



حوايات كلية الآداب

تصدر عن مجلس النشر العلمي - جامعة الكويت

تقويض الحداثة: دراسة في تناص الأوديسة مع رواية البحر، البحر لأيرس مردوخ

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ثمن الرسالة

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		مؤسسات	
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حوايليات كلية الآداب

تمتد رعتن بملسن الفشترا النلسى - بئامعة الحكايت

دورية علمية محكّمة تتضمن مجموعة
من الرسائل وتعنّى بنشر الموضوعات
التي تدخل في مجالات اهتمام
الأقسام العلمية لكلية الآداب

الحولية التاسعة عشرة
الرسالة التاسعة والعشرون بعد المئة
١٤١٨ هـ - ١٩٩٨ م

قواعد النشر في حوليات كلية الآداب

- ١ - حوليات كلية الآداب دورية علمية محكمة تنشر مجموعة من الرسائل في الموضوعات التي تدخل في مجالات اختصاص الأقسام العلمية بكلية الآداب .
- ٢ - تنشر الحوليات البحوث والدراسات الأصلية باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية ويراعى ألا يتجاوز عدد صفحات أي بحث ١٣٠ صفحة ولا يقل عن ٤٠ صفحة .
- ٣ - تقدم البحوث مطبوعة على الآلة الكاتبة على مسافتين من ثلاث نسخ على ورق مقاس ٢٩×٢١ سم (A4) وعلى وجه واحد فقط وترقم جميع الصفحات بما في ذلك الجداول والصور التوضيحية ، وينبغي مراعاة التصحيح الدقيق للطباعة على الآلة الكاتبة في النسخ جميعها .
- ٤ - يرفق الباحث ملخصاً باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية في حدود ٢٠٠ «مائتي» كلمة تصدر البحث .
- ٥ - ترسم الخرائط والأشكال والرسوم بالحبر الصيني على ورق «شفاف» حتى تكون صالحة للطباعة . أما الصور الفوتوغرافية فيراعى أن تكون مطبوعة على ورق لماع ، وإذا كانت ملونة فلا بد من تقديم الشريحة الأصلية .
- ٦ - يراعى وضع خطوط متعرجة تحت العناوين الجانبية ، وكذلك الألفاظ والعبارات التي يراد طبعها بينط ثقیل .
- ٧ - تكتب في قائمة المصادر كل التفاصيل المتعلقة بكل مصنف من حيث اسم المؤلف كاملاً مبتدأ بالكنية أو الاسم الأخير ، وعنوان المصنف تحت خط متعرج وذكر الأجزاء أو المجلدات واسم المحقق أو المترجم ورقم الطبعة ، ومكان النشر ثم اسم المطبعة أو دار النشر ، ثم سنة النشر وينبع في قائمة المصادر النظام الآتي : الطبري ، أبو جعفر محمد بن جرير .
- تاريخ الرسل والملوك ، تحقيق محمد أبو الفضل إبراهيم ، ط ٣ ، مصر ، دار المعارف ، د . ت .
- جامع البيان في تأويل القرآن ، تحقيق محمد محمود شاكر ، ط ٢ ، دار المعارف بمصر . د . ت .
- الشايب ، أحمد ، تاريخ النقائص في الشعر العربي ، ط ٣ ، القاهرة ، مكتبة النهضة المصرية ، ١٩٦٦ .

٨ - تثبت الهوامش على النحو التالي :

يذكر لقب المؤلف ثم الجزء ثم رقم الصفحة ، وإذا كان للمؤلف أكثر من مصنف في البحث فيذكر لقب المؤلف ثم عنوان المصنف ، ثم يليه الجزء ، ثم رقم الصفحة ، ويتبع في الحواشي النظام الآتي :

- الطبري ، تاريخ الرسل والملوك ، ج ٣ ، ص ٩١ .

- الطبري ، جامع البيان في تأويل القرآن ، ج ٢ ، ص ١٢٠ .

- الشايب ، ص ٤٠ .

٩ - توضع أرقام التوثيق بين قوسين وترتب متسلسلة حتى نهاية البحث ، فإذا انتهت أرقام التوثيق في الصفحة الأولى عند الرقم (٦) يبدأ التوثيق في الصفحة الثانية بالرقم (٧) وهكذا .

١٠ - أصول البحوث التي تصل للحوليات لا ترد ولا تسترجع سواء نشرت أو لم تنشر .

١١ - لا تقبل الحوليات البحوث التي سبق نشرها ، كما لا يجوز نشر البحوث في مجلات علمية أخرى بعد إقرار نشرها في الحوليات إلا بعد الحصول على إذن كتابي بذلك من رئيس تحرير الحوليات .

١٢ - عند طباعة البحث المقبول للنشر على المؤلف أن يقوم بمراجعة تجربة الطبعة الأخيرة بمطابقتها على الأصل ، مع مراعاة عدم إجراء أي تغييرات فيها تختلف عما ورد في الأصل ، سواء بالإضافة أو الحذف .

١٣ - تمنح إدارة الحوليات لمؤلف كل بحث منشور ثلاثين نسخة مجانية من بحثه .

١٤ - ترسل البحوث وجميع المراسلات الخاصة بالحوليات إلى :

رئيس تحرير حوليات كلية الآداب

كلية الآداب - جامعة الكويت

ص . ب : ١٧٣٧٠ الخالدية

رمز بريدي : 72454

الكويت

تقويض الحداثة:
دراسة في تناص الأوديسة
مع رواية البحر، البحر
لأيرس مردوخ

د. زهرة أحمد علي

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها - جامعة الكويت

د. زهرة أحمد حسين علي

- دكتوراه فلسفة في الأدب الإنجليزي (تخصص نظريات النقد) من جامعة بروان،
الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

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- مدرس الأدب الإنجليزي بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها، جامعة الكويت، منذ عام
١٩٨٥.

- نائب مدير الهيئة العالمية لكتب الأطفال / فرع الكويت

- عضو هيئة تحرير مجلة الثقافة العالمية (المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب)

- عضو لجنة الرقابة المسرحية (المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب)

- عضو The School Of Criticism And Theory (U.S.A)

- عضو The International Comparative Literature Association

- النشر العلمي :

- باللغة الإنجليزية :

- A Spectrum of Image - Making: Master Metaphors and Cognitive
Acts in Murdoch's Bruno's Dream. Orbis Litterarum: International
Review of Literary Studies. Copenhagen, Denmark.

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الفكر، الكويت.

- عرض ومراجعة كتاب : الدكتورة ماري، في الجزيرة العربية، سيرة ذاتية
وذكرات، مجلة الزمن، الكويت. أكتوبر ٩٦.

- مراجعة كتاب عصر النهايات القصوى: القرن العشرين الوحش ١٩١٤-١٩٩١
للمؤلف إيريك هوبس بم، مجلة الزمن، الكويت، العدد ٢٦، ديسمبر ٩٧.

تقويض الحداثة : دراسة في تناص الأوديسة مع رواية البحر، البحر لآيرس مردوخ

ملخص

تتضمن روايات الأدبية الإنجليزية المعاصرة آيرس مردوخ هجوماً على الأدب الحداثي ومقولاته، ومحمور نشاطها الروائي هو كيفية استحضار نظرة جمالية أخلاقية تحرر فن الرواية من هيمنة النظريات الحداثية التي تنظر إليه ككيان جمالي أو لغوي بحت . من هذا المنطلق، تؤكد مردوخ في أطروحاتها الفلسفية وفي رواياتها مفاهيم مثل «المتافيزيقيا»، «الجليل أو المتعالي»، «الخير»، «الحب». وهي دائماً تحيك الخطاب الفلسفي لكل من أفلاطون وإيمانويل كانط بنسيج خطابها الروائي .

