are not free, separate beings to be respected and loved, but puppets to be manipulated by those more powerful. He expresses this to Morgan: "All human beings have staggeringly great faults which can easily be exploited by a clever observer" (p. 208). His hatred for humanity has a possible psychological explanation. He was a prisoner at Belsen during World War II, and the horror he experienced there has quite probably destroyed his capacity for love and kindness, and has warped his personality.

The distortion in his personality is seen in his inverted moral sense. He tells Rupert that good is dull and evil exciting. Thus he prefers to experience what is evil. In the Chinese restaurant, when he encounters evil in the form of aggression, his eyes become "gleaming with pleasure,
his moist lips slightly parted" (p. 214). He says of the fight afterwards: "I was looking forward to this evening. I didn't know it would be quite so glorious" (p. 215).

In the fantasy of others, Julius plays many roles. To Morgan, he represents form, which she craves after a muddled life with her husband Tallis. With Julius, she says, "everything is a ritual" (p. 79). He expects her to be "predictable. To be gay at the right times, quiet at the right times. To live to his timetable" (p. 79). While Tallis "has no myth" (p. 48), Julius is "all myth" (p. 48). She says to Hilda:

'Julius is so open and so clear, and yet he's mysterious and exciting too. I wonder if you see what I mean? Julius turned me into an angel. Julius is all soul, all inner life, all being, and he filled me with being and made me solid and compact and real' (p. 48).

Falling in love with him has the intensity of a "cosmic explosion" (p. 133). Their relationship, in her mind, assumes epic proportions: "Julius and I lived like gods" (p. 48). As she explains to Hilda:

'Everything with Julius was so high - it was higher than anything like marriage. It was a heroic world. It was like living in ancient Greece or something. The light was so clear and everything was larger than life' (p. 46).

With him, she feels herself "in the hands of the gods" (p.
Julius, in fact, is her God. "Oh Julius," she says on one occasion, "You really are a god" (p. 151). As a god, he has the ability to show her things; he is "a great world-revealer" (p. 163). Consequently, their affair becomes for her a mystic experience, an epiphany during which she thinks she has seen "a deep truth. It had been like a mystical vision into the heart of reality" (p. 131), the secret of the universe. From such fantastic heights, the fall is expectedly severe. Julius becomes bored, the affair is ended, and the secret of the universe becomes "a few smouldering chicken bones lying in a dark corner covered with dust and filth" (p. 132). Though rejected by him, he remains "large and omnipresent in her consciousness" (p. 279), and an accidental meeting with him causes an intense emotion in her: "The sheer physical authority of his presence almost reft her of breath" (p. 86). Her enchantment with him continues until she becomes involved in another illusory relationship, this time with Rupert.

To Hilda, Julius is not an individual, but an "exotic foreign object" (p. 7), "a very interesting object" (p. 17). She is without guile and is easily manipulated by Julius into his destructive scheme. She succumbs to his spell, and like Muriel in the presence of her father in The Time of the Angels, Hilda in the presence of Julius is mesmerized:
Julius was studying her and she could not look at him. She looked at the sunlit garden and the sparkling water and the roses and her eyes dazzled. She shifted her chair and filled her sight with the soft blurred colours of the dim room, the figure of Julius vague and hazy in her attention. She felt nervous and yet at the same time almost sleepy (p. 261).

She can no more resist him than can Muriel her father. Misguided into thinking him a worthy confidant, she becomes the tragic victim of his vicious intrigue.

Julius is idealized by Rupert, a romantic Sunday philosopher, who insists on seeing life in simple terms. He tells Hilda that Julius "may be clever, but he's also very truthful and sort of simple" (p. 17), but he recognizes that Julius is "someone who might do anything because he was bored" (p. 5). He acknowledges that Julius is "outrageously honest" (p. 220), yet when told by Julius that he gave up research on biological warfare because he was bored, Rupert refuses to believe him. He prefers to think that Julius had acted on humanitarian principles. He allows that Julius is "a tremendously straightforward person" (p. 17) but when Julius expresses the view that there is no goodness and that humanity is unredeemable, Rupert thinks that Julius is merely professing cynicism. He refuses to be disturbed by Julius' questions on his (Rupert's) philosophical position, for to do so would be to destroy the fantasy, in the form of a
philosophical framework, that he has built around himself and around Julius.

