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Doctoral Dissertation

The German Exile Literature and the Early Novels of Iris Murdoch

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Introduction

A Reflection on the Past

Murdoch and her Jewish Teachers

In the present dissertation, I will provide a comparative analysis of the impact of the German exile literature on Iris Murdoch's early novels. In this work, I will explain how the issues of trauma, memory, displacement and power in Murdoch's fiction were informed by her intellectual encounters with three German-speaking exiled authors, Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner and H.G. Adler. Concentrating on five novels from Murdoch's early period, *Under the Net* (1954), *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *A Severed Head* (1961), *The Italian Girl* (1964), *The Nice and the Good* (1968), I will explore how the post-war trauma and the questions of displacement, power and making sense of the past had become central to her. What makes these works curious to discuss is that, in them, she sets up the diagnosis of post-war societies, which are suffering between two totalitarian powers, where exile is a symbol of the modern state of being that is characterized by rootlessness and alienation. Considering the theoretical aspects where the memories of the war, the trauma of the Holocaust and the problem of exile are represented by her refugee characters, many of whom were inspired by Canetti, Steiner and Adler, I will explain how the sense of rootlessness and identity search depicted in these novels can be compared with the theories and the lived experiences of the three authors discussed.

Iris Murdoch was one of the most prolific and significant English writers and philosophers in the 20th century. She was born in Dublin in 1919 of Anglo-Irish parents. From 1932 to 1938, she was a boarding student at Badminton School in Bristol. From 1938 to 1942, she studied philosophy at Somerville College, Oxford. During the war she went to work as an Assistant Principal at HM Treasury, and then worked for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (U.N.R.R.A.) in the refugee camps in the refugee camps in Brussels and Innsbruck between 1945 and 1946. From 1947 to 1948, she had a postgraduate studentship in philosophy at Newnham College, Cambridge. In 1948, she returned to Oxford, where she became a fellow of St Anne's College. She lived with her husband, the professor and literary critic John Bayley, from 1956 until her death in 1999.

From her debut with *Under the Net*, Iris Murdoch was regarded as one of the most remarkable post-war women writers starting their careers in the mid-twentieth century, now called

intermodernism, whose vivid description of sexuality and morals has influenced such novelists of the later generation as Margaret Drabble, A.S. Byatt, Alan Hollinghurst, or Sarah Waters. In her career as a novelist, spanning for more than four decades, she wrote 26 twenty-six novels, a short story (*Something Special*, 1957), six plays, two volumes of poetry, and four books on philosophy, including two Platonic dialogues. Her novels enjoyed a wide readership and were hailed by her contemporaries, winning several literary awards, among the Booker Prize for *The Sea, the Sea* (1978), the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *The Black Prince* (1973) and the Whitbread Prize for *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974).

Murdoch's fiction is filled with philosophical ideas on the nature of good and evil, love, suffering, the mysterious forces of the human psyche, and the various manifestations of power in human relationships. In her novels, she speaks about modern life and modern love, the complexities of human nature and the morality of our world after Hitler. Although it is debated whether Murdoch can literally be described as a "philosophical novelist"[1], she herself always rejected such classification,[2] the undeniable merit of her fiction is that she blends her philosophical ideas into the everyday lives of her characters. One of the moral issues that is central to Murdoch's novels is how to become good, how to identify ourselves with goodness, and the mixture of good and evil within us. Many of her characters goes through some traumatic experiences that they try to handle without passing it onto others, whose moral lives are haunted by the traumas they had suffered from.

Murdoch's novels raise the questions: How can we overcome our guilt for the past? How can our suffering be healed? How can we have a true picture on evil and good? How can morality be regained after the terrible experiences of human life? These questions are fundamental for Murdoch's views on morals and the historical and biographical background for them can be found in her encounters with the Jewish exiles coming to England before, during, and after the war. To these persons belong the philosophy teacher Edouard Fraenkel, whose seminars on Aischylos's *Agamemnon* much influenced Murdoch's early career as a philosopher, Georg Kreisel, a researcher of the philosophical roots of mathematical logic whose work was much praised by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Harry Weinberger and Marie-Louise Motesiczky[3], two

[1] See Miles Leeson, *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist* (London/New York: continuum, 2010).
[2] Murdoch, in fact, calls in an interview with Bryan Magee, philosophy and fiction two separate areas of thought. She argues that their difference is that while philosophy aims at clarifying, literature is many times a form of mystification. Bryan Magee, "Iris Murdoch's conversation with Bryan Magee," BBC. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBG10XnxQaI. Access: 19.07. 2019.
[3] On this see Anne Rowe, *The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (Lampeter: Edwin Meller Press, 2002); Rebecca Moden, "Breaching the Barrier of the Mask: Iris Murdoch, Simone Weil and the Construction of Visual Metaphor," *Iris Murdoch Review* 8 (2017) : 38-44.; idem, "'Liberation Through Art': Form and Transformation

Central European painters whose pictorial narratives had an essential effect on Murdoch's use of figures and colours in her later novels, as well as Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner, and H.G. Adler, the three authors whose work this dissertation wishes to focus on. Their lived experiences on the Holocaust as well as their views on survival, power and suffering were key sources for Murdoch's fiction. John Bayley notes in his memoirs on Murdoch (1997):

> In reality the people Iris went to see were not gods or demons but intellectuals, writers, artists, civil right servants, mostly Jewish, mainly refugees, who knew one another and formed a loose-knit circle, with its own rivalries, jealousies and power struggles. They loved Iris and accepted her as one of themselves, although she remained inevitably an outsider, living and teaching as she did in humdrum academic circles, away from their own focus of attention. […] It was Iris's own imagination which had in a sense created them, and continued to create and nurture them as the strange and unique characters of her wonderful novels.[4]

Bayley's statement is supported by Elaine Morley, who argues that Canetti and Murdoch's thinking was triggered by the Nazi political repression and the traumatic effects of deportations. According to Morley, "[b]oth Murdoch and Canetti personally identified with historically oppressed groups of people (Jews and Irish) and indeed wrote about such individuals, directly or indirectly, in their works which deal with the theme of power-play in the widest sense." [5] Conradi also takes mention of Murdoch's journals in which she refers to her Central European friends as her "Jewish teachers" [6], expressing by that her thirst "for fatherly guidance for the intellectual for the intellectual she was becoming." [7] Many of these people were those Jewish intellectuals, whose struggle was for survival and fitting into a foreign culture after having lost their homes, their nationalities, and their relatives, and whose lived experiences about the destruction of the war and the uprootedness coming with it constituted an integral part of Murdoch's fiction and philosophical writings.

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in Murdoch's Fiction," in Gary Browning ed. *Murdoch on Truth and Love* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), pp. 159-182.

[4] John Bayley, *Iris: A Memoir of Iris Murdoch* (London: Abacus, 1999), pp. 64-65.

[5] Elaine Morley, *Iris Murdoch and Elias Canetti: Intellectual Allies* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 10.

[6] Peter J. Conradi, „Franz Baermann Steiner's Influence on Iris Murdoch," in Jeremy Adler, Richard Fardon and Carol Tully eds., *From Prague Poet to Oxford Anthropologist: Franz Baermann Steiner Celebrated – Essays and Translations* (München: Iudicium, 2003), p. 123.

[7] Ibid.

Murdoch's sympathy for the Jewish exiles dates to her student years and her own experiences of destruction and loss during and after the war. From her early years, Murdoch paid a special attention to the Jewish thought and the ethical dilemmas fuelled by the devastating upheaval of Fascism and the Holocaust. In 1937, she attacked in an essay the Germans' attitude towards Jews, defending democracy and tolerance.[8] During the war, as a graduate student at the University of Oxford, she read classical Greek literature and philosophy before taking an assistant job at the Treasury. In her 1941 letter to her friend David Hicks, she mentions those "elderly German Jews with faun-eyes & Central European scholars with long hair & longer sentences"[9] who "flooded the streets and buses" [10] in London and Oxford. Conradi refers to Murdoch's notes written around 1940, in which she notes "that the internment of refugees who had been fighting fascism, some suicidal, drove her 'frantic'."[11] As a worker for the U.N.R.R.A., Murdoch "saw people deported to almost certain death and survivors who would never return to their homes."[12] In 1945, she wrote to David Hicks: "I find my pro-Semitism becoming more & more fanatical with the years."[13]

Murdoch lost two of her loves in the war and the Holocaust. One of them was the poet Frank Thompson, who, as a liaison officer between the British army and the Bulgarian partisans, was killed in a row of German executioners. The other, Franz Baermann Steiner, was haunted by the loss of his parents at the Treblinka death camp for many years after the war, and his grief over their demise could have been a contributing factor to his own early death from a heart attack. Conradi argues in his biography on Murdoch: "Like William Golding, and perhaps Muriel Spark, the Second World War made Iris think anew about human wickedness and irrationality. If there is a common effect on Murdoch's philosophy and novels, it is certainly Hitler."[14]

It is now widely accepted by the studies on Murdoch's works that many of her demonic Jewish refugee figures traumatized by the Holocaust were drawn from the real-life character of Elias Canetti and Franz Baermann Steiner. The present work aims to explore the comparative perspectives that come about through these characters along with the parallels and paradoxes that these perspectives stand for in view of Steiner's, Adler's and Canetti's ideas. A peculiar

[8] Priscilla Martin and Anne Rowe, *Iris Murdoch: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 1.
[9] "Iris Murdoch to David Hicks 21 March 1941," in Peter J. Conradi ed., *Iris Murdoch: A Writer at War - The Letters and Diaries of Iris Murdoch: 1939–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 187.
[10] Conradi 2003, 122. o.
[11] Ibid., 123. o.
[12] Martin and Rowe, p. 28.
[13] "Iris Murdoch to David Hicks, 8 March 1945," in Conradi 2009, p. 223. and Conradi 2003, p. 123.
[14] Peter J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 597.

feature of Murdoch's early works lies in her representation of the moral crisis of a post-war era where the social collapse triggered by the Nazi genocide and the traumatic lived experiences of the Holocaust led to the total rootlessness of the individual.

