Murdoch's Gift: *The Book and the Brotherhood*'s Narrator

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Readers of Iris Murdoch's 1987 novel *The Book and the Brotherhood* usually recognize that it is a significant novel and possibly a great one, but they are often puzzled. What is it about? Perhaps its focus is on a single character. A. S. Byatt labels David Crimond, the neo-Marxist author of the title's "book," as the latest of Murdoch's enchanters (293); David Gordon sees Crimond as the first of the unsatisfactory spiritual leaders of her late novels (172-73).

Many critics avoid the question of centrality by focusing on lesser characters or groups of them.[1] Most agree that, in the "brotherhood" of Gerard, Jenkin, Rose, Duncan, and (improbably) Gulliver, the novel shows the decline of English bourgeois late-capitalist liberalism.[2] In reading the novel, however, this theme seems lost in a welter of side issues and diverting accidents. There are collections of variegated stones, mysterious dancing and telepathic mollusks, barks of real and imaginary foxes and of ghostly dogs, high-speed cars, fireworks, guns, a live cat and a dead one, a witch, and a memorable parrot. The novel presents an array of improbable coincidences and complex strings of events which include adultery, a glider crash, proposals of marriage, a suicide pact, a pregnancy, and a murder. Action takes place in a variety of London interiors, as well as in a tower in Ireland, and in and near an estate in the English provinces.

Murdoch elsewhere emphasizes the chance events (or "contingencies") that fill our lives.[3] This novel seems so full of detail that readers must conclude that Murdoch desires them to see characters at sea in an ocean of accident. Accidents do not add up to themes.

Why *The Book and the Brotherhood* is such a puzzle becomes clearer when it is compared to a classic work of fiction, such as *Emma*. From the first sentence of Jane Austen's novel, Emma herself is established as the central character. *Emma*'s third person narration is almost "limited" in the fashion of later novels, for we are often inside the mind of the clever and energetic heroine and see almost every scene from her perspective. From early

on, however, readers sense that much of the novel's message or vision is expressed by the older and wiser George Knightley, to whose mind the reader also pays visits.

These visits are only occasional, and Mr. Knightley's values are mainly communicated by what he says (Emma is wrong for ignoring Jane Fairfax) and what he does (he asks Harriet to dance). Mr. Knightley's values are so clear that when he reproaches Emma for insulting Miss Bates, readers know that Emma was wrong and must change. Emma acknowledges her faults and thereby takes another step toward maturity. When Emma and Mr. Knightley unite in the conclusion of the comedy, they will live happily ever after. That is, the novel celebrates the harmony of Mr. Knightley's reason and his consideration for others with Emma's potential and vitality. Emma recognizes and adopts Mr. Knightley's wisdom, and he reciprocally loves and values Emma's youth and spirit.

Readers too know what attitudes have won, and they endorse them. They have been helped to that knowledge, not only by the novel's comic structure but by the presence of a narrator. This narrator's energetic wit (it is sometimes hard to say where the narrator's voice ends and Emma's thoughts begin) is mixed with judgments which harmonize with Mr. Knightley's values.

The Book and the Brotherhood is also like *Emma* in that, despite its accidents, it does not simply record a random and aimless concatenation of events. It has a structure. It has three parts that progress (roughly like the three books of *Emma*) through a year, here from midsummer to midwinter to spring. Like a Jane Austen novel, scenes between two or three people alternate with large social gatherings of one sort or another: a Midsummer Night's revel at an Oxford College; a Guy Fawkes Day party; a reading party at a country house that includes an afternoon of skating; several committee meetings; a housewarming.

More importantly, people change. Like Emma, all are different at the end from what they were in the beginning. Readers know how to read *Emma* and the hundred thousand of other novels like it. But in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, what is the point? What does its progress mean? Which character is central? Crimond, Gerard, and Jenkin are the best candidates for centrality, but many others are given detailed attention, often by letting readers see into the ways their minds are working. Although many of the characters' actions seem to proceed from, if not principles, at least consistent dispositions, there is no Mr. Knightley to provide an anchor of value. (Gerard often speaks more convincingly than the rest, but his authority is undermined by his vacillations and his coldness.)