To Axel, Julius is "morally attractive" (p. 25) because "he's exceptionally honest .... Julius isn't a compromiser" (p. 24). But he has also seen another side of Julius -- the destructive, mischief-making side. However, as he is engrossed with his own emotional problems, Axel chooses to disregard the potential damage Julius is capable of doing to others and thus fails to avert a tragedy.

To Simon, Julius is a father figure, a sexually attractive enchanter who can compel him to do things against his will. His initial dismay at Julius' arrival into his life arises from his insecurity of Axel's love. He sees Julius as a threat to his relationship with Axel:

He did not seriously imagine that Julius would deliberately try to steal Axel. As far as he knew, Julius had no interests of that sort at all. He did not imagine that Julius would deliberately make any sort of trouble for him. He simply feared that the proximity of this very intelligent and high-powered old friend would open Axel's eyes. Axel would suddenly see how flimsy Simon was, how unsophisticated, how lacking in cleverness and wit, how hopelessly ignorant about important things such as Mozart and truth functions and the balance of payments (p. 64).

Later, Julius appears in his dreams as the figure of his father whose powerful hands grip him about the waist and
lift him up towards the letter boxes. He fears Julius, but finds him sexually attractive, for Simon cannot distinguish between the two emotions. Drawn by Julius into his plot involving Rupert and Morgan, Simon finds himself enslaved. As he explains it to Axel later: "I feel he's taking me over - I mean just sort of controlling me" (p. 350). In spite of himself, he begins to lie to Axel, for "Julius had this extraordinary power of making him do things" (p. 330) against his will. Finally, driven beyond endurance, when Julius prevents him from leaving the swimming pool, Simon retaliates. He pushes Julius into the pool, and curiously gains Julius' respect from this act, as well as his own liberation.

The only character not enchanted with Julius is Tallis, whom nobody respects, except Julius. For Tallis represents contingency, and is the symbol of goodness. His house is the contingent world. It is messy, disorganized, nauseatingly dirty. Seen from Hilda's point of view in its usual state:

The familiar group of empty beer bottles was growing cobwebs. About twenty more unwashed milk bottles yellow with varying quantities of sour milk. A sagging wickerwork chair and two upright chairs with very slippery grey upholstered seats. The window, which gave onto a brick wall, was spotted with grime .... The sink was piled with leaning towers of dirty dishes. The draining board was littered with empty tins and open pots
of jam full of dead or dying wasps. A bin, crammed to overflowing, stood open to reveal a rotting coagulated mass of organic material crawling with flies. The dresser was covered in a layer, about a foot high, of miscellaneous oddments: books, papers, string, letters, knives, scissors, elastic bands, blunt pencils, broken biros, empty ink bottles, empty cigarette packages and lumps of old hard stale cheese. The floor was not only filthy but greasy and sticky and made a sucking sound as Hilda lifted her feet (pp. 55-56).

The door of the house, significantly, is off its hinges, symbolizing perhaps, Tallis' receptiveness to the outside world. Morgan says of him: "Tallis has got no inner life, no real conception of himself, there's a sort of emptiness" (p. 48). He has no self-image; he merely accepts the muddles of humanity. This, in Irish Murdoch's ethics, indicates that he is good. He is also an epileptic, whose occasional seizures appear to be mystical experiences. He is seen during one of his seizures:

His body took on a peculiar quality ... a sense of his feet not touching the ground. He knew that this was an illusion, but the sensation was very definite and persistent. If he lay down he seemed to float. If he knelt down he seemed to fly ....

In a mechanical and repetitious way these exhausting manifestations were accompanied by the idea of love. The connection was mechanical and puzzling and Tallis seemed to know merely by some sort of external association or semi-conscious memory, not by direct experience, that this concept was somehow involved. He accepted the connection, since he had by now
almost entirely given up speculation. He felt a bond at such moments not with anything personal but with the world, possibly the universe, which became a sort of extension of his being. Occasionally the extension was gentle and warm, like the feeling of a river reaching the sea. More often it was uncomfortable or even horrible as if he had immense dusty itching limbs which he could not scratch. Sometimes he felt an awful crippling weight, as if a steam hammer were very slowly coming down on top of his head. On two extraordinary occasions the steam hammer phenomenon had been immediately combined with the feet-off-the-ground phenomenon and Tallis had lost consciousness (p. 185).