In my analysis, I will argue that Murdoch's wartime experiences in the refugee camps, her personal and intellectual encounters with Steiner, Canetti and Adler, and her experiences of loss and bereavement were essential to her vision as a novelist. In the novels under discussion here, there are several displaced persons, such as Peter Saward in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, Elsa Levkin in *The Italian Girl*, or Willy Kost in *The Nice and the Good*, are victims of a larger political system that stamped on them as survivors the trauma of the Holocaust. In contrast to them, there are several power figures in Murdoch's novels, magicians, whose chief core is to keep everything and everyone under their control, and whose ability to triumph above all for their survival. A critical aspect of Murdoch's fiction is that both the oppressors and the oppressed come from the same refugee circles. Murdoch's destroyer power figures are vulnerable because they have a shared knowledge about oppression and violence themselves. Indeed, power figures are, for Murdoch, victims to their urge to triumph, to get rid of the *sting*, i.e. the hurt they received from others by deracinating yet other people. The concept of the sting, which Murdoch borrows from Canetti, refers to the Ancient Greek word ατη, which simultaneously means blindness, a crime committed in blindness, and misfortune, blasphemy.[15] As Elaine Morley explains, the passing on pain for Murdoch and Canetti is "an immoral tendency which the individual must resist."[16] In the following chapters, I will examine in what ways did exile and displacement trigger the power struggles, suffering and violence in individual lives during and after the war, and what inspiration Murdoch found from her encounters with refugees and exiles, most notably with Steiner, Canetti and Adler.

Theoretical Framework

In my dissertation, I aim at identifying key concepts, such as displacement, trauma, modernity and memory culture, in order to locate them and explain their significance in Murdoch's novels. In order to examine these terms in Murdoch's fiction, I will explain how they should be understood in Steiner, Adler and Canetti. The reason for my choice is that the texts of these three

[15] Alajos Györkösy, István Kapitánffy and Imre Tegyey, eds. *Ógörög – Magyar Szótár* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1990), p. 161.
[16] Morley, p. 56.

authors are in a constant dialogue with each other on topics such as power and suffering, offering many intertextual references to one another. Yet, although the joint mention of these authors here may give the impression their ideas and lived experiences are inseparably linked with one another, their biographies and work, their diaries, notes and letters suggest notable differences, which this dissertation will highlight.

Born in Ruse, Bulgaria to a merchant family in 1905, Elias Canetti was the descendant of Sephardic Jews. His father and grandfather were merchants, while his mother came from the Arditti family, one of the oldest Sephardi families in Bulgaria. He mostly spent his childhood years in Ruse, Manchester and Wien, Zürich and Frankfurt, and had already been fluent in Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), his mother tongue, Bulgarian, English, and some French, when, after his father's death, his mother insisted on teaching him to German. From 1924 to 1929, he studied chemistry, yet his main interest turned out be philosophy and literature. Politically sympathizing with the left, he witnessed the July Revolt of 1927, a riot that originated from a political protest where nearly ninety people died and the Palace of Justice was set on fire, which event inspired *Crowds and Power.* After publishing two books in Wien, the play *Komödie der Eitelkeit* (1934) and his only novel *Die Blendung* (1935), he left the country in 1938, after the *Anschluß* with Germany, and moved with his wife, Veza, to London. During his time in England until the 1970s, Canetti became sexually involved with the painter Marie-Louise von Motesiczky and the novelists Friedl Benedikt and Iris Murdoch. In the meantime, he published numerous memoirs, notes and essays in German. In 1981, he received a Nobel Prize for Literature.

Franz Baermann Steiner, along with H.G. Adler, was part of the last generation of the German Jewish minority in Prague at the dusk of the Austro-Hungarian empire, who had notable contributions to German literature. He was born in 1909 in Karlín, a small town outside Prague. Even though neither of his parents practiced Judaism, and that his father was an atheist, Steiner received some religious education at school and on occasional visits, at synagogues. In 1928, he enrolled at the German University of Prague on Semitic languages and ethnology, and, as an external student at Charles University, Siberian ethnology and Turkish studies. While on a one-year study of Arabic at the Hebrew University in Palestine from 1930 to 1931, he met the philosopher Hugo Bergmann, a schoolfriend of Franz Kafka's and a friend and colleague of Martin Buber and Gershom Sholem. After obtaining his doctorate in linguistics in 1935 with a thesis on Arabic word formation, he went onto study Artic ethnology at the University of Wien. He then moved to London in 1936 and briefly studied at the London School of Economics. In 1937, he returned to Prague to devote himself to a field research on Roma communities in Carpathian

Ruthenia. In 1938, he went to Oxford and completed a research degree at Magdalen College on the subject of "A Comparative Study of the Forms of Slavery". During the war, he studied anthropology under Evans-Pritchard. From 1950 until his death, he taught anthropology at Oxford. His parents were exterminated during the Holocaust. After learning this from H.G. Adler, Steiner health condition rapidly deteriorated. In 1949, he suffered a coronary thrombosis. In 1952, he died of a heart attack just after Iris Murdoch accepted his marriage proposal to her.

A German language poet, novelist and a Holocaust survivor, H.G. Adler was born in 1910 in Prague. He graduated from Charles University in 1935, where he had studied musicology, literature and philosophy. He worked as a secretary, a teacher and a radio broadcaster at the Urania, a pedagogical institute. In 1941, he was sent to a Jewish labour camp, and worked in a liquidation group of the Jewish Community of Prague until his deportation to Theresienstadt with his wife and other relatives on February 8, 1942. His wife, Gertrud, a doctor and a chemist, led the medical central labour, while Adler held only small positions that included room duty, law firm assistant, or barrack construction, and gave occasional lectures. He arrived at Auschwitz with his wife and her mother on October 14, 1944. His wife could have survived but refused to leave her mother, and both women perished in the gas chambers. On October 28, 1944, Adler was deported to Niederoschel, and then, on February 16, 1945, to Langenstein, two subdivisions of Buchenwald. On April 9, he evacuated the camp, and on April 13, 1945, he was free. Following his liberation, he worked for two years in the Jewish Museum in Prague, devoting himself to building an archive of the times of persecution and the camp of Theresienstadt. During this time, Adler was also involved in an eventually unfinished project to collect documents saved from the camp in order to bring them to Palestine. For his mother tongue was German, he lost his Czechoslovakian citizenship. After the Soviet takeover of Prague, he fled to London in 1947, married his childhood friend from Prague, Bettina Gross, fathered a son, Jeremy Adler, completed his book *Theresienstadt: The Face of a Coerced Community (1960) ,* and wrote other twenty-six.

As can be seen from the biographical data, exile and displacement, as well as the trauma of the Holocaust were differently experienced by each of the three authors. Steiner and Canetti had flown to England before the war broke out and the concentration camps were established, while Adler emigrated as a survivor after the war. As a survivor, Adler looks at survival as a task, a mission of preserving the Holocaust's events in memory through his novels and thereby conveying its message to the future generations. For Steiner, the traumatized scholar and poet who never could overcome the loss of his parents, the repetitive nature of speech in literature was on a par with the feeling of guilt and the constant atonement for his own survival. Canetti

describes survival in *Crowds and Power* as the moment of power, a privilege for the tyrannical ruler who catches a glimpse of his own uniqueness, of his immortality by seeing himself standing where others lie dead on the ground. Survival in his argument is therefore incompatible with the sense of guilt. Only those who have the tyrant's mentality that altogether involves a lack of guilt, can triumph.

Canetti, Steiner and Adler were part of that rather heterogeneous group of German exiled intellectuals whose life was especially threatened from the rise of National Socialism, who had no choice but fleeing abroad during or after the Holocaust, and whose primary goal was to express their opposition to the Nazi regime and to stand for the "other" Germany. Klaus Mann sums up beautifully the function of German *Exilliteratur*, that is, on the one hand, to warn the world about the Third Reich by unveiling the true nature of it, thereby keeping contact with the resistance groups, and, on the other hand, to keep the German spirit, the German language, and the German tradition alive, a tradition, "for which there was no place any longer in the country of its origin,"[17] and which can only be maintained by a "creative contribution"[18]. The term *Exilliteratur* is for this reason as heterogeneous as the authors it stands for, since it covers an entire German culture that stood up against the Nazis in their writings, their lived experiences and their "critical conceptions of art and culture"[19] for which they were banished from their motherland.