Often in multi-centered works, common denominators among the major characters will reveal the novel's theme or message, but readers will find it difficult to discern what conclusions can be drawn from the collected careers of, say, Lily, Jenkin, Duncan, Tamar, and Gerard.[4] What's more, although the novel seems to have a happy ending, there is little of the triumph a reader might expect. Gulliver and Lily are magically together; most readers will be happy for them, but their upcoming marriage is not in Emma's league. Rose and Gerard are together; Rose has part of what she wants, but Gerard seems slightly crazed as he prepares to write his book. Jean and Duncan are a broken pair, pitifully keeping their love alive by deception. People change, but not necessarily for the better. In short, knowing how to read novels like Emma will not enable us to read *The Book and the Brotherhood* well.

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Help is available from another source. Readers can benefit from a brief look at one of Murdoch's short philosophical works, *The Sovereignty of Good*.[5] Although the three essays that make up this slim volume were written in the 1960's, Murdoch's theme is one to be found in her non-fiction through her last major work, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992).

She is highly critical of many aspects of contemporary British philosophy; the argument most useful here runs like this: God is dead, but there may be the Good. Philosophers disagree on what the Good can be said to be. Early in the twentieth century, G. E. Moore argued that even through the Good is (in Murdoch's words) "mysterious. . ., unrepresentable, and indefinable," it is a real quality of the world and as such an "object of knowledge" (3).

In contrast, British philosophers after Moore denied that Good is a quality of the world itself. Although they agreed with Moore that the Good is indefinable, it is so, not because it is mysterious, but because it varies with the will of individuals. To these later thinkers, "Good must be thought of, not as a part of the world, but as a moveable label affixed to the world" (3).

That "goods" are relative follows from the basic assumption made by these philosophers: man is

(or can be) rational, responsible, and free. A man's acts are the result of his will directed to making judgments: what he wants, he labels as his good. These decisions may result in actions to bring about changes in the world. It follows for these philosophers that what qualifies as "thought" is mental activity directed to judgments and then (possibly) to acts and that everything else that goes on in the mind is simple daydreaming and therefore not worth serious consideration. If we look carefully at a man's acts and words, we can discern all that is important about his mental life: his intentions, his motives.

This sort of modern man is familiar to us, Murdoch adds, because "he is the hero of almost every contemporary novel" (7). Needless to say, Murdoch argues strongly against this picture of Man and of the Good. To her, man is not simply rational and free. Man has a meaningful interior life. The Good, as it has been thought about from Plato to Moore, does exist outside of the individual will. Turning from Murdoch's philosophy to her novels, readers may at first be confused. The characters in *The Book and the Brotherhood* do not deny but rather appear to confirm the philosophers that Murdoch opposes. When the Brotherhood of young Oxford idealists combine to support Crimond as he writes the *Book*, they think they have found an objective Good because they share the same ideal, but their illusions are soon shattered as their ideals diverge. Crimond moves farther and farther to the left (he is expelled from the Communist Party for being too radical), while the rest move toward various parts of the political center.

In many other ways, the novel illustrates the modern idea of individual persons establishing their individual Goods. Gerard leaves the Civil Service and contemplates writing a book. Jenkins plans to go to South America to help the poor. Crimond finishes his book to change the world; once his goal is reached, there seems to be nothing left. Rose wants to be with Gerard and love him. Reeve Curtland wants Rose to live with his family. Gideon and Pat want Gerard's house; Gideon wants to promote happiness and make money.

Some characters aim for goals that are not Good in conventional ways. Jean Kowitz Cambus gives her life to Crimond; her husband Duncan plans to kill him. Crimond plans for death. Tamar's goals shift day by day. Collectively, they embody the fragmented state of modern life.