تعتبر رواية البحر، البحر، وهي الحائزة على جائزة بوكرك للأدب في بريطانيا عام ١٩٧٨، أحد منجزاتها العظيمة، وأكثر أوجهها المثيرة للإعجاب هي كيفية التي توظف بها مردوخ تكنيك تناص أوديسة هومر مع خطاب البحر، البحر لتتقد تيار الحداثة في الأدب، ولتربط بين مشروعين هما: المشروع الفلسفي لتجديد الميتافيزيقيا أو الانطولوجيا بوصفه منبعاً للرؤى الأخلاقية، والمشروع الجمالي الذي يعيد الحوارية (الديالوجزم)، أي صوت الآخر وصورته، لخطاب الشخصية الرئيسية ووعيها، وهي شخصية السيد تشارلز أروبي، وهو فنان حداثي والسارد الوحيد في الرواية .

يحلل هذا البحث، تناص ملحمة الأوديسة وتشكيله للخطاب السردى لرواية البحر، البحر، وتأثيره في رسم الشخصيات وتحديد الرمزية والقيمات في الرواية . ويذهب البحث إلى أن تأثيرات التناص معقدة لأنها تتحرك على محورين متعاكسين، المحور الأول يوطد ذاتية وأنانية خطاب تشارلز أروبي، أما المحور الثاني فيقوض هذه الذاتية، ويعلم أروبي الحوارية . ويستكشف البحث كذلك تداعيات التناص ونتائج الفلسفية والجمالية على الخطاب السردى لأكثر روايات مردوخ شهرة .

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whirlpool renders it Hades-like, and James as spiritual guide, who knows the terrain, pathways, and obstacles to the purgatory journey, is the visionary Teiresias, the only Homeric character who has memory in Hades, and who is, therefore, more than just a shadow. Like Teiresias, James knows the truth about the Trojan war, and can read it as a chapter in human vanity; "the heroes at Troy fought for a phantom Helen . . . vain wars for phantom goods." And he knows about the bane of a shadowy existence and spiritual morbidity, nemesistic forms for egocentrism and solipsism:

Some Tibetans . . . Believed that the souls of the dead, while waiting to be reborn, wander in a sort of limbo, not unlike the Homeric Hades. They called it bardo. It can be rather unpleasant. You meet all kinds of demons there. (p. 384)

The quotation above suggests that James understood the significance of the archetypal pattern of The Odyssey; to recognize one's archetype can be a way to save oneself from succumbing to stereotyping. James's self-image of Teiresias, like the image of hamster or woodlouse, is an image to enliven the understanding--the truth lies beyond.

Murdoch's biaxial employment of embedding attests to her extraordinary ability to thrill with exuberant experimentation and to synthesize the comic and the highly serious, the absurd and the realistic. Harold Bloom once complained about Murdoch's authorial interventions to explain the characters' psychological and spiritual miseries: "why Murdoch tells us what we expect her to show us."²⁵ In The Sea, The Sea she engagingly shows us and she does hold quite successfully what Mr. Bloom wittingly calls "the comic story and the Platonic Kernel."

²⁵ Harold Bloom, "Introduction" in Modern Critical Views: Iris Murdoch, p. 7.

novel he retains the image of the attentive reader, the activity of reading being in effect an erasure of self and identity.

I have explained James's role as echo theoretician of Murdoch's views; but despite some distinctly delineated roles--James as moral philosopher, Good Man, repentant colonialist, Charles's multifaceted antithesis--he remains the most mysterious and "opaque" of all the characters. No clues in the text attest to Charles's speculations about his possible homosexuality, and no clues confirm Charles's suspicion of his activities as a British secret agent. And although James engaged successfully in two activities, one military and the other literary, the text gives no insights about the nature of either activity. As noted earlier, to grasp and appreciate aesthetically the highly contingent nature of James's characterization the reader must approach it from two perspectives: the anti-modernistic subterranean trend in the text, and the dialogic workings of embedding. From the perspective of the first angle James's characterization is not allowed to be merely processed through the first person narrator's consciousness (this is one function of the lengthy theoretical speculations of James), nor is it allowed to be dehierarchized, to be levelled with the minor details of his childhood memories, as in the case of Aunt Estelle and Uncle Abel. From the perspective of the second angle, Charles cannot place James in a preconceived, predetermined literary slot which is mathematically equivalent to The *Odyssey's* scheme of characterizations. Charles describes James as a "bore," and an "eccentric pedant" with a "world-weariness which [is] simply tedious" (p. 374). And although after his fall, he notices James's "ecclesiastic" look and acknowledges his "facile superiority". (p. 382), he cannot comprehend James: "James made moral judgements and confused me" (p. 374).

Not that James eludes the embedded myth, not at all; from the perspective of the monologic workings of myth (myth as Charles's illusion) he is outside, but from the dialogic workings of myth (myth as revelation) he is inside it. The eschatological nature of the churning

‘These are images,’ said James. “Some say Nirvana is and can only be here and now. Images to explain images, pictures to explain pictures.” (pp. 384-85)

Thus to convey does not involve a linguistic difficulty only, but it may entail an epistemological failure, and the risk of distorting, of tainting the necessary nature of the concept of Good. The use of images and words poses traps, pitfalls and perils; to perceive God or Good or Nirvana as a person, object, or empirical phenomenon is to integrate these concepts in the context of contingency, of subjectivity, and local meanings. God and the other analogous conceptualizations degenerate into charismatic man, supernatural being, idol, or personal fate. Silence, infinite space are the most apt metaphors we can conjure up to express, describe, and refer to God. Significantly, James does not seek certainty, because it ushers in self and subjectivity, and it can occasion tyranny.

Attentive, non-integrating silence is our only gesture towards the unsayable, and is the condition for a pure moral vision. Nirvana, James tells Charles, is a “vast flash, like an atom bomb, something terrifying and dazzling and incomprehensible. But if you can comprehend and grasp it then you are free” (p. 385).

James cannot and will not specify the meaning of free, free to do what: “just free--Nirvana--out of the wheel.” These dashes, these halts in his discourse betoken the salutary gesture of silence. Nirvana, therefore, is to reach the limit of language and the sayable, and to enter the void of the unsayable; this void, of course, is not a sort of nihilism or nothingness; it is freedom. Charles who does not seem to believe in the existence of the limits of language, and therefore does not believe in the existence of the category of the unsayable, continues to dream of writing, although he takes no practical steps towards that goal. In contrast, James has stopped writing poetry long ago; throughout the

Suffering not only redeems James, but also gives him redemptive ability. The hostility of the sea, so ruthless towards Charles, is absent in the case of James; the sea is the subliminal medium which brings forth and concretizes James's redemptive ability. It is significant that in his first visit to Shruff's End James pays homage to the sea, and associates it with the roots of the platonic moral vision: "The sea, the sea, . . . Did you know that Plato was descended from Poseidon on his father's side." James's redemptive activity, his rescue of Charles, can only take the form of silent action; it cannot be expressed in verbal constructs. In the fainting consciousness of the drowning Charles, James becomes both an active but silent and a resurrecting Christ; immediately after his rescue Charles scribbles these remarks:

James saved me . . . He put his hands under my armpits and I felt myself coming up as if I were in a lift. I saw him against the sheer side of the rock leaning down to me, and then I rose up and he held me against his body and we came up together. But he was not standing on anything. One moment he was against the rock as if he were clinging onto it like a bat. Then he was simply standing on the water. (p. 468)

Silent action is the mode of the climatic rescue scene because purgatory journeys, like the concepts of "Nirvana," "The Sublime," and "The Good," are above and beyond language and imagery; they are outside our sign-system. James's dilemma, therefore, has yet another aspect: how to convey the unexpressible, the unimaginable. In a revealing conversation Charles asks:

'Do you believe in reincarnation. Do you think that if one hasn't done well one will be reborn as a ___ hamster ___ or a ___ woodlouse?'

'These are images. The truth lies beyond.'