That this experience is associated in his mind with love indicates that he is a good person; for in Iris Murdoch’s world, the acceptance of contingency is the acceptance of reality, and this acceptance is an indication of goodness. Thus, Tallis is good, and Julius is the only one who recognizes this, and who recognizes the power of goodness, for he constantly defers to Tallis. He confides in Tallis about his own diabolical plot, he bandages Tallis’ cut finger, cleans his kitchen and offers him money. In this novel, goodness is seen as a dynamic, effective force. Tallis is the only person able to act decisively at crucial moments to overcome deceit and evil. He saves the victim of violence at the Chinese restaurant by delivering a blow to the offensive delinquent, and it is he who leads Julius to the telephone to confess his scheme to Hilda.
In this contingent world in which Tallis is at the centre, Julius is the Nietzschean superman and a magician from Shakespearean plays. The suggestion that Nietzsche's philosophy is a source of reference in this novel is seen in the philosophical discussion between Rupert and Julius when the idea of "life force" (p. 199) is mentioned. This is an allusion to G.B. Shaw, whose ideas of the life force, and of the superman, are to a large extent influenced by Nietzsche. Julius' role in this Nietzschean frame of references is revealed when in discussion with Rupert, he explains his nihilistic philosophy, a philosophy that bears a striking resemblance to some of Nietzsche's ideas. Early in his writings, Nietzsche announced that God is dead. There is, not only no God, but no ordering principle either:

The total nature of the world is ... to all eternity chaos .... There are only necessities: there is no one to command, no one to obey, no one to transgress ....

This is echoed in Julius' speech to Rupert:

'Listen Rupert. If there were a perfectly just judge I would kiss his feet and accept his punishments upon my knees. But these are merely words and feelings. There is no such being and even the concept of one is empty and senseless. I tell you Rupert, it's an illusion, an illusion' (p. 201).

To Rupert's reply that even if there were no judge, there
is justice, Julius says: "No, no, if there is no judge there is no justice, and there is no one, I tell you, no one" (p. 201).

Nietzsche believed that the primary instinct of man is the will to power: "Where I found a living creature, there I found the will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master." Julius expresses this idea to Rupert:

"Well, we know what moves people, dear Rupert, Fears, passions of all kinds. The desire for power for instance. Few questions are more important than: who is the boss?" (p. 200).

Later, he says to Simon: "But human beings cannot live without power any more than they can live without water" (p. 239). When asked by Axel what he desires most from life, Julius replies: "Not fun. Power perhaps" (p. 69). The will to power is the quality that defines the Nietzschean superman. God is dead, says Nietzsche, and with his death, man is released from the slave morality of Christian teachings. This release will lead to "a transvaluation of all values," and to the development of the superman. The superman is the ultimate expression of the will to power. He has sublimated his instinct of primitive aggression into self-control. This is a task requiring the greatest increase of power and the superman is thus master of himself. The greatest increase
of power also brings the greatest happiness to one who had experienced it; thus the superman is the happiest man.57 Julius indeed exhibits a kind of contentment that results from power having been achieved. After having exerted his power over others, he goes to Paris, and reflects that life is good.

The superman is committed to a total affirmation of life, which is often expressed in the assertion of power, not only the assertion of power by himself, but also by others. He enjoys being a witness to the expansion of energy, for this is further proof of the force of the will to power. The assertion of power is often translated into might, and this, the superman believes, is the ethics of power.58 Thus, Julius' delight at the violence at the restaurant may be interpreted at this level as his joy over the assertion of power in the form of aggression. His admiration for Tallis, on this occasion, is consistent with the belief that might is right, for Tallis proves his point by physical violence, a blow in the face of the attacker. Similarly, when Simon asserts his power by pushing Julius into the swimming pool, he expresses approval, for Simon's act conforms to the ethics of power.

It is apparent that in Nietzsche's view, the superman is outside the conventional morality that is practised by
the majority of people in society. The superman is "beyond good and evil," a law unto himself. As for the rest of humanity, the superman has utter contempt for them; they are the "common herd."\(^5^9\) Julius holds a similar contempt for humanity, as evident in his speeches to Rupert and Morgan discussed earlier.