Belonging to German-speaking minorities both in Europe and in their English exile, the experiences of displacement and linguistic and cultural barriers that Canetti, Steiner and Adler had, as well as their theories about them, certainly differed from those arriving from Germany. As Angelika Bammer argues, in Canetti's case "the borders between these different languages were not to be transgressed nor were the territories they staked out to be negotiated; change came only by decree,"[20] i.e. upon the insistence of his mother to fulfil his father's place by acquiring the German language, with which Canetti later on identified. Adler and Steiner came from the German Jewish community of Prague that faced dislocation of a kind, since "Czechs often saw Jews as rivals, many Germans did not consider them to be fully German, and the Jews were left to fend for themselves."[21]

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[17] Klaus Mann, *Der Wendepunkt* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 2006), p. 407.
[18] Ibid.
[19] "Exilliteratur 1933-1945." Available: https://www.inhaltsangabe.de/wissen/literaturepochen/exilliteratur. Access: December 10, 2020.
[20] Angelika Bammer, "Mother Tongues and Other Strangers: Writing 'Family' across Cultural Divides," in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 97.
[21] Peter Filkins, H.G. Adler: A Life in Many Worlds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 12.

The concept of *Exilliteratur* is particularly problematic in the case of Canetti, Steiner and Adler, since their scholarly work, essays and private writings to one another are inextricably intertwined with their literary ones. They transgress the boundaries between the scholarly and the literary to such extent that the border-crossings between Steiner's ethnological research and his poetry is almost unanimously called as a major contribution to "anthropological, or, rather, ethnological poetology"[22]. In their English exile, Canetti, Steiner and Adler continued to write chiefly in German as an inclination to de-nazify their language, although Steiner's academic work was conducted in English. Their meetings with one another were random, and took place in libraries and public places, during which they debated contemporary social and aesthetic issues, thereby influencing, commenting and referring to each other's works. The correspondence between Steiner and Canetti was exceptionally close, to the point that they "often noted down their ideas after a conversation and subsequently each accused the other of having appropriated his ideas."[23] This mixture of intellectual admiration, jealousy and the debates found in their work give a colourful picture on the way they impacted one another. Moreover, as part of the German-speaking community in England, they provided an essential contribution to the transforming cultural life of their host country, a *cultural transfer* that, as Michel Espagne claims,[24] involved a mutual understanding between the cultural majority and its exiles, whereby each part is capable of self-awareness through the recognition of the other. This attitude made it possible that some of the ideas and the vision of the three authors on identity, moral and religion, aspects of existence that they made central to their work, can be tracked down in several works by Murdoch, including her 1962 review of Canetti's *Crowds and Power* entitled as "Mass, Might, and Myth", or her fiction.

My choice of topic is justified by the fact that apart from Canetti, Steiner's and Adler's works remained for long unrecognized out of their own professional circles. Accordingly, Steiner's poems and Adler's novels have only recently gained some wider interest.

The first major milestone in the recognition Steiner's poetic work was the 1999 English edition of his selected articles, and the symposium entitled "From Prague Poet to Oxford Anthropologist: Franz Baermann Steiner Celebrated", organized by the German Institute of the

[22] Rüdiger Görner, "Shadows and Borderlands: A Motif in the Poetry of Franz Baermann Steiner," in *From Prague Poet to Oxford Anthropologist: Franz Baermann Steiner Celebrated*, p. 154.
[23] Franz Baermann Steiner, *Taboo, Truth, and Religion, Selected Writings 1* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), p. 77.
[24] Michel Espagne, "A nação de transferencia culturel," *Jangada* 9 (2018) : 136-147. Available: https://journals.openedition.org/rsl/219. Access: 26.07.2019., Jeremy Adler, "The Great Transformation: The Contribution of German-Jewish Exiles to British Culture," *The Fifth Martin Miller and Hannah Norbert-Miller Memorial Lecture* (London: Institute of Modern Languages Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2019), p. 15.

University of London in 2000, which His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, Dr. Pavel Seifter calls "[Steiner's] 'homecoming' in a wider sense" [25]. Both Steiner and Adler enjoyed some high reputation within the anthropological, sociological and philosophical schools of their time. As a student of E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Steiner made an excellent body of work on Orientalism, Western civilisation, and slavery and is widely regarded as a significant impact on Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (1966). [26] What is truly crucial in Steiner's thinking is that he determines Jewish identity as inherently Oriental in nature. He sees hermeneutics as a technique that allows for non-Western ethnicities to both theoretically and practically reinvent their world of roots. He describes Western civilisation as essentially predatory, aiming to defy each and every culture and society different from it.[27] This view is to a certain degree a forerunner of ethnographic and postcolonial theories, since they see the interpretations of Western societies on the East within a hierarchical structure of power that relies on the dichotomies of "the self" and "the other", "the majority" and "the minority", and, what is more crucial in today's standards, "the modern civilization" and "the refugee".

Although Adler was known and admired in literary circles, and had numerous correspondences with writers like Hermann Broch, or Erich Fried, his literary reputation was limited. His two novels, *Eine Reise* (1962) and *Panorama. Roman in 10 Bildern* (1968), that were published in his lifetime, were not widely known in Germany or in Europe. Owing to W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), with it reference to Adler's *Theresienstadt*, [28] a renaissance in the scholarship on Adler's work has arisen, with Peter Filkins's translations of Adler's novels, two biographies, and an extensive research on Adler's contribution to the Holocaust studies. This is all the more curious to note, since Adler's views on the Holocaust and the failure of politics and society were subjects of debate for philosophers like Hannah Arendt or Theodor W. Adorno. Arendt gives important references to Adler's Theresienstadt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), and it is a widely accepted fact that Adler's theory on the Holocaust and totalitarianism has its own resonances in Theodor Adorno's philosophy. The major aspect of the thinking of Adler and Adorno is that they discuss the Holocaust from aesthetical and metaphysical perspectives and analyze the human condition in the context of the post-war social and political climate. In their

[25] His Excellency, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, Dr Pavel Seifter, "Preface: Franz Baermann Steiner," in *From Prague Poet to Oxford Anthropologist: Franz Baermann Steiner Celebrated*, p. 8.
[26] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001).
[27] Richard Fardon and Jeremy Adler, "Orientpolitik, Value, and Civilisation: The Anthropological Thought of Franz Baermann Steiner," in Franz Baermann Steiner, *Orientpolitik, Value, and Civilisation, Selected Writings* 2 (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999).
[28] W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (London: Penguin, 2018), p. 327-342.

letter exchanges, there are some notable traces to their later theories, and the differences in their line of thought are also strikingly apparent. Some of these differences lie in their views on the role and the relevance of poetry after the war. For Adorno, no poetic sense can capture the suffering of the victims and the systematic genocide under Nazism. Dressing up the horrors of Nazism in the robe of artistic coherence is an act of counterfeiting, and all poetry that aims to evoke the events in Auschwitz inherently carries some elements of bourgeois decadence. [29] Adorno's view is invalidated by the fact as a camp prisoner, Adler himself began to write the first drafts of his Theresienstadt book, revoking the daily life of the camp in the widest possible detail, wrote poetry on it, and during his years in England after the war, he consciously felt obliged to revisit his own past experiences in his novels. Adler, the prisoner and the novelist found it as his duty to revive the tragedy of the Holocaust: writing for him was not merely the only source to maintain his human existence in inhuman circumstances but also a means of keeping the past in memory and, by that, making sense of it.

A comparative analysis of the writings of Canetti, Steiner, and Adler might unfold the differences and the overlaps in their theories on power and survival. Like Steiner, Canetti depicts the figure of the ruler in his *Crowds and Power* as a predator whose rising to power and keeping it, lies in his success to remain constantly invisible for the eye. *Crowds and Power* is a seminal book because it portrays effectively the character of the ruler, mass psychosis in different historical and social circumstances, and the obedience to power which are clearly exemplified by not only the 1927 mass demonstration in Vienna that served as an inspiration for the book, but also Nazism which it implicitly alludes to. There are some curious variations of the mass phenomenon here such as the crowd as a threat, the crowd as a symbol of collective consciousness, the crowd as a prerequisite to power whose will power rests upon, and the fear from the crowd, i.e. the fear from losing power that requires the paranoiac stabilization of it. In *Theresienstadt*, Adler draws up a remarkably similar formula to Canetti's when he describes the crowd during Nazism as a weapon in the hands of a historically and socially specified crowd used for the systematic destruction of other masses. It cannot be a coincidence that Canetti dedicated a copy of *Crowds and Power* to Adler with the following words: "To Günther, who experienced what I wrote about." [30]

[29] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2010), pp. 177-217.
[30] Conradi 2001a, p. 360.

Peter J. Conradi argues that the writings of Canetti, Steiner and Adler "bear out the truism that the 20th century, or world is the work of Hitler." [31] By that, he echoes Murdoch's words that "[the] loss of promised redemption and wise gentle stoical peace is something which speaks to our, Hitler and after, age when warfare and tyranny have achieved an intensity of cruelty which previous generations might have consigned to the barbaric past." [32] The ethical atmosphere that brings Murdoch's novels relatively close to the writings of Canetti, Steiner, and Adler is that the world these works represent captures a moment in a complex historical process of the 20th century that is highly tormented by the haunting presence of the war.

Although Murdoch does not describe the events of the Holocaust in her novels, she does talk about the moral implications of it, the rootlessness that comes as a post-war human existence, and the post-war world that has lost all its moral values, and that is dominated by people we select out to be our demons. In her novels, Murdoch portrays one form of survival as a paranoiac consolidation of power through a blindness to the traumatic past and the act of passing on trauma. The mass phenomenon in Murdoch's novels is all the more observable from her second novel on, and the crises of her fiction lies in her baroque-like order of dramatis personae and the permutations and variations of relationships with each party struggling to rule, that also recall Shakespeare's comedies. There is in almost each novel a power figure, a magician, who mixes up relationships, keeps everyone under his control and is usually a traumatized figure himself. His success relies on how effectively he can use his magic to pass on his trauma and to keep everyone as his voluntary slaves. Yet, there is another face of survival in Murdoch's prose, the survival that is never fully accomplished and that involves the constant carrying of guilt. For Murdoch, we are responsible to learn from the past and literature may serve as our guide to make sense of it and to move on.