As they contemplate their choices of "lifestyles" (my word, not Murdoch's), Gulliver and Lily could be illustrations for Murdoch's description in *Sovereignty* of man as

conceived by modern philosophers. Such persons choose morals the way they make "a visit to a shop. [They] enter the shop in a condition of totally responsible freedom, [they] objectively estimate the features of the goods, and [they] choose"(8). The characters in this novel believe they live in the modern philosopher's world of rational freedom. Many act with the idea that they can do something to make the world better. Gerard sends Tamar to Jean and to Duncan to get husband and wife back together. Tamar consoles Duncan to show him he is loved. Rose places Duncan in a bedroom that will hold no memories. Father McAlister works his magic to transform Tamar's pain. Jenkin thinks he will do good when he goes to prevent a duel.

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They will make the world better—or worse: Violet intends to make life hell for Patricia and Gideon. With their freedom comes responsibility. When Jenkin is killed, each one of them blames himself or herself. Although some of their reasoning is ludicrous and self-regarding, they try to take responsibility for what they think of as their free and willful acts.

The world Murdoch shows us is not evil by conventional standards, but is a mixed bag of people motivated to pursue their own ends, labeling different things their Good, much as recent philosophers have described. Even though the characters in Murdoch's novel conceive of themselves as existing in much the same way as do characters in a standard modern novel, this is not the novel's view of the matter. Whether they know it or not, the characters in *The Book and the Brotherhood* are essentially different from standard characters. Their thoughts are not always coherent, and their motives can change wildly: Jean and Rose both fall in and out of love with Crimond in an instant, and the progress of Tamar's career is almost impossible to plot.

Unlike standard characters, Murdoch's creations are sometimes conscious of their inconsistencies, and even marvel at them: "I was insane, thinks Rose" (482). Moreover, the characters have interior, secret lives whose relations to events in the outer world are not clear. Some of their thoughts have no influence at all; other thoughts do influence events, but in ways no one can imagine.

One of the charms of the novel is that it takes us into the inner lives of characters, to thoughts deemed unimportant by the philosophers and by other novelists. We are made privy to dreams that may or may not be significant, to half-realized thoughts, to small personal secrets. For example, we discover that Lily "had a way of accentuating [her neck] by thrusting her head forward and staring out of her face as though through a muslin mask; she experienced this as cat-like, as 'putting on her cat face'" (33). No other character will know of her cat-face, but it lives in Lily's intimate imagination.

Other characters have similarly rich and touching inner lives and fantasies: Gulliver's tongue hurts; Rose thinks she hears Sinclair's dog bark. To know only their speeches and acts is not to know them very well.

Also unlike the philosophers' picture of rational beings making choices that will make them happy because they are right for them, the choices Murdoch's characters make do not bring conventional endings, happy or otherwise, for them or for the novel. They pursue their ends without gaining them, and much of what they do achieve is not what they aimed at. The novel ends without the multiple satisfactions provided by the end of *Emma*. Yet the experience of reading *The Book and the Brotherhood* is not so bleak as such an analysis implies.

There is another voice in this novel, one of which a reader may not be fully conscious at first reading—that of the narrator.[6] This voice fills the role here that is often taken in a Shakespearean comedy by a wise character, such as Rosalind in *As You Like It* or Viola in *Twelfth Night*. Some readers will simply call this voice Iris Murdoch, leading one commentator to say that "Murdoch is present in this novel, but only at one remove."[7] It is probably better to stick with the term narrator, for the pervasive voice in this novel may not be the same as the narrator's voice in another novel by the same author.