Iris Murdoch's view of Nietzsche's superman philosophy is expressed in her description of the relationship between Tallis and Julius. That Tallis is the only person Julius appears to respect may indicate that ultimately, it is goodness, not might, that is the effective force in the lives of human beings.

On this symbolic level of reality, Julius is also a magician, a malevolent Prospero, the "sinister Oberon" of this midsummer nightmare.\(^6^0\) Not unlike Oberon, Julius sets off a chain of events through trickery; he is, in fact, the instigator of the whole plot. His ability to make other people act parts, to do things against their wills, suggests that he, like Prospero, possesses a magical power. He says to Hilda as he is confessing his scheme: "I was the magician" (p. 372). On a visit to Hilda, he is "dressed in what looked like an evening cape" (p. 286), suggesting the commonly depicted attire of a magician. He arrives at Tallis' house on another occasion carrying a "slim, vigorously rolled
umbrella" (p. 299) that evokes a magician's wand. The difference between this Oberon figure and Shakespeare's Oberon is that while the latter's trickery leads to situations that resolve in joy, Julius' trickery leads to tragedy. He is "a sinister Oberon-figure who uses magic of his own to destroy the very model of stability and harmony that supports the other characters." One is reminded of the wisdom of Emma Sands' words that one must not attempt to play God in the lives of other people.

Julius as an enchanter is presented in the same manner as Nigel, in that both are exotic figures in "closed" novels who, like Emma Sands and Millie Kinnard in "open" novels, exist on two levels of reality simultaneously. The startling difference between them is that Nigel is not an obvious power figure, whereas Julius, like Mischa Fox and Honor Klein, is conspicuously so. For Nigel, like Tallis, symbolizes a self-effacing philosophy, thus he appears to be insignificant, though he is, in effect, powerful. Because of him, Diana and Lisa are changed. Julius, on the other hand, represents an aggressive philosophy, and is therefore manifestedly powerful.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


2. The Disciplined Heart, p. 207.


5. Ibid., p. 256.


8. The Disciplined Heart, p. 190.


12. Ibid., pp. 46-76.

13. Ibid., p. 72.


18This is discussed in "On 'God' and 'Good.'"


22The *Disciplined Heart*, p. 79.

23*Degrees of Freedom*, p. 59.


25The *Disciplined Heart*, p. 79.


27The *Disciplined Heart*, p. 87.

28The *Greek Myths, I*, p. 297.


30Heyd, "An Interview with Iris Murdoch," 141.

31*A Severed Head* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963), p. 32. All subsequent references are to this edition.

32O'Connor, "Iris Murdoch: A Severed Head," 75.


38 Hall, "Bruno's Dream," 429-430.
40 "The Sublime and the Good," 52.
42 Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 72.
43 Ibid., p. 150.
44 Hall, "Bruno's Dream," 433.
45 Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 129, n. 46.
46 Ibid., p. 81.
47 Ibid., p. 150, n. 83.
48 Ibid., p. 150, n. 83.
49 Hall, "Bruno's Dream," 437.
50 Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, p. 151.
51 Hall, "Bruno's Dream."
54 A Fairly Honourable Defeat (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 3. All subsequent references are to this edition.
56 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p. 137.
57 Thus Spoke Zarathustra, pp. 26-27.
59 Ibid., p. 230.
60 See Robert Hoskins' "Iris Murdoch's Midsummer Nightmare," Twentieth Century Literature, 18, no. 3 (July, 1972), 191-198.
61 Ibid., 192.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the different techniques Iris Murdoch employs in presenting the enchanter figures in her novels as people in the world of normal reality, and as allegorical figures in the world of symbolic reality. There is an inherent conflict between her aim to give her characters the freedom to develop as separate individuals, with "depth and ordinariness, and accidentalness," or contingency, and the necessary mythical framework she must impose on their characterizations in order to make them appear as allegorical figures. This conflict is apparently irreconciliable. It is an affirmation of her skill as a novelist, however, that she has achieved that fine balance, the "synthesis between people and myth" meaning narrative pattern --- that she has said is her aim in her fictional writing. Most of the enchanter figures, particularly the ordinary ones, appear, on the level of normal reality, to be "real, free characters," as I hope I have shown. At the same time, as allegorical figures, they are very much a part of the "mythical" framework of the novel in which they appear, serving thus to enrich the narrative.
patterns as well as explain them.