Making sense of the past for Murdoch is important, as it enables us to get a true picture of the power struggles in modern societies, the real evil of our daily lives, and teaches us to live by a moral philosophy and theology "which can continue without God"[33] whereby we need to learn to be good for nothing (see my remarks on this in the fifth chapter). Murdoch's early novels written in the 1950s and 1960s, in their own way, are important precursors to the European *memory culture*. They do not perceive the past as historically stable and closed but as an ongoing process that still resonates in our contemporary society and human relationships. She claimed in a 1983 interview with Peter J. Conradi:

[31] Conradi 2014, p. 129.
[32] Murdoch 2003, p. 120.
[33] Murdoch 2003, p. 511.

> The human race is in such a state of torment. When the war ended one thought that, 'Oh well, things are going to get better, this torment will end'. But if you think of the torment of these people now in the Lebanon, of the awful situation of these people who are being bombed, and shot at the whole time, and a lot of them are just ordinary blokes, who aren't involved at all. It's so awful. Whereas when we were being bombed and shot at in the centre of London we were involved, we were fighting against another lot of people, and we were right, and they were wrong! And this was part of the thing, which made it comprehensible, and endurable. Whereas if you're just the kind of helpless victim in the middle of some crazy business which shouldn't be happening at all… like victims of terrorism in various parts of the world…[34]

As Frances White remarks, the Holocaust for Murdoch was the symbol for human evil, cruelty and suffering, a moment in history that opened a window to the social and political conflicts in the 20th century and the millennium that have all resulted in mayhem and genocide.[35] Her novels as it were envisage an aspect of memory culture that is also pivotal in Zygmunt Bauman's ideas on the Holocaust: namely, that one of the startling lessons of the Holocaust in our contemporary society "*and by what we learned of its perpetrators was not the likelihood that `this' could be done to us, but the idea that we could do it*" (italics by Bauman).[36]

In her book *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur: Eine Intervention* (2013), Aleida Assmann argues the post-war German generations have increasingly realized their own responsibilities concerning the Holocaust memory, felt obliged to reflect on the past, breaking the family and social silence, and making their own parents and grandparents accountable for their active or passive participation in the Holocaust. Assmann cites Elias Canetti ("What has happened is not over"[37]) and, with it, she calls for a self-critical memory through the recognition of the changing narratives of victims and perpetrators, that altogether might strengthen the tie between European cultures within a collective European memory and that might pave the way

[34] Peter J. Conradi, "An Unpublished 1983 Interview," *Iris Murdoch Review* 4 (2013): 13.
[35] Frances White, "'The World is Just a Transit Camp': Diaspora in the Fiction of Iris Murdoch," *Iris Murdoch Review* 2 (2010) : 14.
[36] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 152.
[37] Aleida Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur: Eine Intervention* (München: C.H. Beck, 2016), p. 211. My translation. Original text: "Vorbei ist nicht vorüber."

for "a new era in the context of cultural remembrance"[38]. Murdoch has a strikingly similar view on the Holocaust and the process of making sense of the past. For her, the Holocaust was the result of those social, political and cultural processes that in many ways can be found in the post-war modern age.

To get a more complex picture on the connection between the concepts of exile and modern society, it might be worth paying attention to the question of what "modernity" means. In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) Zygmunt Bauman defines modernity as a "civilizing process"[39] that originates from the legacy of the Enlightenment and by which science has become a dangerous instrument "of awesome power allowing its holder to improve on reality, to reshape it according to human plans and designs, and to assist it in its drive to self-perfection." [40] This tendency, that Bauman compares to a form of "gardening", became a dreadful reality during the Holocaust. Bauman writes:

> It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to arrive at the idea of extermination of a whole people without race imagery; that is, without a vision of endemic and fatal defect which is in principle incurable and, in addition, is capable of self-propagation unless checked. It is also difficult, and probably impossible, to arrive at such an idea without the entrenched practice of medicine (both of medicine proper, aimed at the individual human body, and of its numerous allegorical applications), with its model of health and normality, strategy of separation and technique of surgery. It is particularly difficult, and well-nigh impossible, to conceive of such an idea separately from the engineering approach to society, the belief in artificiality of social order, institution of expertise and the practice of scientific management of human setting and interaction. For these reasons, *the exterminatory version of anti-Semitism ought to be seen as a thoroughly modern phenomenon*; that is, something which could occur only in an advanced state of modernity.[41]

This idea of modernity is evidenced by H.G. Adler's *Theresienstadt* that explores the systematic operation strategy of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, the layout of the camp, its daily life, and the mechanism of destruction, with the help of modern history, sociology, and

[38] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Mit dieser Überzeugung beginnt eine neue Zeitrechnung im Rahmen der Ernnerungskultur."
[39] Bauman, pp. 12-17.
[40] Ibid., p. 70.
[41] Ibid., p. 73.

psychology. Adler's work is unique in the sense that it is the first to provide a detailed description of the effective use of modern technological instruments such as architecture, arms industry, and medical sciences for the sake of extermination. Murdoch argues in her speech at Kingston University:

> All these things (politics, reason, and civilisation) have been transformed in the twentieth century, notably in ways that pose dangers to our lives. Hitler and the evil of the Holocaust remains a potent warning of the threat of political fanaticism to security and ordinary virtue, while the erosion of belief in Christianity due to scepticism over its miraculous doctrines undermines a source of virtue and love. The ongoing development of technology, a tribute to mankind's rationality, also endangers its continued cultivation, in that collateral environmental degradation and the invention of lethal weapons threaten to destroy a rational form of life. Even the creativity of an individual artist is threatened by the development of standardised technology, such as the word processor.[42]

For both Murdoch and Bauman, the Holocaust, though a Jewish tragedy, cannot be narrowed down to a problem or historical event that only touched the Jewish people. They see the Holocaust as the tragedy of modern humanity "[that] *was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture* [italics by Bauman]."[43] Murdoch's novels can be described as essentially "post-Holocaust" in the sense that they approach the Holocaust as not a historically stable event involving just a single population but as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century humankind that was carried out within and by our modern civilisation whose experience "contains crucial information about the society of which we are members." [44] Murdoch sees modernity as a process that played a crucial role in the formation of the two greatest totalitarian regimes in the 20th century and that itself produced

[42] Iris Murdoch, "Dame Iris Murdoch's Address to Kingston University Humanities Graduates, the Barbican, London, 4 November, 1993," in Yozo Moroya and Paul Hullah, *Occasional Essays by Iris Murdoch* (Okayama, Japan: University Education Press, 1998), pp. 49-53., cited by Browning, pp. 3-4.
[43] Bauman, p. x.
[44] Ibid., p. xiv.

its own refugees through total terror and the social and moral collapse during and after the Second World War.[45]

What makes Murdoch's worldview unique among her Oxford colleagues and the British literary circles of the 1950s and early 1960s is that her philosophical work and her fiction heavily drew on her personal attachments to Canetti and Steiner. Canetti claimed in his notes written between 1992 and 1993 that the first reader of *Under the Net* and the "discoverer"[46] of Murdoch was Franz Baermann Steiner who exercised power over Murdoch intellectually"[47]. Murdoch notes on Canetti in her journal of 1953:

> C[anetti]. remains an enigma, a riddle. What shall I feel, where shall I be, after I'e next seen him? He said he foresaw the possible courses of love in me. I can foresee nothing in him. I notice already his influence upon me – about "power" for instance. (Should the virtuous have power? I discussed with two political theory pupils!) I shall have to retake my attitude to religion. (Am I excessively "open to influence"? Franz influenced me very much. Now C[anetti]'s influence operates in a rather different way.) [48]

Murdoch's love affairs with Steiner and Canetti are well-known from her biography. It is also generally accepted by the Murdochian scholars that many characters of her novels, including the traumatized scholar, the mysterious magician and the holy fool, were based on the German-speaking Jewish exiles in England. In his editorial preface to *Existentialists and Mystics* (1997), Conradi notes that, although Murdoch always denied that the characters in her fiction had anything to do with the characters in her real life, it is difficult not to find some reference, especially in the case of *The Flight from the Enchanter*, to her experiences in the refugee camps and to draw some comparison between the scholar Peter Saward, researching ancient Jewish history, and the anthropologist Franz Steiner, or the fictional "enchanter" Mischa Fox and Elias Canetti by whom Murdoch herself felt to have been enchanted. [49] Murdoch's refusal might come from a conscious authorial intention, her *ars poetica*, according to which "one goes where the honey

[45] Bran Nicol explains Murdoch's nausea against modernity with her tendency to conform the settings and the tone of her novels to the 19th century narratives and her way of handling all the social and technical changes of modern society with a relative distance and contempt. Nicol, p. 33.
[46] Elias Canetti, „Franz Steiner," in *From Prague Poet to Oxford Anthropologist: Franz Baermann Steiner Celebrated – Essays and Translations*, p. 254.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Iris Murdoch's Journal 2 January 1953, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/8.
[49] Peter Conradi, „Preface," in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. xx.

is," [50] i.e. neither philosophy, nor fiction should stuck in one particular theory and a specific character that is a speaking-tube for the author, but rather serve as a house opened to various, sometimes contradicting, ideas and characters that are independent from the writing hand that has created them. Therefore, I am inclined to see Murdoch's way of putting real people in imaginary circumstances as a form of experimental aesthetics on her part, whereby she employs a technique that is somewhat similar to Woolf's, i.e. being "truthful, but fantastic"[51], in other words, being faithful to the real without rejecting the imaginary. Such reading of Murdoch can avoid the pitfalls of mere referentiality, since it argues that the fictional characters of real people allow Murdoch to portray and to confront their ideas and their lived experiences by putting them into various imagined situations. In her reading the refugee crisis reveals a peculiar nature of modern human condition that is characterized by uprootedness, displacement and alienation, and for that the intellectual trio of Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner and H.G. Adler was a major inspiration.