Although the narrator in *The Book and the Brotherhood* (let us call her "she") is elusive, it is possible to begin to define her. For one thing, she is leisurely; the novel (at 607 pages) is Murdoch's longest. One can say what Dr. Johnson said of *Paradise Lost*, that "none ever wished it longer," without thinking the novel too long. The character of the narrator is very different from the characters in the story; she does not appear to be an individual striving toward a personal goal. Even when rushing to a climax, she never seems rushed. Hers is a genial presence, and she enjoys telling her stories. Conversations, descriptions, introspective meanderings, and accounts of social gatherings—all exfoliate slowly, in masterful detail.

One particularly memorable scene occurs at Boyars when members of the group gather for a leisurely afternoon of skating and ice-dancing. Gulliver, who cannot skate well, worries about the figure he will cut. Jenkin watches, warm in his sensible cap. Father McAlister cuts a lonely figure gliding along in his cassock, like a cleric in a Raeburn painting. Gerard and Rose perform with their customary excellence. Lily is overjoyed to find that she can still skate well—very well indeed. Rose is jealous.

. . . the narrator . . . is playfully witty . . .

Although the scene does add to the development of individual characters, it has a leisurely existence of its own, a still moment in which most of the forces of the novel are miraculously suspended by a narrator who is in no hurry.

In this scene, and even in scenes which are full of tension, the narrator's arresting particularity of detail shows Murdoch's well-known concept of attention, a quality she defines as "a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality" (34), a gaze that is only possible to a mind that has set egotism aside.[8] Attention can be sensed on every page, never more so than in the description of how characters appear and what they wear. Although the real historical Iris Murdoch was largely indifferent to her own apparel, the narrator of this novel sees clothing in wonderful elaboration.[9] Some descriptions may reflect the vanity of the wearer (Gulliver) or her good taste (Rose), but all of them show attention. Consider the picture (which comes just before the "cat-face" passage) of Lily's clothes and general appearance at the Midsummer Ball:

> Lily, who was alone, was dressed in baggy orange silk trousers, drawn in at the ankle by spangle bands, and a floppy white silk blouse weighted by gold chains and anchored by a purple sash into which a transparent silvery scarf covering her shoulders was also tucked. This gear had by now begun to come adrift, the trousers escaping from the band, the blouse from the sash, the silk scarf hanging down behind on one side. Lily was shorter and thinner than Rose, very thin in fact, and had a thin almost gaunt pale face and short dry weightless fair hair and a long neck. It is possible for a girl to have too long a neck, and Lily's could be said to be on

> the border between the swan-like and the grotesque. (33)

This description is not only a marvelously detailed illustration of attention (and an emblem of the progress of the party itself), but it shows another quality of the narrator: she is playfully witty and even catty at Lily's expense: the way her costume falls apart, her swan-like, yet grotesque neck. The tone of this wit is sharp, but it is not nasty. It could also be called affectionate, as when a bit later Gulliver thinks that Lily "looked like a rather small crazy pirate, perhaps a cabin boy on a pirate ship in a pantomime"(37).

Perhaps these passages should be characterized as simultaneously pointed, hilarious, and affectionate—qualities which could be considered antithetical but which can coexist in the tone of Murdoch's narrator.

The narrator has not singled Lily out for derisory remarks. She has fun with almost all the characters, though lesser characters like Lily and Gulliver get more than their share. All but Crimond have their silly private secrets and dreams. All have backslidings and make disastrous snap decisions.

Murdoch's narrator is always amused at the unexpected turns of events that confound her characters. The narrator has her serious side; indeed, serious moments make up most of the novel. She enters with encompassing sympathy into Gerard's lament on the death of his father, into Rose's misery, into Duncan's early despair, and into Jenkin's deliberations on how he can best serve mankind. In such passages, her wit is restrained. Yet it is important to see that her serious sympathies need not be blunted by her wit.