'And do we then exist somewhere else?'

refusal of finality are means of transforming epic self into nirvanic experience of selflessness, that liberation from the vicious wheel of "attachments and cravings, desires, what chains us to an unreal world" (p. 385). This is the proper environment conducive to the pursuit of truth which always lies "beyond."

Ironically, however, James's philosophical convictions pose a certain dilemma for him; as guide and mentor he must save Charles from the temptation to succumb to cults erected around the charismatic human personality. However, James knows that the belief in "God" or "Good" or similar conceptualizations is not a matter of empiricism and sensory experience, but a matter of personal suffering and faith. One cannot save the other, the other must save himself; a man can only give the proof of "God" or "Good" to himself, very much like Descartes "Cogito Ergo Sum."

To save Charles, James can only narrate his own painful journey towards the "Good": when in India James one winter decided to make a night journey into the Tibetan high passes with his servant sherpa. He knew that the journey was really impossible, but he thought that he could practice a certain trick, a sort of white magic, whereby he could raise his bodily heat by mental concentration to a degree sufficient to keep himself and his servant warm in the midst of the snow. However, they were caught in a blizzard and the sherpa died that night in James's arms.

James's narrative is actually the classic moment of confrontation between self (or subject) and the monumental terrifying sublime: the dark night, the snow, the wind, and the colossal heaps of mountainous ruin, which are symbolic of infinite space, the vulnerability of our personal being, and the very ruins in which all our totalized and closed "theories of coherence" would lie. Through remorse and guilt James is redeemed from epic self and its cult of magic and myth-making, and is ushered into an enlarged and enlarging vision of life.

moral element on empirical grounds; one must believe in it, have faith in it, in order to see it. He argues with Charles:

If even a dog's tooth is truly worshipped it glows with light. The venerated object is endowed with power, that is the simple sense of the ontological proof. And if there is art enough a lie can enlighten us as well as the truth. (p. 175)

In another scene, Charles remarks that religious sentiments are compensatory illusions, and counterbalancing devices for our human weakness and inadequacy: "I thought religious people felt weak and worshipped something strong;" in reply, James explicates the danger of a consoling and a utilitarian approach to the sacred:

That's what they [the people] think. The worshipper endows the worshipped object with power, real power not imaginary power, that is the sense of the ontological proof . . . But this power is dreadful stuff. Our lusts and attachments compose our god. And when one attachment is cast off another arrives by way of consolation. We never give up a pleasure absolutely, we only barter it for another. All spirituality tends to degenerate into magic, and the use of magic has an automatic nemesis even when the mind has been purified of habits . . . Demons used for good can hang around and make mischief afterwards . . . Goodness is giving up power and acting upon the world negatively. The good are unimaginable. (p. 445)

The "sense" of the ontological proof means its message of warning, the consequences of adopting the argument of the proof are subject to contingency, for worship can take the form of magic and a Nietzschean will to power (and this seems to be the dominant norm) or a will to salvation and goodness, just as a belief in man's fallen nature can lead to indulgence or repentance. Only the labor of negativity, the

Dichotomies fuse alloy-like in his vision of life, and the sources of his vision cut across cultures and historical periods; standing on the bridge over the churning whirlpool, James tells Charles:

Just look at the force of that water, isn't it fantastic, isn't it terrifying? . . . It's sublime yes, in the strict sense, sublime. Kant would love it. Leonardo would love it. Hokusai would love it. (p. 330)

James exhibits a steady, non-shifting mystical mood where fantasies, terrors, sea serpents do not or cannot prey on his serene mind. However, this steady mood is not merely indicative of saintly piety; it is the result of having successfully rediscovered a vision, or retrieved an "episteme," to use a Foucauldian concept, that can save him from the fragmentary and fragmenting nature of the modern world.²⁴ This episteme, in its essence a centrifugal demythologizing outlook, postulatory of the necessary, non-contingent of moral value, and highly subversive of imperialist self, is based on various but unitary conceptualizations that resuscitate a platonic philosophical paradigm of morality--the return of the ontological effects a return to the traditional. To explicate further, James treats the Kantian "natural external sublime," the Platonic fundamental "Form of the Good," the Anselmian "credo ut intellegam," i.e., the "Ontological Proof," and the Buddhist "Nirvana" as corresponding, and more or less synonymous epistemological frames. All these concepts point to an ab initio "unconditional," absolute element that exists in the structure of the human mind and in the structure of reality. Because of the existence of this absolute element in both structures, James does not separate the real from the good, epistemology from ethics, and he does not abolish the moral context of human relationships and human activities whether mundane or artistic. One cannot found one's belief in this absolute

²⁴ The general outline of James's episteme is also Murdoch's, especially as expressed in her essay "The Ontological Proof" in *Metaphysics*, pp. 391-430.

To revert to my initial point, James is a positive force in The Sea, The Sea; this, however, should not suggest that he is merely the idealized voice of wisdom in the midst of chaotic contingency; indeed, he is a multi-faceted antithesis of Charles. Juxtaposing the two characters we delineate several sharply drawn contrasts: Charles is the secular utilitarian philosopher, James is the idealist mystical one; Charles believes in situational morality and according to terms that are very loose, James believes in the existence of the necessary transcendent "Good" which permeates all human activities be they mundane, artistic, or religious. Culturally, the former belongs to Hollywood, Occident, and pop culture which is a channel and a means of perpetuating the normality and the naturalness of modernity, the latter belongs to Tibet, Orient, and minority culture which stands opposed to the socio-semitic contract of modernity. Moreover, Charles, who never went to war and never engaged in building an empire, harbors a ruthless postmodern imperialist dream of cultural hegemony; in contrast, James, who was an army general and a colonialist in the strictest terms, forsook willingly his dream of conquering and assimilating Tibet, and, instead, let himself be conquered and assimilated by it. As a modernist writer, Charles worries about creating texts as primary reality and forming autonomous, totalizing systems of meaning; as critic, James endeavours to attend to reality in order to liberate meaning. Charles is the modern man trapped by the illusion of epic self; James is the saint above and beyond self. Finally, Charles is the embodiment of the popularized Nietzschean image of man as god; James is the embodiment of the good Samaritan, and the austere demythologizing theologian; from an ecclesiastic perspective his image and his role have affinities with Christ, Buddha, and Teiresias.

As these various angles of contrast indicate, James is the greatest frustrator of Charles's monologism, and the passionate advocate of the necessary return of ontology; he is the voice of dialogism par excellence, for in him East and West have successfully met, idealism and realism, spirituality and discipline have merged.

If the snake is the silent messenger of Murdochian aesthetic and philosophical views, James is their eloquent mouthpiece; and if the snake is Charles's terrifying foe, James is his magnanimous guide. But before I elaborate on the role of James, let me point out that I totally disagree with Elizabeth Dipple's negative reading of James as a character afflicted with "magical demonism," and as the magician who fails to be good.²¹ Dipple views James's rescue of Charles as nothing but repetition of his destructive inclinations to use power:

In the rescue of Charles, as earlier in the death of his sherpa, he succumbs to the power of his brand of potent magic: the dangerous road to goodness for a man like James who takes a spiritual route is more subtly tempting and finally more devastating than the egotistical path Charles has so blindly followed.²²

Despite her negative remarks on the credibility of Charles as a narrator, Dipple interprets James's sudden death according to the way unreliable Charles wants us to read it, that is, as a magician's wilful act of self- annihilation:

As a result of his misuse of spirituality, he has made himself into a negative magician who has very little choice except to complete the game, to try to break what last attachments he had, and to die.²³

I do not see why we should believe Charles and not the Indian doctor who tells us that James died of a heart attack.

²¹ Elizabeth Dipple, Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

²² Ibid., p. 291.