Structural Organization of Chapters

In response to a 1957 criticism for her portrayals of social misfits and refugees in her novels, Iris Murdoch compared the exile to the modern man who "is not at home, in his society, in his world".[52] Relying on the theoretical framework, I wish to discuss the ways Murdoch's ideas on the post-war human condition were impacted by Steiner, Adler and Canetti.

The first chapter therefore will discuss the sociocultural constructions of exile, with an emphasis on the role of identity and the existential crisis that comes with them through the works and biography of H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti and Franz Baermann Steiner. The chapter will review the conceptualizations of Jewish identity and exile experience as well as the trauma of the Holocaust in the light of Elias Canetti's, Franz Steiner's and H.G. Adler's years of exile in England. The closing part of the chapter wishes to discuss how the theories outlined in these works can be put into a comparative analysis with the ethical problems that emerge in the early novels of Iris Murdoch, according to which the social collapse caused by the war and the traumatic lived experiences of the Holocaust result in the total rootlessness of the individual.

[50] Browning, p. 5.
[51] Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume Thee (1925-1930)* (San Diego, New York, London: Harvest, 1981), p. 127.
[52] Conradi 2001a, p. 239.

The second chapter will give a further analysis on the problem of rootlessness and identity crisis discussed in the first chapter along with the problem of coming to terms with the past through Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head*. The scene of both novels is London revived from the ruin of the war. Their first-person male narrators are suffering from rootlessness and identity crisis, aiming to find a post-war state of being and to restore their damaged male identity through a set of picturesque journeys and love affairs. Both heroes are carrying the aftereffects of the war and both novels might be seen as some form of parody of the traditional masculine ideals lost in the war and the Nazi genocide. The central issues of these novels: What new alternatives might literature point to after the tragedies of the Second World War and the Holocaust? How can the masculinity required by the war, be reinstated in a changing post-war social and political world? The chapter will discuss the cultural transfer between the English society and its German-Jewish exiles, explaining how the mutual contribution on each side helped to find new paths after the war. Discussing *Under the Net*, I will explain two essential elements that characterized Murdoch as a novelist at the start of her career: the desire to find new grounds for fiction and the commemoration of Steiner. Then, I will examine how the traditional male sexuality gets reassessed in *A Severed Head* in a series of events, whereby Martin Lynch-Gibbon, the novel's hero is forced to realise that he is no longer the master of his world, and that reality is independent from the control of his will. In both novels, I will argue that cultural transfer was a basis for Murdoch to give an accurate portray of a post-war Western world characterised by the permutations and variations of power.

The third chapter will discuss the problems of social and political displacement in Murdoch's second novel *The Flight from the Enchanter.* Her critics approach this novel as the one most concerned with the refugee crisis from Murdoch's oeuvre. Dedicated to Elias Canetti, this novel is among the first to identify the problems of marginality, power and suffering as fundamental elements of the modern world. Departing from the ideas of power and suffering, the chapter intends to discuss the collective phenomenon of Hitlerian power and the social trauma caused by the Holocaust that is characterized by Canetti in *Crowds and Power* with the metaphor of the sting and the transference of the sting, i.e. the liberation from suffering that is only possible by passing it on. This theory is constantly present in Murdoch's fiction. The chapter will discuss how Canetti's conceptualization of the transference of suffering and power takes shape in Murdoch's novel. This chapter will identify the two types of exile characters presented in the book: the overpowering survivors who can only get rid of the sting of their trauma by passing it onto others, and the suffering ones, similarly disregarded by their fellow exiles and the English society as they were during Hitler. In so doing, this chapter will compare Murdoch's critical

approach to exile and modernity, the lack of freedom and the moral blindness of the modern world with that of Canetti, Steiner and Adler, explaining how this problem culminated in the social and political tragedies of the 20th and the 21st centuries, including the Holocaust and the refugee crisis of the 2010s.

The fourth chapter will provide a critical analysis of the problem of trauma. memory as well as the post-war Jewish guilt and mourning for the dead in *The Italian Girl*. Although *The Italian Girl* has often been considered to be a lesser work compared to Murdoch's other novels, this chapter approaches it as a forerunner to her later novels, in which the problems of Jewish exile identity and lived experience as well as the recovery of identity and the elimination of trauma through coming to terms with the past appear more clearly here. In view of this, the chapter will discuss Murdoch's use of the Gothic style combined with the Freudian ideas on homecoming and the uncanny femininity, searching for answers to the question of how the symbolic contrast between the return and the past becomes apparent in the hero's imminent urge to return to the dominant mother and his childhood scene, and how the state of rootlessness and the desire for the home appear through the novel's Russian refugee twins. Then, this chapter will explore Elias Canetti's and Franz Steiner's ideas on survival, explaining how Murdoch's ideas approaches or move away from those of Steiner and Canetti. Accordingly, survival in the novel conveys the obsessive strengthening of power that requires the refusal of the traumatic past and the infinite transmission of guilt to generations based on the definition of the sting discussed in the previous chapter.

The fifth chapter will examine the ideas of reconciliation and forgiveness in Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good*. The themes of this novel are love, forgiveness, and peace, and its characters without exception suffer from the *karma* of the traumatic past, while being determined to give meaning to it through memory. The chapter will examine Murdoch's ideas on forgetting and forgiveness within the framework of memory culture, as well as her problematic engagement n Judaism and, by that, Adler's view on how the past should be made sense of, Steiner's thought on the direction of attention and the concept of suffering. Locating Murdoch's novel in the philosophical and political debates after the Eichmann trial, I will ask whether and how Murdoch's approach fits into the contemporary ideas and arguments about coming to terms with the past, and in what ways does her philosophy represent the *Zeitgeist*, out of which her own conceptualization was borne. In this chapter, I will argue that Murdoch's novels, however ground-breaking they are, represent the characteristics of their age, in that they can only envision progress and forgiveness on the axis of forgetting.

My aim is to draw an arch on how the questions of the post-war human condition, the idea of reconstruction, the reflection on the past and the meditations on power, displacement and suffering become the core of Murdoch's early prose. As she was a thinker and a novelist in the making at the time when she met Steiner, Canetti and Adler, I believe that a comparative analysis should be necessary to reveal the overlap as well as the differences between their theories. Through these authors, I argue that Murdoch's fiction could be linked to the German *Exilliteratur* these three authors were a part of, a literary form emerging from the ruins of the war in the British and American banishment that approaches the concept of displacement, rootlessness, modernity, suffering and power in the context of the Central European lived experience during and after the war.

Chapter One

Exile in England: Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner, and H.G. Adler in London

My homelessness is the world.
Franz Baermann Steiner[53]

Being a German, Being a Jew: Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner, H.G. Adler and the German *Exilliteratur*

The present chapter will discuss the English exile of Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner, and H.G. Adler. Considering that displacement and homelessness, as they were felt by these authors, is equivalent with the experiences of those German-speaking refugees with whom Murdoch had a close contact while she was working in Europe during the war, this chapter aims at explaining how these authors applied in their work what they had lived through. Since it is known that many fictional characters in Murdoch's early novels to be discussed in this dissertation were based on the characters of Canetti, Steiner and Adler, I find it necessary to outline the foundations of their exile that would be central to Murdoch's fiction.

Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner, and H.G. Adler belonged to a group of German-speaking Jewish refugees who emigrated to London from their native countries of Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia between 1933 and 1948. The group of these people fell into two categories: either they had to flee from the threats of Nazism and the possible extermination that it forecasted, leaving their families, friends, colleagues, and culture behind, or they arrived after the liberation of Europe, from various refugee camps, many times in terrible health condition, carrying the nightmarish memories of what they had experienced in Auschwitz, Theresienstadt, Belsen, Treblinka, and many other places of annihilation.[54] This group of intellectuals includes the writers Elias Canetti and Stefan Zweig, the Romanian-born literary journalist Miron Grindea, the painter Oskar Kokoschka, or the cultural anthropologist Franz Baermann

[53] Franz Baermann Steiner, *Feststellungen und Versuche: Aufzeichnungen 1943-1952* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), p. 61. My translation. Original Text: "Meine Heimatlosigkeit ist die Welt."
[54] Marcel Atze, "'Ortlose Botschaft', Der Freundeskreis H.G.Adler, Elias Canetti und Franz Baermann Steiner im englischen Exil," *Marbacher Magazin 84* (1998).

Steiner.[55] Some of these German-speaking refugees were able to get refuge and, occasionally, a passport through the U.N.R.R.A. while others were supported by their family members having already settled abroad.