Because the exotic enchanter figures are much more obviously surrounded by mythical references, it would seem that they, more so than the ordinary enchanters, would be more likely to appear simply as allegorical figures than as free characters. In some of the portraits, it seems that "myth" (in Iris Murdoch's sense of the word, meaning narrative pattern), tends to overwhelm freedom of characters. In the opinion of many critics, the characterization of Honor Klein is such a case. The criticism is not entirely valid, for Honor does emerge quite convincingly as an independent and intelligent person. The other exotic enchanter figures appear to have more psychological credibility. The strange behaviour of Mischa Fox, Hannah Crean-Smith and Carel Fisher is explicable; they are mentally unbalanced. Similarly, Julius King's viciousness can be attributed to personality disorder as a result of his experience in the concentration camp. In the characterizations of the rest of the exotic enchanters, Hugo Belfounder, Maggie, Nigel Boas and the Abbess, as in those of the ordinary ones, a harmony between "myth" and freedom is indeed achieved.

It is necessary, at this point, to include a brief mention of the thematic function of the enchanter figures as it is a most important aspect in the study of Iris
Murdoch's novels. The idea of enchantment, as I have explained in Chapter One, is important to her view of love. In the enchanter figures, the process of love, or the lack of it, can be seen. Those who are able to recognize and accept reality are those most able to love others. The best examples are Bledyward and the Abbess. Others begin with only a partial understanding of reality and gradually improve their knowledge, and at the same time their ability to love. Examples of this process are Ducane and Hugo. Emma, Millie, Maggie and Honor possess degrees of clear vision in proportion to their ability to love others. But for an element of self-interest in their motives, they too, would belong in the first category. Nigel represents love in its most self-effacing aspect, the passivity that is an important tenet of Buddhism, a philosophy in which Iris Murdoch appears to be increasingly interested. Hannah, Carel, Mischa and Julius represent the lack of love. For they are themselves enchanted people. Thus, they destroy those with whom they come into contact.

Thus, regardless of the different aspects of love described, whether it is acceptance of reality, passive self-effacement, or the lack of understanding of reality, in which case there is a lack of love, love is certainly the subject with which Iris Murdoch is the most preoccupied. The
function of the enchanter figure is to explain and emphasize this theme.

In the consideration of her novels, one fact emerges quite clearly, and that is her ability to draw from her abundant and diverse sources of knowledge. This has resulted in an extremely wide range of references in her novels. In two of the more recent ones, Bruno's Dream and An Accidental Man, her interest in and knowledge of Eastern philosophy is apparent. An Accidental Man is an "open" novel in which there is an exotic enchanter figure, who, like Nigel Boas, is a figure from Buddha legends. In her most recent novel, The Black Prince, however, the enchanter figure is not a character in the novel, but the black prince, Shakespeare's Hamlet, who is also Eros, the god of love. This is appropriate, for The Black Prince is her Hamlet, her best novel to date, just as, in her opinion, Hamlet is Shakespeare's greatest play. In The Black Prince, her concern with the subject of love finds its best expression. In technical execution, it represents her highest achievement. The importance of the enchanter figure, both from the point of view of literary technique and theme, is also clearly demonstrated here. For Hamlet, the black prince, is the central metaphor of the novel.

Though not necessarily the focal point of the novels
in which they appear, as Hamlet is in The Black Prince, the enchanter figures nevertheless serve the most important function both technically and thematically. Through them, the marvels of Iris Murdoch's fictional world are revealed.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1Rose, "Iris Murdoch, informally," 65.

2Kermode, "The House of Fiction," 64.

3Among them Rabinovitz in Iris Murdoch, p. 31, who says that Honor plays "too many roles," Leonard Kriegl in "Everybody through the Looking-Glass," Contemporary British Novelists, ed. Charles Shapiro (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 72, who says that the characters in A Severed Head, including Honor, "are two-dimensional," and Gabriel Pearson in "Iris Murdoch and the Romantic Novel," New Left Review, 13-14 (Jan.-April, 1962), 143, who says that Honor is "seen not as a real person ... but a literary type."
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