²³ Ibid., p. 293.

the world and imperfections of language the circle is always broken.¹⁶

In relation to the art object, the world "overflows" and "transcends" it; in other words, another reality always flows through the art work because all art works are "porous" and "cracked." As mind confronting vast phenomenon, in the moment of the sublime the art object is "tension between a clarified statement and a confused painting."¹⁷

This is Murdoch's major transportive move to modify and utilize Kantian principles; however, within the realm of aesthetics or art she initiates a secondary and derivational transference of the Kantian sublime, and she applies this move to the element of characterization, what she often calls "self": "the art object as false unity is an image of the self."¹⁸ Thus, the artist's view of self, namely, his method of characterization, becomes a key criterion of literary evaluation:

the bad story is the sentimental untruthful tale of how the brave attractive ego (of course he has faults) triumphs over accident and causality and is never really mocked or brought to nought.¹⁹

In contrast:

good art mirrors not only the (illusory) unity of the self but its real disunity . . . Good art accepts and celebrates and meditates upon the defeat of the discursive intellect by the world.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 88.

explained how the snake can be perceived as a viable force of ontology, as the emblem of good art, and as mythic Scylla, the snake remains an unfinished symbol; it incarnates other contingent significations. Charles clearly identifies it as "his dark side," namely, as the embodiment of the unfathomable destructive but irresistible drives which govern the psyche, such as jealousy and will to power; Perry too refers to the snake as a causative force in his muddled human condition; in a moment of truth he tells Charles: "you are an awful crook . . . I think it was your own illusion of power that fascinated people, not personal magnetism" (p. 343); Perry was under Charles's spell because of the inner monster of fear and anxiety; freeing himself from that monster, he tells Charles: "I killed the monster when I pushed you into the sea" (p. 435)

It is in connection with the intrinsically paradoxical and prismatic nature of images in art and religion that Murdoch draws a third analogy between religio-artistic images and the truthful concept of self; all three analogous entities of religious image, artistic work, and human self possess only an "illusion of unity" or a "pseudo-unity." Immanuel Kant's concept of the sublime is the "conceptual tissue," the key to the tripartite dynamic correspondence.

Kant's sublime is the emotion of tension and delight at the failure of reason to impose forms of assimilation on that which is too vast to conform to our conceptual schemes. Paradoxically, while the sublime sharpens our sense of finitude, it boosts our sturdy confidence in our rational power. Transporting this Kantian concept from its moral realm to that of aesthetics, a violation of Kantian philosophy similar to the Christian artist's violation of the Second Commandment, Murdoch declares:

The work of art may seem to be a limited whole enclosed in a circle, but because of contingency and the muddled nature of

the realms of art, philosophy, and theology, I must quote Murdoch at length:

The work of art unifies our sensibility. Its authoritative unity and thereness guarantees and stabilises our existence, while removing our petty egoistic anxiety. The art object is an analogy of the person-object, we intuit our best selves in its mirror, and not only when we are under its spell. Art with which we are familiar stays with us as an intimation that love has power and the world makes sense. God combines the characteristics of a work of art and of a philosophical idea with those of an ideal spectator. We see in God in a magnified form the analogy between work of art and person; and Christ as God provides both personality and story.¹⁵

In light of Murdoch's theory I see the snake as analogous to the Christian Logos, as a "unifying principle" which, despite their unresolved struggles, bonds the characters together, and sharpens their sense of collective community against the tyranny of Charles's will to power. In a way, the snake is a guarantor of a moral vision: After Charles's fall in the churning cauldron Rosina remarries Perry, Lizzie becomes free to live with Gilbert, and enjoy "innocent love," Ben and Hartley immigrate to Australia and seem to live in total rapport, and Charles no longer perceives himself as the incarnation of the absolute Nietzschean epic self. Like good art, the snake demythologizes, it invalidates Charles's mythic scheme and it combines self and other, non-self, through love and attention.

Images in religion and in art, Murdoch explains in her writings, incorporate their "dark opposite." This incorporation does not produce rigid dichotomies and neat binary systems; it only produces paradoxes that are valid, unresolved, forever incomplete. Although I have

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

Murdoch calls a "theory of art as morality."¹⁴ Thus, besides being a purgatory journey, Charles's drowning is a consciousness of limits; the encounter with the primordial snake is metaphorically a juxtaposition between bad art and ontology or reality; Charles must succumb to the demands and the power of ontology if he is to be the good artist. His novelistic practice must repudiate the inward, centripetal turn, and endorse an outward centrifugal one. Charles must resist the temptation of the radical modernistic novel if he wishes to write literature which is genuinely valuable; he must seek a new approach which perceives others as others, resisting their assimilation into solipsistic, imperial epic self. Polyphony must be incorporated. It is in this respect that the snake is an antithetical aesthetic paradigm of modernism.

A more detailed analysis of the symbolic snake in light of the Murdochian view of art seems pertinent here. Let me explicate the analogy between aesthetic snake and good art, or "art as morality." The core of Murdoch's view is that in their serious quests, the artist, the moral philosopher, and the demythologizing theologians use the same "conceptual tissue." In her essay "Art and Religion," she speculates on the nature of the Christian artist's practice of image making (in itself an obvious, though useful, violation of the Second Commandment), and the affinities between the natures of religious imagery and art.

The fundamental affinity is that of a shared centrifugal, impersonal bent, a rejection of all practical and consoling explanations, and, paradoxically, an ability to "assimilate and unify." The Christian artist, Murdoch contends, presented God as a "super-art-object" and as a "non-degradable erotic object"; God then was perceived as a "super love-object," the artist believed that egoistic or "impure feelings can be purified by being directed upon a [this] pure (untainted, unstained) object." The art object is also an analogy of the person-object. Since there exists complex and multifaceted analogical relationships among

¹⁴ Murdoch, "Art and Religion," in Metaphysics, p. 80.

at the start of a new and more open relationship with him, that had been the merest prophetic glimmer of what I felt now. (p. 470)

Charles, moreover, can perceive a Plotinian cosmic vision of beauty and light while lying outdoors, listening to the soft rhythmic sound of the sea waves:

As I lay there, listening to the soft slap of the sea . . . more and more and more stars had gathered, obliterating the separateness of the Milky Way and filling up the whole sky. And far far away in that ocean of gold, stars were silently shooting and falling and finding their fates, among those billions and billions of merging golden lights. And curtain after curtain of gauze was quietly removed, and I saw stars behind stars behind stars . . . And I saw into the vast soft interior of the universe which was slowly and gently turning itself inside out. (p. 475)

The falling stars remind us of Charles's falling incident in the cauldron and of human fate in general, but the tone in this passage is serene and void of any sense of panic. Significantly, when the "curtains of gauze" are removed, an act symbolizing a nirvanic comprehension of reality, he realizes that the interior of the universe turns itself outward.

Return of the ontological is redemptive, though not completely transformative; the will to salvation begins with the urgency to understand the centrality of contingency in life; this urgency opens space for new, though perhaps conventional, beginnings, and it makes moral excellence and the cure from solipsism attainable. Charles's fall, however, is more than just a cathartic ordeal. For besides being a vista for a new moral vision, the eschatological aspect of the snake foregrounds contingency as a new and fresh perspective for an aesthetic outlook, or to be more specific, as a metaphysical ground for what

The snake in The Sea, The Sea is not a radical and private symbol; traditionally, snakes are sometimes depicted as the guardians of beautiful girls, and this role is perceptible in the novel. The snake as ontological antidote to Charles's extreme subjectivity demythologizes the characters, intensifies and anchors their solid being in the real world, which is the world of both contingency and freedom. The snake is Charles's adversary; when he gazes at it, its green luminous eyes do not blink. Furthermore, the snake has another traditional role, that of revealing the hero to himself. Charles's drowning is a purgatory journey, because the proximity of death reveals to Charles the limit and the insubstantiality of his power and the ugliness of his irresponsible, ungracious, truth-distorting ego:

What an egoist I must seem in the preceding pages. But am I so exceptional? We must live by the light of our own self-satisfaction, through that secret vital busy inwardness which is even more remarkable than our reason. Thus we live unless we are saints, and are there any? There are spiritual beings, perhaps James was one, but there are no saints. (p. 482)

To be sure, the purgation is partially successful, and Charles in this passage tries to evade his guilt and to justify it by reverting to the cliché that human beings are not saints; nevertheless, we do see a humbled Charles, one who accepts the defeat of his totalizing theory of coherence, and who for the first time can overcome his petty jealousies and can express appreciatory remarks toward the other characters. When he thinks of how James saved his life he writes:

I sat down again at my table, trying to breathe regularly, and at the idea that my cousin had used some strange power which he possessed to save my life I was suddenly filled with the most piercing, pure and tender joy, as if the sky had opened and a stream of white light had descended. I felt like Danae. When after my last talk with James, I had felt myself

The masterly descriptive passages on the everchanging moods of the North Sea are concretions of the random contingency which belongs to real phenomena and to human life. Moreover, the sound of the stormy sea, the appearance of the snake, and the constant intrusions of the characters, are multiplications of other systems of meaning contesting that of Charles. The sea is illustrative of the phenomenal world expanding and modifying the proportions of the initial world picture depicted by Charles. With its rocks, whirlpool, and snake, the sea is primary reality, the embodiment of the most powerful system of meaning which no human articulation can exhaust. Charles's narrative aims at exhaustion of meaning, of positing itself as a form of ultimate reality: how often Charles describes the sea from Shruff End's casements as if to frame it, to contain its meaning, and how constantly cold and hostile remains the sea. The message of the sea and the snake is that one can never disavow one's relationship with contingency. After falling in the vortex of the churning pit, Charles ponders the meaning of the accident:

a primal experience of a total loss of hope. Falling, what the child fears, what the man dreads, is itself the image of death, of the defencelessness of the body, of its frailty and mortality, its absolute subjection to alien courses. . . . A complete fall into the void, something which I had often imagined on aeroplanes, is of course the most terrible thing of all. Hands, feet, muscles, all the familiar protective mechanisms of the body are suddenly useless. The enmity of matter is unleashed against the frail breakable crushable animal form, always perhaps an alien in this hard mineral gravitational scene. (p. 365)

Charles poignantly perceives the absolute separation of self and the world and the disproportionate power and domination of contingent alien matter over the frail self. Charles's tone is pessimistic here, but later in the novel his pessimism attenuates.

rest now, she wants to put her feet up and watch television, not to have disturbances and adventures. (pp. 184-85)

In Charles's free direct discourse the intruding characters represent the category of the "other," that which is separate, unique, resisting totalization and, to borrow a term from E. Said, textualization (Charles constantly ponders over their photographs, letters, speeches). These characters are part of ontology's viable forces, which, because of their power to shape, are catalytic like the everpresent crashing sea waves. To put it in other words, the outright resistance of Rosina, Perry, Ben to Charles's tyranny, and the gradual self-liberation of Lizzie, Gilbert, and Hartley from his demonic spell, are catalytic because they not only defeat epic self but they subvert Charles's monologic text.

The workings of embedding The Odyssey are biaxial: just as myth betokens allusion and lie, it betokens a moral vision; and just as it establishes Charles's monologism, it counteracts it, countercharms it with dialogism. It is as if Murdoch defies Charles's reading of reality by using the very same tool; if myth blinded Charles with self-centeredness, myth, in the configuration of sea or cauldron, Charybdis, snake-Scylla, and the visionary Teiresian-like James, revealed to him existence, the "good" and the "sublime." This does not mean that Charles becomes saintly after his fall in the pit and his encounter with the snake; nevertheless, his solipsism attenuates and his moral sense is partially redeemed.

Dialogism as redemption is the major role attributed to sea, snake, and James, but before I elaborate on the dialogic workings of embedding, let me outline the fundamental Murdochian world view. It contends that the nature of the world is fallen but this does not abolish innocence; the world is contingent but this does not abolish the transcendent; truth is unattainable but it does exist.

housekeeper. Charles's modernism, however, fails to have a genuine radical edge, for he retains throughout the novel the image of the failed modernist whose cherished dream of radical artistic experimentation, and the creation of the perfect form that embodies only symmetrically corresponding patterns of internal references, never materializes. As an agent Charles is selfish but not anarchistic; he is lonely but not alienated; he believes that he is a member of a minority culture, but he actually belongs to pop culture; and despite his jealousies, obsession with Aunt Estelle, and his deep disappointment in his parents, he has no "crisis." Perhaps nowhere is Charles's mediocrity more highly foregrounded than in the way the intrusions of the other characters change the initial mode of his narrative and dictate to him its subsequent mode.

Indeed, these characters install the normal symbolic and semiotic order which sustain social communication, thus forcing Charles's narrative to turn away from the neatly circumscribed past to the recording of the contingent daily events, the very "muddle" of human life. Consequently, Charles is not free to force words out of their habitualized contexts, nor is he free to turn against the traditional referential function of language. Ironically, it is this conservatism, though Charles remains unaware of it, which liberates his text from the thralls of a univocal meaning, and corrects its perfunctory mythologizing of the character of his social circle. In a scene, jealous and possessive Rosina reasons with Charles and comments on his "delusions" about Hartley:

I remember your talking about a first love, but these things are imaginary, they are fables. You're just suffering from the shock of seeing her, give it a fortnight. And she's got a bourgeois marriage and a son, and, Charles, she's ordinary, you can't do it to an ordinary woman just because you fancied her at school, it's nonsense and she wouldn't understand! . . . She's an old-age pensioner, she wants to

and contingent disappears; his theory is faulty because he equates "reality with integration" into a single conceptual system; degrees of reality get equated with degrees of integration; if something (or somebody) resists being subsumed by this system, then it is unreal.¹² Hartley's love for Ben, who is indeed a very common and undistinguished man, and her wish to save her marriage despite its banality, makes no sense, because it does not cohere with his mythologized reading of reality. It is not surprising that whenever Hartley resists Charles's advances and whenever she decries his interpretation of their past she is perceived as an animal.

Murdoch is not intrinsically against the idea of coherence; on the contrary, she finds it part of the activity of forming moral visions; however, she is mindful of its potential "reifying" effects:

Scholarship, science, art, everyday life, involve searching for coherence ('making sense of things') and dealing suitably with the innumerable contingent elements which impede, divert, or inspire the search . . . The metaphysical deification of truth in coherence theories derives its plausibility from the recognisable moral effort demanded by the continued search for coherence. Because of the endlessly contingent nature of our existence this quest can never reach a 'totalised' conclusion.¹³

Charles's outmoded modernism smacks of cultural subversion, ruthless hegemony, and a tendency to reify. As a modernist he likes to adopt the role of the rebellious and aberrant hero who engages in hostile acts against dominant notions of social order: he kidnapped the wife of a man, he never attempted to commit himself to a single love relationship, and he, metaphorically speaking, enslaved Gilbert Opian, a homosexual actor, who temporarily becomes his unpaid cook and

¹² Ibid., p. 196.

¹³ Ibid., p. 195.

becomes nothing but meaningless, uninhabited space: "How huge it is, how empty, this great space for which I have been longing all my life" (p. 15).