To say that the English society of the time was less than enthusiastic to welcome Jewish refugees from Central Europe would be a subtle understatement. As Jerry White argues, there was a notable antagonism toward foreigners who pursued to find work during and after the Great Depression. The rise of anti-Semitism in the working-class areas where most emigrants were residing was damaging for the Jewish population of London who at that time outnumbered black or Asian people, and thus, being "a vice of intellectuals as well as the urban poor," [56] it "ran the gamut from mild antipathy to single-minded loathing."[57] In this transformed socio-political situation, the meaning of the term "homeland" is to be seen in a different light. Jeremy Adler highlights that "homeland" or the "fatherland" are not only spiritual concepts any more than social realities.[58] Homelessness indicates the complex and tragic consequences of exile. In this case, the emigrant feels trapped between two worlds: he is banished by the one, and from that point on a return is impossible for him; he always feels disconnected from the language and culture of the other world, and his existence is that of the uprooted and isolated outsider. Thus, the exiles from National Socialism had to expect a large number of problems when they arrived abroad. They had to repress all hopes for the dissolution of the Nazi Reich and break all ties to Germany. At the same time, their existence was hampered by the fact that few people could manage a lasting and secure financial situation with their literary and scientific activities. Yet, many refugees had to face with the general xenophobia and anti-Semitism of the foreign land. As Jeremy Adler argues:

> The exile lives in two worlds. He suffers as a human being on the border, he is fundamentally insecure and experiences the pressure of two different cultures. The traveller can move freely. The outsider suffers from a culture. The exile, however, is without an actual homeland between two cultures. He lives in an ongoing existential crisis. He cannot feel at home anywhere. He has a split identity. Not only a people went into exile, but a whole culture. [...] Almost the entire spiritual world,

[55] Jeremy Adler, *Das bittere Brot: H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti und Franz Baermann Steiner im Londoner Exil* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), pp. 7-8.
[56] Jerry White, *London in the 20th Century* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 126.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Adler 2015, p. 10. My own translation. Original text: "'Heimat' und 'Vaterland' bedeuten nicht nur geistliche Begriffe, sondern soziale Wirklichkeiten."

which had unfolded from the Enlightenment to the Weimar Republic in Germany, went to exile.[59]

In his book, Adler raises the issue of Jewish exile to an aesthetic level that redefines the ideas of lived experience and identity. Adler's study examines exile in a broader cultural-historical aspect, from the origins of Judaism through Shakespeare, Nietzsche and Joyce to the existential analysis of displacement, and then gives a detailed explanation about the ways identity and the rootlessness and traumatic lived experience as inherent components of exile can be described in the case of Central European Jewry fleeing England during the war. In Adler's view, the concept of exile had a similar meaning in history to the concepts of rootlessness, suffering, a sense of homelessness and the loss of identity. Accordingly, only speech and memory served as instruments for breaking the barriers, acting against terror, making sense of the traumatic past, and to find responses to the transforming political and social situation – such issues, many of which can be found in the work of Canetti, Steiner, and Adler.

The friendship between Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner and H.G. Adler was a manifold one. Having been friends from their youth, Steiner and Adler represented the last generation of the German literary circle in Prague, the so-called Prague School of German Jewish intellectuals, whose literary legacy was strongly tied to the works of Franz Kafka and Max Brod. Writing in German, the aim of this group was to keep a constant identification with German language and culture, "which had been the vehicle of social mobility under Austrian hegemony, a 'Czechoslovakifying' majority in Prague, and the cause of Zionism."[60] Steiner and Adler were offsprings to German-speaking Jewish families and residing in England after the war, they remained the only exiled authors from Prague.[61] The friendship between Adler and Canetti arose from May 21, 1937, when Canetti received and accepted an invitation from Adler to give a reading on his 1935 novel *Die Blendung* (translated to English in 1946 as *Auto-da-Fé*) and his 1932 play *Die Hochzeit* (*The Wedding*) at the Urania, after which Canetti, in Adler's company, wandered about Prague for a week, the two of them having exciting conversations

[59]Ibid., p. 7. My translation. Original text: Der Exulant lebt in zwei Welten. Er leidet als Mensch an der grenze, er ist grundsätzlich unsicher und erfährt den Druck zweier verschiedener Kulturen. Der Reisendekann sich frei bewegen. Der Außenseiter leidet jeweils an einer Kultur. Der Exulant steht aber ohne eigentliche Heimat zwischen zwei Kulturen. Er lebt in einer andauernden existentiellen Krise.Er kann sich nirgendwo zu Hause fühlen.Er hait eine gespaltene Identität. Nicht nur ein Volk ging ins Exil, sondern eine ganze Kultur. […] Fast die ganze geistige Welt, die sich von der Aufklärung bis zur Weimarer Republik in Deutschland entfaltet hatte, wanderte aus.

[60] Richard Fardon, "Franz Baermann Steiner as Contemporary Anthropologist. An Anachronistic Suggestion," in Jeremy Adler and Gesa Dane eds., *Literatur und Anthropologie: H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti und Franz Baermann Steiner im London* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014), p. 202.

[61] Gesa Dane, „Einleitung," in Adler and Dane, p. 9.

with one another. One year later, they spent another week at the Salzburg Festival. [62] Upon Adler's insistence, Steiner got to know Canetti in Wien in 1937, and their friendship blossomed during their English exile. Following his survival in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, Adler joined Canetti and Steiner in England in 1948. Their different lived experiences during the war translated superbly itself to their friendly correspondences that eventually culminated in their works.

Canetti, Steiner, and Adler had many qualities in common both as intellectuals and members of the group of German-speaking Jewish exiles. Their writings, which included poetry, journals, short-stories, novels, monographs, and essays, was colourful and vital.[63] Their friendship marked the individual and collective fate of Jewish people. The fact that all the three of them came from a multilingual background and yet sought to write in German, added new layers to their roles as exiled authors. The mother tongue of Steiner and Adler was German, they learnt Czech and English, while coming from a Bulgarian Sephardic Jewish family, Canetti spoke Ladino as his native language, Bulgarian, German from the age of seven, as well as English and some French. Writing in German in exile was a conscious decision on their part that had both political and aesthetic implications. During the Second World War and especially after the fall of Hitler's Germany, language served as the only cohesive power for many Germans broken by trauma and guilt. For the German authors in exile, such as Erich Maria Remarque, Thomas Mann, or Anna Seghers, German language was an instrument of resistance, "the opportunity to get to know very many layers of fascist Germany through the fate of a single man,"[64] and to provide alternatives for those Germans who fought against Hitler.[65] Moreover, German language was tightly connected to survival, since it was possessed by those whose voice had not been silenced in the gas chambers, who felt the urge to speak for the dead, and who saw their physical survival as a task to safeguard "the survival of a language not disfigured by the National Socialists."[66]

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[62] Filkins 2019, p. 56.

[63] See Adler 2015, p. 30.

[64] Anna Seghers, "Brief an Iwan I. Anissimow vom 23. 9. 1938," in Sigrid Bock ed., *Über Kunstwerk und Wirklichkeit* Vol. 2. (Berlin: Akademia, 1970) p. 16. cited in Christiane Zehl Romero, *Anna Seghers* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1993), p. 64. My translation. Original Text: „Eine Fabel also, die Gelegenheit gibt, durch die Schicksale eines einzelnen Mannes sehr viele Schichten des faschistischen Deutschlands kennenzulernen. Dieses Buch darf und wird allzu lang dauern."

[65] Obviously, all the authors mentioned had different perspectives on what these alternatives should be. Seghers had strong sympathies with Socialism, to which she gave voice in *The Seventh Cross* (*Das Siebtre Kreuz*, 1942). In his 1938 lecture entitled as "The Coming Victory of Democracy", Mann highlighted the spiritual and moral need reawakening democracy, while Remarque emphasized his pacifism in his post-war novel the *Spark of Life* (1952), a book that was among the first to give an authentic description of a concentration camp after the war.

[66] Dane, p. 12. Original Text: "Ihre Sprache haben die von den Deutschen Verfolgten ins Exil mitnehmen können, ihr physisches Überleben sichert das Überleben einer nicht durch die Nationalsozialisten verunstalteten Sprache."

Steiner's scholarly work was written in English, yet he wrote his "private, religiously based culture critical writings"[67] in German. While he was striving to find some links to the contemporary Czech poetic circles, Adler used German language to provide report on his own experiences as a survivor. Canetti wrote in his wartime journals: "The language of my mind will remain German because I am a Jew. What remains of the devastated land, I want to preserve as a Jew in me. Their fate, too, is mine; but I bring along a common human inheritance. I want to give back their language that I owe them. I want to help them be thanked for anything."[68] In a similar manner, Steiner identifies in his letter to Georg Rapp the value of art as "this coming-to-terms with the weight of suffering"[69] of Jewish people. He writes:

> I have never moaned in your presence or complained about what the Germans are doing with my people. I have not, as is usually the case, condemned even the most brutal events, and never twisted what oppresses us into a realm in which political machines could be "accused" or "justified". Don't think that I have discovered some special comfort which enables me to keep silent when others complain. It is much rather the case that, for me, every horror which people perpetrate (against whomsoever) defines the nature of man. That man am I.I refused to recognise that every, but really every abomination which so-called Germans, so-called English, Romanians, Poles perpetrate is simply the precise extension of obscure thoughts and feelings which I have had at one time or another, then everything that I believe about man, about creation, about sin, would become meaningless […] One needs real closeness to the mother-tongue in order to write poetry. But if anyone thinks that one needs this "thinking" about weightier and unpleasant things any less, that is a great error. I don't expect you to write war and disaster poems. On the contrary. If you follow me, you understand that one must not keep suffering, and especially collective suffering in a little room.[70]

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[67] Jeremy Adler and Richard Fardon, "Eine Einführung in Leben und Denken F. B. Steiners," in Franz Baermann Steiner, *Zivilisation und Gefahr. Wissenschaftliche Schriften* (Wallstein: Göttingen, 2008), p. 501. Original Text: " […] privat religiös begründete kulturkritische Schriften auf deutsch verfaßte."