Consider her account of the boy Gerard and his parrot, Grey (a long quotation is essential):

> Grey glowed with health and beauty and grace. His clever eyes, surrounded by an ellipse of delicate white skin, were pale yellow, his immaculate feathers of the palest purest grey, and in his tail and wing-tips, the softest most radiant scarlet. . . . He could whistle more purely than any flute and dance as he whistled. His musical repertoire when he first arrived included "Pop Goes the Weasel" and part of the "Londonderry Air" and "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring." Gerard soon taught him "Three Blind Mice" and "Greensleeves." He could imitate a blackbird and an owl. His human vocabulary had progressed more slowly. He could say "Hello" and (impatiently) "Yes, yes," and (excitedly) "Yippee!" He could also say, often with amusing appropriateness, "Shut up!" . . . The intelligence and presence of Grey was for Gerard a continual source of trembling joy, a feeling he described to himself as a "touchment." The parrot was a world in which the child was graciously allowed to live, he was a vehicle which connected Gerard with the whole sentient creation, he was an avatar, an incarnation of love. The clever inquisitive white-rimmed yellow eyes expressed, so soon, fearless faith and love. The gentle firm clasp of the small dry claws, the lightness of the entrusted body, the sudden scarlet of the spread tail, expressed love, even the hard dense stuff of the curving black beak seemed mysteriously endowed with tenderness. Of course Grey was soon out of his cage, flying about the room or perched on Gerard's hand or shoulder, leaning his soft feathered head caressingly against his cheek, clambering round the back of his neck and peering to look in his face. Eye to eye they often were as Grey, back in the cage to which he returned willingly, swung or jolted and danced to and fro upon his perch, or climbed around the bars, sometimes upside down, pausing to gaze or to listen or to demand attention. . . . Gerard would often take the bird, gently gathering the folded wings, to nestle the small head and light fragile body against his chest, or hold him inside his shirt against his beating heart. He stroked the soft feathers, cradling the frail hollow bones, while the delicate claws grasped his fingers with perfect trust. (59-61)

This passage, a breathtaking tour de force, is important in many ways. It is another example of the narrator's attention; a more detailed rendering of a parrot's appearance and movements is hard to imagine. The passage shows, moreover, the young Gerard's awakening taste for an ideal, perhaps divine, love by virtue of his attention to the parrot and even by virtue of the parrot's attention to him. The narrator's description of the tenderness of Gerard's love for each part of his bird's body and for each of his bird's endearing

motions—all this makes a reader experience Gerard's loss with excruciating vividness. These are private experiences, but they influence Gerard's actions in the world, though this influence is forever unknown to his friends. (Crimond knows a little about the parrot and makes a few guesses.)

Gerard's experience of such an ideal love and such a loss sets the stage for his philosophical ideas (neo-Platonism) and for a life of unfulfilled yearning. The loss of Grey helps explain why Gerard developed his defensive and even icy reserve in later life, and it prefigures the doom he will experience when he searches for human love. (With Jenkin's murder, Gerard loses tragically and forever not the first but the second true love of his life.)

At the same time Grey is a parrot—only a parrot. He sings funny songs, his movements are sweetly and comically awkward (even grotesque), and his exotic coloring, though beautiful in its way, is bizarre. The narrator makes sure that, even as we are suffering what the young Gerard is suffering, that we realize how funny this all is. A parrot is not an adequate symbol of ideal love, and Gerard is only a nice middle-class boy entering puberty. On the other hand, experiences of the ideal have to happen to someone, and what exactly can be an adequate symbol of divine love? This is to say the narrator renders the story of Gerard and Grey with a tone that is simultaneously deeply sympathetic and marvelously comic.[10] The narrator views life with benign and even playful acceptance. The world does not show the patterns that many characters and many readers would like. It does not show justice: Duncan, for example, is left to live his diminished life without much thought or much suffering. Evenings do not end as hoped; Gulliver is kissed by a deer. Accidents abound.

Sometimes coincidences have dire consequences (Jean's finding Crimond's note). Sometimes, as with Sinclair's stones, objects serve as examples of the meaningless diversity of the world. The narrator does more than accept. She looks at the world with a marveling eye. When Rose reflects on Sinclair's beautiful stones, she sees that each one is configured differently: "How accidental everything was, and how spirit was scattered everywhere, beautiful, and awful" (539).