Charles not only fails to give educative or exhortative roles to the sea, he fails to give symbolic significance to his nightmarish visions of the sea snake, just as he has failed to read the significance of James's Buddha statues, and his ornate pagoda-shaped wooden casket where the Tibet's lamas keep demons prisoners. The modernist, romantic self, autonomous, lonely, and purged of all contingency can rule out the existence of possible meanings in objects if they do not cohere with self's readings. The most glaring aspect of Charles's solipsism is the naive way he explains away and nullifies bizarre events as nothing but mere adumbrations of past experience. Early in the novel, Charles looks intently at a worm coiling itself in the rock pool, and when he watches the wide glaring expanse of the sea, he sees "a monster rising from the waves" (p. 19). Charles is frightened but soon he explains away the vision as an imagined and involuntary resurfacing of the experience of a "bad trip" when he took a dose of LSD. The external is always explained in terms of the internal, the snake becomes a possession of the self, and Charles calls it "my huge monster." No doubt, the snake is part of the self, for it is the snake of jealousy and egoism, and Charles is vaguely aware of this interpretation:

It was something morally, spiritually horrible, as if one's stinking inside had emerged and become the universe: a surging emanation of dark half-formed spiritual evil. (p. 21)

Nevertheless, the snake is also part of the sea and the whirling pool; it is part of the ontological. Charles's interpretation of the vision of the snake is not wrong, but it is inadequate because it is monologic.

The activity of embedding is actually Charles's version of what Murdoch terms as a "theory of coherence" whereby all that is individual

purpose and because they are deliberately private, totally hedonistic and purely consumptive.

The highly foregrounded self-reflexiveness of Charles's discourse defines writing in three related ways: writing is a manifestation of aesthetic language exploring itself as language, writing is a definite and adequate system of meaning circumscribing itself as primary reality, and it is memory recreating and shaping history, both Charles's individual history and that of the other characters which, in fact, is nothing but an extension and part of his private history:¹⁰

It is necessary to write . . . and to write in a way quite unlike any way which I have employed before. What I wrote before was written in water and deliberately so. This is for permanence, something which cannot help hoping to endure. Yes, already I personify the object, the little book, the Libellus, this creature to which I am giving life and which seems at once to have a will of its own. It wants to live, it wants to survive. (p. 2)

The written text is organic, autonomous, and beyond contingency; writing is not perceived, as Murdoch contends, as a tension-filled and equivocal confrontation between the linguistic world and the non-linguistic, non-human, natural world, or between a momentary coherence and the infinite world of incoherence.¹¹ In Charles's initial narrative, the sea, that is, the elemental world, is denied its significant ontological status; the sea is projected as a mere locale of his narrative, as a decorative background, as a provider of the bodily pleasure of swimming, and as a possible and handy generator for his "pensées." At times the sea is even deprived of these lowly roles; it

¹⁰ In my speculations about modernity's approach to writing and language, I am greatly in debt to the excellent general introductory book of Astradur Eysteinnsson, The Concept of Modernism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

¹¹ See Iris Murdoch, "Derrida and Structuralism," in Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (New York: Allen Lane-Penguin Press, 1992), pp. 195-96.

Martello tower is of course the setting of the first chapter in Ulysses where we first meet the anxious and pensive Stephen Daedalus who might have harboured just such a cherished dream.

These are subtle manifestations of Charles's modernistic literary inclinations, but there are bolder gestures mostly expressed by excessive metafictionality. Charles ponders long over the generic nature of his writing:

I spoke of a memoir. Is that what this chronicle will prove to be? Time will show.. At this moment, a page old, it feels more like a diary than a memoir. Well, let it be a diary then.
(p. 1)

A few paragraphs later he returns to the same generic concern:

Of course there is no need to separate 'memoir' from 'diary' or 'philosophical journal' . . . To repent of egoism: is autobiography the best method? Well, being no philosopher I can only reflect about the world through reflecting about my own adventure in it. (pp. 2-3)

Self-referentiality in literature is a way of creating awareness of the social processes of fabricating meaning and generating communication, but in Charles's initial narrative self-referentiality rapidly dwindles into a mere probing of the fabrication of his psyche, his jealousies, and his quest for power. Rather than investigating the popular presses' negative depiction of him, Charles's text abounds with elaborate description of his meals; these passages betoken a form of neurosis, what James sarcastically labels as his "gastronomic mysticism." These solitary meals are definitely ritualistic in nature; they are a celebration of self preserving its being and guarding its survival; yet they are very perverse, because they lack any collective and ethical

activities such as visiting his friends, taking his secretary to dinner, attending the theatre. No particular vision of an artistic vocation, and no particular conception of a germane opus emerge in his mind. To be sure, Charles ponders the possibility of writing a novel about Clement Makin, but he is not keen on that project and seems to be merely toying with an idea to ward off occasional boredom. Living in the busy metropolis, socializing with ordinary people, and abandoning all grand literary ambitions is analogous to the activity of reading, of consciousness turning outward.

In his initial literary project Charles entertains a decadent and lyrical romantic mood: "But now the main events of my life are over and there is to be nothing but recollection in tranquility" (p. 1). His project, moreover, is a crude imitation of classical modernistic conventions, for like James Joyce's Ulysses, and Marcel Proust's A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu he intends to begin with the drama between child and mother, artist and muse: He begins with an account of his relationship with Clement Makin, an actress nineteen years his senior, his first mistress and a protective mother figure:

She always fought mercilessly for those she loved, and then she became totally immortal . . . She loved me and I am quite prepared to admit that as it happened she made me. (p. 33)

Charles even recalls an experience of Oedipal complex:

She was always beset. I was never terribly jealous, except perhaps for a short while of Marcus, because I had such a close connection with Clement, just as if . . . she were my mother! (p. 53)

Charles intends to do his writing in the "Martello" tower he bought along with Shruff End: "It is alas only a shell. I would like to restore it and build a spiral staircase and a lofty study room" (p. 6). The

Murdoch approaches myth dialogically, i.e., from two distinct contesting angles; on the one hand, myth is synonymous with allusion, lie, and self-deception; ironically, Charles compares Shruff End, his new house by the sea, to a cave, an image reminiscent of Plato's famous cave of illusion anecdote. On the other hand, myth is a tool of nemesis and instruction: Charles drowns in the whirlpool and encounters the snake; he is helpless but survives only because James comes to his rescue. He is humbled by this experience, learns about the fragility and brevity of power, but more importantly he learns about "Good" and "love," two fundamental concepts in Murdoch's moral philosophy.⁹

The workings of embedding are multifaceted, and they raise more than just moral speculations. Perhaps one of the most significant issues they raise is the relevance of modernism as a literary movement in our postmodern world. Murdoch as a postmodern theoretician has many aggressively phrased misgivings about modernism, in particular its cult of form, symbolism, and its claim of the autonomy of the literary text. The workings of embedding in The Sea, The Sea imply some dyslogistic hints against modernism, not that the novel is a programmatic attack on the modernist literary tradition, but rather that Charles is a mediocre modernist writer with serious moral flaws, in particular egocentricism and totalitarianism. Indeed, the novel can be read as a künstlerroman except that the thrust of the hero's initiation into maturity is moral and not aesthetic, and as a result, he veers from self to ontology, from the activity of writing to the activity of living. At the end of the novel we see Charles carefree, engaging in simple daily

⁹ Murdoch defines "Good" as "the focus of attention when an intent to be virtuous co-exists (as perhaps it almost always does) with some unclarity of vision . . . The Good itself is not visible . . . we can certainly know more or less where the sun is; it is not so easy to imagine what it would be like to look at it." See Iris Murdoch, The Sovereignty of Good (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1986), p. 70. She defines "Love" as "the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real". See Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," Chicago Review, 13, No. 3 (1959), p. 51.

should suit you" (p. 405). Like Odysseus's perception of Calypso, Charles associates Rosina with female imprisonment and sexual pleasure, never with true love and the sacredness of marriage: "I was never 'in love' with Rosina" (p. 72); nevertheless, he wanted her, and actually destroyed her happy marriage to Perry Arbelow, because "there was something factitious and brittle and thereby utterly feminine about her charm which made me want to crush her, even to crunch her" (p. 72). However, compared to the other characters Rosina's mythic image is not sharply drawn, for at times she is portrayed as a menacing Circe; she is associated with tricks, magic and fierceness. Charles complains that her "terrorism was intolerable" (p. 106); he is aware of her nails "painted a dark purple" and compares them to "little spears." Rosina victimizes her lovers, especially Perry Arbelow; she can trap them and turn their gentleness into raging madness as in the hilariously comic episode when she ambushes Charles and his male companions on their way to reconcile Hartley and Ben, and to clear up the bizarre business of Charles's incarceration of Hartley. Moreover, like her two mythic counterparts, Rosina enchants by song. In a scene we see shy Titus and Gilbert singing an Italian song under Rosina's "exercise of power," both men totally "enthralled" and "quite dazed by her attractions" (p. 313). As a foil to Hartley, Rosina is the very archetype of the femme fatale; she is "electric," "gorgeously adorably artificial" with a gaze that has "a strange concentrated intensity" (p. 72).