[68] Elias Canetti, *Die Provinz des Menschen: Aufzeichnungen 1942-1972* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2015), pp. 62-63. Original Text: "Die Sprache meines Geistes wird die deutsche bleiben, und zwar weil ich Jude bin. Was von dem auf jede Weise verheerten Land übrig bleibt, will ich als Jude in mir behüten. Auch ihr Schicksal ist meines; aber ich bringe noch ein allgemein menschliches Erbteil mit. Ich will ihrer Sprache zurückgeben, was ich ihr schulde. Ich will dazu beitragen, daß man ihnen für irgendetwas Dank hat."

[69] Franz Baermann Steiner, "Letter to Georg Rapp," in *Selected Writings* 2, p. 117.

[70] Ibid., pp. 118-120.

Thus, for Canetti, Steiner, and Adler, writing was a tool to give meaning to their experiences as exile, to make sense of their past, to convey the anguish of their people, and to purify German language from the dirt of National Socialism. This effort was not easily comprehensible and was certainly not shared by many other Jewish survivors. In 1966, Gershom Scholem wrote about the "melancholy enterprise"[71] of speaking about the Germans and the Jews, explaining that "so great, even now, is the burden of emotions, that a dispassionate consideration or analysis of the matter seems almost impossible; we have all been moulded too strongly by the experience of our generation to permit any such expectations of detachment."[72] Like many German-Jewish exiles, Scholem looked upon the German language as his mother tongue that "defined and gave expression to the landscape of our youth."[73] A cruel consequence of Nazism was that sort of rootlessness, whereby an abyss came to existence between the Jews and the Germans, and whereby many German Jewish survivors consciously distanced themselves from their language. To "guarantee that official contacts between the two peoples will not be poisoned by counterfeit formulas and demands,"[74] Scholem sees the necessity of bridges "built by good-will and conscious thought"[75] that are "firmly anchored on both sides"[76] and by that one "generate new hope in the resumption of communication between Germans and Jews."[77] This idea forms the background of the thinking of Adler, Steiner, and Canetti. As Jeremy Adler puts it:

> Each of them was, in his way, a victim. Each was, in his way, a witness. Each knew how to master his humiliating situation. Because one experienced the great political movements first-handedly and knew how to put these into words. Canetti called this "packing the century at the throat". Thus, through the reference to the time, a new form of committed poetry emerged, sustained by three authors who, as Adler expressed it, functioned between literature and politics: as a writer, one was simultaneously "exposed" and "dangerous". The author's unwarranted position characterized the self-understanding of these three, who knew how to ward off the dangers of the modern world, despite the subjugation they experienced. One looked through the horrors of the time. One resisted the attacks that the century brought with itself.

[71] Gershom Scholem, "Jews and Germans," *Commentary* 42/6 (November 1966) : 31.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., p. 38.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

> One was handed over. One suffered. One lost his identity and his home, and yet, one used language to eradicate borders, to counteract terror, and to restore the world in a new form. In the face of the modern turmoil, one employed above all the old-fashioned idea of poetry and thus reduced his own personality.[78]

Adler's description beautifully reveals the major characteristics of what it means to write in one's own language, the language of the exile, the displaced, the oppressed. Richard Fardon argues that from this point of view, some parallels could be found between Steiner and Michel Foucault in that both of them "share a coevality that is not narrowly chronological but derives from a relation between subject positions and historical circumstances: specifically the experience of, albeit different, markedly ambivalent, modern identities subject to power/danger."[79] What makes Steiner, Adler, and Canetti unofficial precursors to Foucault is their notion of power, the notion of being "exposed" as "dangerous", the notion of "knowledge as control"[80]. All the three of them make this idea pivotal in their work. As Fardon notes, writing on taboo, Steiner defines power and danger as "overlapping if no originally identical cosmological concepts"[81] where being exposed as a Jew involves the risk of "becom[ing] subjects of dangerous ambivalence,"[82] since "taboos would act to focalize danger."[83]

In *Crowds and Power*, Canetti has a very similar approach when he describes the ruler as a "lurking creature" that "disappears entirely, covering itself with secrecy as with a second skin,"[84] watching his prey in a shadowy distance. For Canetti, "power is impenetrable,"[85] and, as such, is the privilege of those who "[see] through other men, but does not allow them to see through him,"[86] i.e. possess the knowledge for controlling other people without allowing

[78] Adler 2015, p. 30. Original text: "Jeder war in seiner Weise ein Opfer. Jeder war in seiner Weise ein Zeuge. Jeder verstand es, seine demütigende Lage zu meistern. Denn man erfuhr die großen politischen Bewegungen am eigenen Leib und verstand es, diese in Worte zu fassen. Canetti nannte 'das Jahrhundert an der Gurgel packen'. So entstand durch den Zeitbezug eine neue Form engagierte Dichtung, von drei Autoren gepflegt, die – so begriff es Adler – zwischen Literatur und Politik agierten: Man sei – so meinte dieser weiter – als Schriftsteller zugleich 'ausgesetzt' und 'gefährlich'. Die prekäre Lage des Autors war typisch für das Selbstverständnis dieser drei, die es verstanden, trotz der Unterjochung, die sie erfuhren, die Gefahren der modernen Welt zu bannen. Man durchschaute die Grauen der Zeit. Man wehrte sich gegen die Attacken, welche das Jahrhundert mit sich brachte. Man war ausgeliefert. Man litt. Man verlor Identität und Heimat – und doch, man bediente sich der Sprache, um Grenzen auszuloten, Schrecken entgegenzuwirken und die Welt in neuer Form wiederherzustellen. Gegen die modernen Wirren setzte man vor allem die althergebrachte Idee der Dichtung ein und stellte somit auch die eigene Persönlichkeit wieder her."
[79] Fardon 2014, p. 201.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Canetti 1981, p. 290.
[85] Ibid., p. 292.
[86] Ibid.

anyone to find out about "his opinions or intentions."[87] A pre-Foucauldian illustration of the panopticon-like layout of the concentration camp of Terezín appears in Adler's *Theresienstadt*.[88] Adler's book is rich in detailing the many ways the ruling power exerted control on the Jewish prisoners in the behind the closed gates of the concentration camp. For Adler, Theresienstadt exemplified a form of "unprecedented socioeconomic unit"[89] in the sense that Jews were legally forbidden to maintain any business relation with the outside world. Adler writes:

> [P]artnership was replaced by servitude, or barely disguised slavery – but in the "Protectorate" (among other places), this situation had been prepared before the creation of the "ghetto." The German rulers selected Jewish representatives from the Jews' autonomous bodies as their only permissible partners. Thus the SS coerced the Jews, even before their imprisonment, into an antecedent form of what would come, controlling them through functionaries who were authorized as partners but represented nothing more than the long arm of SS rule; they were robbed of any power of their own but empowered by those rulers. This displacement of power onto a partner nullified any genuine partnership, for helplessness and lack of rights can coexist with monstrous power only in a relationship of submission.[90]

The form of institutionalized power that Adler explains here has resonances with Kafka's *The Trial* (1925), where Josef K. becomes the target of the inhuman bureaucracy that is never wrong because "it cannot be wrong,"[91] for the crime of *being* and *being seen as different*, therefore dangerous for a society that does not tolerate difference.[92] As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari note, Kafka's work is political in that it unfolds the complex relationship between language and power. The writer is an integral part of a collectivity. He expresses his views from the position of his community. His language is de-territorialized in the sense that it destabilizes "the

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[87] Ibid.
[88] H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: The Face of a Coerced Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). See also Adler's sketch on the camp in Sebald, pp. 328-329.
[89] Ibid., p. 375.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Richard Cohen, "Kafka's 'Trial' is Ours," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1989. Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/magazine/1989/01/15/kafkas-trial-is-ours/be350222-e885-453f-a1f7-d33c825e9d4c/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0d987a7d0c85. Access: April 24, 2019.
[92] In fact, when adapting Kafka's novel to the screen in 1962, Orson Welles chose to shoot a crowd of half-naked men as well as the last sequences where Josef's executioners leave him in a quarry with an exploding dynamite with heavy smoke rising in the air as direct references to the Cold War and the Holocaust. See Cristina Vatulescu, "The Medium on Trial: Orson Welles Takes on Kafka and Cinema," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 41.1 (2013) : 52-66.

traditional concepts of territory."[93] It is a pivotal observation, considering that Kafka was himself a Jew within the German-speaking community of Prague, being a part and an outcast of his minority community. The de-territorialization of language makes for him possible to portray and to deconstruct the bureaucratic power of his age, something that the German-speaking writers in exile, like Canetti, Steiner, and Adler, did during and after Hitler.

Speaking and writing in German was therefore not only an attempt to keep a minority community together; it also had strong political implications. Although London pioneered in letting its German immigrants publish in their own language, in "the language of the enemy"[94] as it was phrased by the British government, most of these were based upon a significant amount of self-help since the "British involvement in the production of German books in this country was limited to the craftsmanship of the typesetter."[95] As Donal McLaughlin recalls, this "Gemeinschaftsarbeit" as well as Britain's refusal to be involved in any form in the publication of German texts, were clearly palpable when Herbert Read applauded the work of the *P.E.N. Club* upon its visit to the *Freie Deutscher Kulturbund*, expressing his sorry "that the influence of the English writers is not sufficient to enable the German writers living in England to fully improve their creativity and material help."[96] Publications were restricted to German language newspapers, periodicals and underground publishers with cheap material.