The spirit Rose sees in stones is what the narrator sees as well, from the energy (its source in the activities of Roman legionnaires two millennia ago) still emanating from the ley-lines of the Roman Road (269), to the exiting melodrama of much of the novel's action. What pains, what joys, what

loves, what betrayals! This world is magical. When Gulliver is saved by a snail and when he and Lily communicate by snails, many readers do not know what to think. Here the narrator (like many of Murdoch's other narrators) uses paranormal phenomena to startle readers into wondering if there may be forces in the world they know nothing about.

The narrator hints that paranormal forces do exist; Murdoch often flirts with such possibilities. Gerard yearns for ideal love; Jenkin yearns to help mankind; Rose yearns for Gerard; Duncan yearns for revenge; Jean yearns for an all-consuming love; Crimond yearns to tell the world his message and then yearns for death; Gideon and Pat yearn for Gerard's house; Tamar at first yearns to be a good girl; Gulliver and Lily yearn for something to take over their lives.[11] Everyone yearns. So there is a common denominator after all, a common denominator of disposition, not a theme. The narrator not only shows this, but knows all this and more.

Her intelligence is limpid, and her knowledge is almost without boundaries.[12] She is forgiving, and she is judgmental. Her judgments are implicit, not pontifical; as with Moore, there is a Good, but it is "mysterious . . ., unrepresentable, and indefinable." Readers know that, say, Gerard and Jenkin are to be more highly valued than Gulliver and that Duncan ends up a pathetic and almost despicable man. (It is significant that he and Jean are exiled to France.)

The narrator of *The Book and the Brotherhood* presents a spectrum of significant people living in significant places in significant times. Even so, the world is full of accidents—random events and coincidences—that thwart their purposes. Though all her characters yearn for something, no two characters yearn for the same thing,

and many do not even understand what they want. She views this human comedy with a gaze that is unperturbed, attentive, and loving (loving because attentive).

She speaks to her readers in a human voice which is both detached and deeply sympathetic, both witty and serious. (Readers of Shakespeare will recognize this tone when, for example, they recall the Justice Shallow scenes in *Henry IV*, Part II.) The novel's ending is not an ironic parody; while it not as joyful as *Emma*'s, it is a happy one. Most of the characters are at least somewhat happy, and the attitude of the narrator has triumphed.

The prominence of the narrator in *The Book and the Brotherhood* may be a departure for Murdoch. At the conclusion of *Emma*, readers are clear that Mr. Knightley and Emma herself know what Jane Austen knows. In contrast, when they finish most other Iris Murdoch novels, readers often feel that, though the work seems coherent, they are not sure in what that coherence consists.[13] Perhaps they are puzzled because at the end there are no characters like Emma and Mr. Knightley who appear to understand and embody the novel's vision. At the end of *The Sea, the Sea*, Charles remains, but his understanding seems to be fading. In *The Black Prince*, Bradley's version of what happened is preferable to what the other characters say, but he is not reliable. At the end of *The Bell*, Michael and Dora have both come though, but they hold different conclusions.

In *The Book and the Brotherhood*, a few characters may have momentary glimmerings of the novel's vision (Rose perhaps and Gerard, consciously; Lily and Gulliver instinctively), but it is the narrator who supplies what Emma and Mr. Knightley supplied in Jane Austen's novel, a vision and an attitude that is insistent and (even though impossible to summarize) coherent. Crimond's *Book* looks forward not only to destruction, but to a new order and a liberation of human energy (302). Although members of the Brotherhood will not admit they agree with Crimond in any way, Jenkin and Gerard share some of Crimond's ideas. Jenkin wishes to live at the edge of what might be a new world. Gerard senses that a new era may be dawning. Just before the skating party, he only could look back to a marvelous age when God and the Platonic Good were united and could only wish that today there was "a genius to teach us a new way to think about goodness and the soul" (252).