If the scope of embedding The Odyssey as a device to reveal the shallowness and rigidity of the narrator's premeditated categorization of characters seems to the reader ridiculously overblown, it appears just as ridiculously overblown to the characters themselves; Perry Arbelow, who pushed Charles into the terrible whirling waters of Minn's Cauldron to avenge the deliberate smashing of his happy marriage, confronts Charles with these words: "You're an exploded myth." One cannot help but think that perhaps Murdoch is subtly and playfully alluding to Joycean "metempsychosis," but this possible idea requires a separate investigation.

Charles's neurotic mythmaking. Titus must become his loyal son; rather than helping Titus cope with the torment of an identity lost and impossible to retrieve, Charles finds Titus's question of "Are you my father" on their first meeting (p. 248), enough reason to engage in shoddy sentimentality: "You are searching for a father. I am searching for a son. Why don't we make a deal?" (p. 261). Later he is more outspoken and steadfast:

I feel that fate or God or something has given us to each other. Let us not stupidly miss the chance. Don't let idiotic pride or suspicion or failure of imagination or failure of hope spoil this thing for us. (p. 287)

Not that Charles's sentimentality is spontaneous and pure; he imagines that Titus's conflict with his step-father can be exploited to disengage Hartley from Ben, and win her back: "Everything, everything . . . depended on Titus, he was the centre of the world, he was the key" (pp. 250-51). Despite Titus's cold response and "affected cynicism" Charles's dream of family and home takes on an absolute utopian form: the three of them will live together in the Mediterranean and Charles will play the role of perfect husband and father:

What kept me more boldly on was an optimism which Titus himself had rather crazily engendered with that image of the three of us living together in the south of France! If he would stick to me, and she would come out, there would be for all of us, some tremendous spiritual release, like a sudden ecstasy which Titus and I had experienced in the sea. I would make her happy, I would. And I would make him happy and successful and free. (p. 263)

Rosina Vamburgh is mythologized too; when she phones Charles to tell him that the director of the new "monster epic" film of The Odyssey has offered her the part of Calypso, Charles replies, "That

others, of neatly prescribing meanings and rules, of stereotyping. Mythmaking is a mental strategy of will to power; without it no "master narrative," to borrow a phrase from Edward Said, can be constructed.

Charles repeatedly associates Hartley's name and their love story with two of the most unmodern words: purity and chastity:

And we were chaste, and respected each other absolutely and worshipped each other chastely. And that was passion and that was love of a purity which can never come again and which I am sure rarely exists in the world at all. (p. 80)

Hartley is the emblem of security and home: "we would have become one, and the holiness of marriage would have been our safety and our home forever" (p. 84). Charles believes that ever since she left him, his life has been nothing but the embodiment of Odysseus's journey to Penelope, but while the Homeric hero's journey was deliberate, his was unconscious:

And in a way I did keep on searching for her, only it was a different and quite involuntary kind of search, a sort of dream-search. (pp. 85-86)

After visiting the Fitches, Charles provides his mythologized scheme of characterization with another necessary detail -- Hartley is a suffering captive -- "Hartley has been a captive all these years" (p. 158), and Ben Fitch is vile: "he was mentally undistinguished; there was no wit or spiritual sweetness in that man" (p. 158); Ben is a "tyrant, probably a chronically jealous man, a dull resentful dog" (p. 158). The honourable mission of Charles becomes clear: "I shall rescue her and make her happy for whatever time remains to us" (p. 158).

Titus's youth, his boyish handsome looks, and his agonizing search for his biological parents, give further justifying grounds to

and moral vision. To put it another way, the structure of The Sea, The Sea is based on tension between what Charles wants to write as a modernist writer, and what actually gets written: a postmodernist text. Zohreh T. Sullivan insightfully describes the nature of the proper approach to Murdoch's novels:

The function of enchanters and demons in her novels should be explored simultaneously on the levels of psychology, social commentary and myth, not merely on one level at the expense of another.⁸

The embedding of The Odyssey is, therefore, biaxial: it monologizes Charles's reading of events and characters, and it dialogizes, despite Charles's unawareness, the novel's discourse so that it manages to project an aesthetic and a moral vision. To explicate the monologic workings of embedding, let me first map the elaborate though "crystalline" scheme of characterization in Charles's narration.

Charles identifies himself with Odysseus, for like this mythic counterpart, he has a conflict with the hostile, supernatural sea, and like him he has survived the snares and the sirens, i.e., actresses of the theatre world (how often we see the female characters seductively singing pop songs). Obsession with this self-image compels him to distort the contingent reality of other characters; they become corresponding counterparts of various mythic characters: Mary Hartley is his Penelope; Titus Fitch, her adopted son, is Telemachus; Ben Fitch, her husband, an ex-soldier and a retired fire-extinguisher salesman, is a vile suitor; Rosina Vamburgh, a jealous actress and one of his ex-mistresses, is Circe-like. Clues abound to help the reader discover this embedded scheme of characterization. Before I elaborate, let me emphasize that mythmaking is a way of circumventing the history of

⁸ Zohreh T. Sullivan, "The Demonic: The Flight from the Enchanter," in Modern Critical Views: Iris Murdoch, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), p.73.

manner; the myth subtly interweaves with the diegetic discourse in an interminable and parallel manner almost until its last major scene, but before I elaborate on this point let me outline the plot.

Charles Arrowby is one of England's leading playwrights, and an ex-director depicted by the popular press as "tyrant," "tartar" and "power-crazed monster." This depiction is not inaccurate; throughout the novel he demonstrates a relentless quest to control, manipulate and tyrannize the other characters: Lizzie Scherer, Rosina Vamburgh, Gilbert Opian, Perry Arbelow, and the Fitch family. As a result of this quest he destroys marriages and friendships. Charles is a hateful sexist and a ruthless egoist, yet he is more than just that; he is the exemplar of the demonic, Dionysian artist whose aspiration is to be god; how often he reminds his theatre friends that he "made them."

At the outset of the novel, Charles has just retired to live in the small village of Narrowdean in self-imposed solitude to write his own history. But Charles's initial literary project, markedly composed along Proustian lines and dominated by a strong self-reflexive literary mood, is disrupted by the intrusions of several events: the casual, abrupt visits of friends from the theatre world, the appearance of Mary Hartley Fitch, his sweetheart forty years ago and his first love who left him to marry another man, and the return of his cousin James Arrowby, a Buddhist, and a retired army general, from India. These intrusions change the nature of Charles's initial literary project and cause it to become a realistic, and to a certain degree factual, recording of strange and sometimes hilarious daily events and conflicts. But despite the shift in the nature of Charles's literary project, his reading of his past and the present as repetition of the Odysseus' story does not change. Like all egoists he perpetually mythologizes, and he abhors and fears all that retains a stubbornly unique, and contingent form of existence; namely, human beings and history itself. While James Joyce used myth as a structural device in Ulysses, Murdoch uses it as an elaborate device for mock characterization, and as a technique to highlight a certain aesthetic

desperate haste to escape through the narrow outlet under the arch.⁶ (p. 243)

This is Charybdis. Like Odysseus, Charles recognizes Charybdis as a moral test, and as a challenge to his resilience and fortitude:

I would never have imagined that I would dislike the sound of the sea, but sometimes, and especially at night, it was a burden to the spirit. (p. 243)

The element of the fantastic belongs to the cauldron; the horrible, coiling sea monster, that "black snake" with the "long thickening body with a ridgy spiny back" (p. 19) which Charles encounters twice, lives in the cauldron. The snake is mythic in size because he "could see the sky through the coils" (p. 19), and when Charles drowns in the pit, he sees "the strong small head," the "terrible teeth," and the "green luminous eyes" (p. 466). This, of course, is Scylla.⁷ Like Odysseus, Charles has to journey successfully between Scylla and Charybdis, between two difficult choices: the tyranny of self or total submission to ontology, i.e., all that is non-self, between demonic will to power and saintly goodness, a philosophical inward turn and one that points outward. In short, the journey is allegorical, and it is, in an abstract sense, between monologism and dialogism. Embedding of The Odyssey, however, does not appear in a patchy

⁶ Compare this passage with The Odyssey's description, trans. E. V. Rieu (London: Penguin, 1946) pp. 191-95: "Three times a day she [Charybdis] spews them [dark waters] up, and three times she swallows them down once more in her horrible way . . . when she vomited it up, she was stirred to her depths and seethed over like a cauldron on a blazing fire; and the spray she flung on high rained down on the tops of the crags at either side. But when she swallowed the salt water down, the whole interior of her vortex was exposed, the rocks re-echoed to her fearful roar, and the dark sands of the sea bottom came into view."

⁷ Compare this description with The Odyssey's: "She [Scylla] has twelve feet, all dangling in the air, and six long necks, each ending in a grisly head with triple rows of teeth, set thick and close and darkly menacing death". Ibid., p. 191.

narratees. As I must limit the scope of this study I will address the second method of embedding only.

In her interview with John Haffenden, Murdoch comments on embedding Shakespeare:

I've always got The Tempest in my head, just as I had in The Sea, The Sea: the idea of giving up magic, the relation between religion and power.⁴

She acknowledges that her employment of The Tempest is "terribly shadowy."⁵ What is surprising, however, is Murdoch's silence on the employment of The Odyssey in The Sea, The Sea.

Direct mentioning of The Odyssey as a proposed film project appears twice at the end of the novel, yet several subtle and obscured clues pointing to the text can be detected. Aside from the ever present hostile raging sea, the most conspicuous evidence of the text's embedding is "Minn's Cauldron," the "deep enclosed rocky area" where the waves are constantly "coming flying through killing themselves in fits of rage" (p. 26). The pit makes Charles giddy; nevertheless, he is fascinated by its "loud hollow report"; repeatedly we see him watching the pit with a prolonged steady gaze:

It gave me a gloomy fatalistic pleasure to observe the waves, as they rushed into that deep and mysteriously smooth round hole, destroy themselves in a boiling fury of opposing waters and frenzied creaming foam. Then when the tide was receding the cauldron became an equally furious sucking whirlpool as the water churned itself into a circling froth in its

⁴ Haffenden, p. 195.

⁵ For an excellent comparative essay on The Tempest and The Sea, The Sea, see Peter Conradi, Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist (London: The MacMillan Press, 1986), pp. 230-54.

resides outside language or linguistics are two central tenets of modernistic literature and postmodern criticism. However, and because of her anti-modernistic attitudes, Murdoch's novelistic practices aim at disrupting social modernity, in particular its egotistic, hedonistic trends, and its glorification of power.

But how does Murdoch combine her philosophical project of restoring ontology or metaphysics with her aesthetic project of restoring the voice and the image of the "other"? How does she provide textual space for the connatural presences of ontology and dialogism? I believe the technique of embedding connects the two projects in order to nullify our fear of finding out that "morality is just a superficial phenomenon." My explication of the workings of embedding will confine itself to The Sea, The Sea.²

Generally, embedding follows two methods; it is, as Mikhail Bakhtin states, a diegetic strategy of dialogism, of "double-voicing," of implying or making physically present a second voice.³ The epistolary sections of The Sea, The Sea form short diegetic or intradiegetic narratives which sabotage the powerful but solipsistic free direct discourse of Charles Arrowby. Another method of embedding, however, is to "enclose" or set within the main discourse another antecedent narrative. I find that The Odyssey is present in The Sea, The Sea as a pseudo-diegetic narrative. I describe it as pseudo-diegetic because Charles Arrowby's discourse cleverly obscures the myth's metadiegetic status. The activity of retrieving this embedded myth is analogous to the traditional moment of illumination (in its spiritual, moral, and aesthetic senses). This moment is pertinent not only to Charles's reformed consciousness, but also to that of the deluded characters under his spell, and to the reading competence of the

² The edition used in this study is Iris Murdoch, The Sea, The Sea (New York: The Viking Press, 1978).

³ See Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, trans. and ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

“I do not endeavour, O Lord, to penetrate thy sublimity, for in no wise do I compare my understanding therewith; but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.”

St. Anselm of Canterbury, Proslogion

Iris Murdoch writes in motley. Her novelistic formula combines incongruous elements: tragedy, comedy, mythology, allegory and, of course, philosophy; the gothic is equally conspicuous as is the realistic. However, Murdoch's espousal of a gothicized comic yet realistic mode is a declaration of interwoven aesthetic and philosophical convictions: the crux of her novelistic practice is a search for possible techniques that procure dialogic perceptions of reality. She, therefore, posits ontology, namely, all that exists as non-self, as the only viable postmodern “generative grammar” of moral visions. It is in this Murdochian type of realism that an urgently needed aesthetico-moral project can be demonstrated. Murdoch once said that it is always pertinent to approach a philosopher from the perspective of what he/she fears most; and when once asked about her fears as a philosopher she replied:

I think I'm afraid of somehow finding out that it doesn't really matter how you behave, that morality is just a superficial phenomenon. I don't think one could find this out, it's just a bogey; the impossibility of finding it out is very deep in moral philosophy. I don't believe in God, but I think morality is fundamental to human life.¹

I interpret “superficial” in this quotation to mean merely culturally conditioned, not belonging to the category of the transcendent; the credos that it is all merely cultural, and that nothing

¹ John Haffenden, Novelists in Interview (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 203

ABSTRACT

The novels of Iris Murdoch embody attacks on modernism and its creeds. The crux of her novelistic practice is the attempt to conjure up an aesthetico-moral vision that succeeds in redeeming the novel from the purely aesthetic, or the purely linguistic approaches to literature. Murdoch, therefore, emphasizes in both her philosophical works and in her novels concepts such as, "Metaphysics," "The Sublime," "The Good," and "Love." And she often interweaves the Platonic and the Kantian discourses into her own literary discourse.

The Sea, The Sea, winner of the Booker Prize for 1978, is a fascinating achievement. The most engaging aspect of the novel is the way Murdoch employs the technique of embedding The Odyssey of Homer, in order to critique modernism, and in order to connect two projects: the philosophical project of restoring ontology, or metaphysics, as the fount of moral visions, and the aesthetic project of restoring dialogism, i.e., the voice and the image of the "other," to the consciousness and the discourse of the central character, Charles Arrowby, a modern artist, and the sole narrator in the novel.

This paper explicates the complex, biaxial workings of embedding The Odyssey in The Sea, The Sea in relation to characterization, symbolism, and theme. This essay maintains that just as the embedded myth of The Odyssey betokens allusion and lie, it betokens a moral vision; and just as it establishes Charles Arrowby's monologism, it counteracts it with dialogism. This paper, moreover, explores the aesthetic and philosophical ramifications of this technique in one of Murdoch's most exuberant novels.

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Academic Publications:

In English

- A Spectrum of Image-Making: Master Metaphors and Cognitive Acts in Murdoch's Bruno's Dream. Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies. Copenhagen, Denmark (No.52 / 1996).
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- A Book Review of The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914- 1991, by Eric Hobsbawm. Al-Zamen (Dec. 1997).

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