At the end of the novel, as he contemplates his answer to Crimond, he can look forward. He "felt the planet turning, and felt its pain, oh the planet, oh the poor poor planet" (590), and he hopes he can influence the future. Although Gerard may be foolish to conceive of this mission as an ascent to an ideal (hence its merging in his dream with a parrot!), it is important that Crimond is not the only one who looks ahead to a new way of regarding the human condition. The energy Rose senses everywhere about her may help readers to sympathize with this anticipation.

No one would accuse Iris Murdoch of being a frivolous writer. She was certainly conscious of her considerable talents and responsibilities. In *The Book and the Brotherhood* she gives her readers not only an engrossing story but, in the stance and tone of its narrator, a possible way (perhaps a new way) of living in the world. This way is without God, but it is not without a spiritual dimension that includes a sense of real but indefinable Good. She views the human comedy with judgment and attentive love and with laughter that is usually amiable, but sometimes not. These qualities do not exist alternately, and they are not suspended in a mixture. They are exhilaratingly present simultaneously, and this exhilaration is not frantic, but calm. Perhaps the skating scene, located as it is at the fulcrum of the novel, embodies this spirit in its purest form.

NOTES

This essay owes its origin to the discussions at a conference on Iris Murdoch sponsored by The Liberty Fund in St. Paul, Minnesota, on June 3-5, 1999, and led by Professor Michael Zuckert of the University of Notre Dame. My title follows a suggestion by Professor Richard Crouter of Carleton College.

1. Bove, Chapter 8, focuses on Tamar. One of the emphases of Gabriele Griffin is on the fate of older women. Suguma Ramanathan in Chapter 7 deals with Jenkin at length.

2. Byatt 294; Towers 36-37; Levenson 40-44.

3. Gordon, Chapter 4. See Murdoch's *An Accidental Man* and comments by Martindale and Todd, Chapter 4.

4. A good example of an older multi-centered novel is *Middlemarch*. Unlike Murdoch in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, George Eliot is careful to show thematic parallels among her central characters:

Lydgate wants to discover the key to the human body; Casaubon strives to discover the key to all myths; Dorothea wants the key to how to act in the world.

5. London: Routledge, 1985. *The Sovereignty of Good* was first published in 1970 and collects essays dating from 1964, 1967, and 1969.

6. Murdoch's narrator can be called intrusive, but not insistently so. Readers are reminded of the narrator mainly when she glances forward in time. The most jarring example of this occurs when she remarks that though on one occasion Violet thought of suicide, "it was not tonight that Violet would kill herself" (521).

7. This is the observation of Professor Ralph McInerny.

8. Murdoch borrows the term from Simone Weil.

9. Similarly, although Murdoch was known to eat simply, the narrator's descriptions of food are elaborately detailed. See for example the Guy Fawkes feast (196) or the meals at Boyars (265).

10. The same is true of the parrot's last appearance. As Gerard is energized to idealize his project of writing a book contesting Crimond's ideas, his dreams become entangled with an image of a parrot (591)—movingly for Gerard, comically for the reader.

11. Elizabeth Dipple notes that characters in all Murdoch novels can be defined by their "longing" for "various grand ideals" (7).

12. She does not enter Crimond's mind, though what she reports of his words and acts give us a sense of what he is like. Why does the narrator set this boundary? It must be that, although the novel is about many things, it is not about what it is like to be Crimond.

13. Murdoch's first novel, Under the Net, may be an exception, for at the end of the novel its hero's outlook seems to summarize Murdoch's own. This work is atypical, and perhaps that is what a few critics think it is Murdoch's best. See L. R. Leavis, "The Anti-Artist: The Case of Iris Murdoch" in Neophilologus 72 (January, 1988): 136-154.

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