Several exile groups emerged during and after the war, including the *Freie Deutsche Kulturbund* in 1938, the *Young Austria in Great Britain* in 1939, the *P.E.N.-Centre of German Writers Abroad* in 1942, or the *Club '43* in 1973.[97] According to Jeremy Adler, the gatherings within these groups were not primarily based on the Nazi power and its after-effects, but on the writers' preference to stay in England, maintain their German identity in the foreign land without ever returning to Germany.[98] The need for such groups was justified by the fact that "in the post war period, the life of German-speaking exiles was, probably, less culturally cohesive than before, although for a long time they were neither absorbed by the German world on the continent, nor by the English literary establishment, nor, indeed, by English *Germanistik*, which,

[93] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature: The Components of Expression," *New Literary History* 16.3 (1985) : *n591*.
[94] Donal McLaughlin, "'Whilst this London is being shaken by German Bombs': Writing in German in British Exile [1939-1945]," in Siglinde Bolbecher et al., *Literatur and Kultur des Exils in Großbritannien* (Vienna: Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft, 1995), p. 103.
[95] Ibid., p. 111.
[96] Ibid., p. 105. My translation. Original text: "[…] daß der Einfluss der englischen Schriftsteller nicht hinreichend sei, den in England lebenden deutschen Schriftstellern die volle Entfaltung ihrer Schaffenskraft und materielle Hilfe zu ermöglichen."
[97] Jeremy Adler, "Erich Fried, F.B. Steiner and an Unknown Group of Exile Poets in London," in Bolbecher, p. 163.
[98] Ibid.

with some exceptions, has been somewhat slow to recognize its obligations to the local exponents of the literature it professes to profess."[99]

Under the editorial leaderships of Franz Baermann Steiner and Erich E, and with the participation of Adler, Hans Werner Cohn, Hans Eichner, or Georg Rapp, a group of exile poets was established around 1947. This group "had no names and no programme, was loosely organized, and despite obvious connections such as common language and common Jewish background, is described as very heterogeneous."[100] Despite being different and sporadic, this group was culturally, historically and politically essential in the life of the refugees in England, since it not only aimed to make the literary works of the participants known for German speakers, but it also made room for them to express their post-war political views and their need to aesthetically restore the German language after its degradation by the Nazis. Although efforts were made to publish their works for a wider, possibly German, audience, their poems failed to attract the attention of any publishing houses. Therefore, although twelve of these works survived in manuscripts, a large part got lost. What is especially curious about these surviving poems is that while they tend to focus on the refugee crisis and the problems of survival in the foreign land, the events of the past largely appear in a repressive way. In this respect, while Steiner, Fried and Adler all aim at deconstructing the nature of power that resulted in homelessness and death, only Adler gives direct reference to what meanings survival and death might take in their most extreme forms.

The tragic irony is that despite the fact that both Steiner and Adler were highly recognized by their peers, Adler being called as a precursor of Holocaust literature and scholarship, the general atmosphere of the 1950s with regards to the Holocaust, did not allow to make their works public. Thus, Canetti's fame for many decades overshadowed the literary significance of his friends. Consequently, Adler's novel-trilogy only came out in German periodically between 1962 and 1989, their English translation having first been published after 2009. As a poet, Steiner's poetic achievements had a wider acknowledgement after the 2000 symposium, even though some of his poems had already been intermittently translated to the English and Czech languages from the 1940s.

[99] Bolbecher, pp. 163-164.

[100] Franz Hocheneder, *H. G. Adler (1910–1988) Privatgelehrter und freier Schriftsteller Eine Monographie* (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), p. 195. My translation. Original Text: "Diese Gruppe hatte keinen Namen und kein Programm, sie war lose organisiert und wird trotz offensichtlicher Verbindungen wie der gemeinsamen Sprache und der gemeinsamen jüdischen Herkunft als sehr heterogen beschrieben."

Franz Baermann Steiner's "Homelessness"

"My homelessness is the world,"[101] wrote Franz Baermann Steiner in his journals in August, 1946. What Jeremy Adler defines as "split identity" has a peculiar dominance in this form of uprootedness. [102] Having been banished from their fatherland that was governed by the Nazis who took Jews as their primary targets and enemies to the German Aryans, the Kafkaesque dark vision of the world became a devastating reality for many Jews. Coupled with it comes the notion of having been tossed into a foreign culture *as a German and a Jew* at the same time, the idea of being twice displaced by two societies operated by different forms of institutionalized power had a frustrating and alienating effect on those in exile. As Peter J. Conradi notes:

> [T]here was much in Britain that was inhospitable to émigrés. Franz made more friends in Spain in ten weeks than in eighteen years in England. Despite having a Czech D.Phil., he had to complete a second, *British* doctorate, in July 1950. He was nonplussed by assimilated Anglo-Jews, disliked British weather and imperialism, and saw before others how the will to *power over*, and the will to *knowledge of*, other societies were inseparable in old-fashioned anthropology.[103]

On 5 November 1952, Steiner noted upon reading Kate O'Brien's novel *Farewell to Spain* (1937):

> If I compare her with my love-hate relationship to England, the difference lies there when I say: I would not hesitate to kill myself if it happened in defence of the Spanish people. For the protection of the English state and its institutions, I would make all sacrifice and would even let myself be killed. The difference lies thus in the folk-state contrast and the "even". Kate O'Brien writes like Irin [sic!] but the Introduction and the Epilogue are by far the most insufferable English intelligentsia, each mixture of moral insanity and secularized puritanism. […] This is the suicidal English renunciation of ideals. This is the root of sterility. Even when one considers this renunciation as a sacrifice, even when one himself cannot suggest any alternative,

[101] Steiner 2009, p. 61.
[102] Yet, in my conversation with him, Adler explained this "split" nature of identity as a Proustian sense of the self that is never fixed or steady. A London conversation with him, 15.10.2019.
[103] Conradi 2001a, p. 324.

> it remains a lethargy. A lethargy interrupted by the aesthetic rebellion of small, nervous sounds of birds.[104]

It is not the first case that Steiner uses English literature to articulate his views as a poet, an anthropologist and an exile. In fact, his aphorisms are full of allusions to Milton, Shakespeare, Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Conrad, Woolf, or Ivy Compton-Burnett. His observations on the English cultural life and the metaphysical and existential limitations and possibilities of poetry and modernist aesthetics are rich and manifold. These aphorisms reveal an author trying hard to make sense of his exile, his art and his education, and who feels incapable of assimilating to the foreign culture as he sees it as a strain that requires a partial or complete giving away of one's own identity, yet his material existence depends upon how successful his assimilation might be.

As Jeremy Adler explained it to me, this complexity of exile comes from the fact that although respected by his academic circles and having an influence of such figures as Mary Douglas, Steiner's inner sense of self remained forever on the margin, forever a stranger and an outsider.[105] In his poetry and his journal, Steiner uses many allusions to the English literature and culture. Yet, he did not regard England as home, and the English life could not eliminate his despairing sense of homelessness. As Jeremy Adler writes:

> Once it was love, once hatred, that bound Franz to England, very contradictory feelings that the word love-hate cannot describe the truth. He certainly did not recognize it as his homeland […], but England and the English were very much insulted by him and earned his ridicule: even if he almost never or half admitted. Franz deeply penetrated to the English way of life, he was and remained a stranger,

[104] Franz Steiner's diary 5 November 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS6/1/54. My translation. Original text: "Wenn ich sie mit meiner Hassliebe zu England vergleiche, so besteht der Unterschied darin, dass ich sage: Ich würde mich ohne Zögern töten lassen wenn dies bei der Verteidigung des spanischen Volkes geschähe. Für den Schutz des englischen Staates und seiner Einrichtungen würde ich alle Opfer bringen und mich sogar töten lassen. Der Unterschied steckt also im Volk-Staat Gegensatz und im 'sogar'. Kate O'Brien schreibt als Irin [sic!], aber Einleitung und Nachwort sind durchaus unleidlichste englische Intelligentsia, jenes Gemisch aus moral insanity und säkulisierten Puritanismus. Auch ihre Sympathie gehört einer kommunalen Gesellschaft, die für sie unerträglich ist, grau, fade, […] ideentötend, aber 'besser', 'moralischer' als alles andere. Dies ist der selbstmörderische englische Verzicht auf Ideale. Dies ist die Wurzel der Sterilität. Auch wenn man diesen Verzicht für ein edles Opfer hält, auch wenn man selbst keine Alternative vorschlagen kann, bleibt's Lethargie. Eine Lethargie unterbrochen von der ästhetischen Rebellion kleiner nervöser Vogelstimmen."

[105] A conversation with Adler, 15.10.2019.

> the German-speaking Jew from Prague […], but he belonged to England and England to him; his nature and the host country touched and permeated one another.[106]

Coming back from the worst and humanly unconceivable circumstances, H.G. Adler had a somewhat different outlook on his new home and the questions of refugee existence and assimilation. As he remembers: "Today I certainly belong to London […] but does London belong to me? I am not so sure about that but at least I think so. I believe that […] London to me, the anxious Central European, has conveyed much of its restlessness, which has unfortunately diminished since my arrival, but is still prevalent. [...] I have set up a temporary extension in London."[107] Adler's ambivalent viewpoint about the city might have been fuelled by the treatment simultaneously from his fellows and English society he had to face as a German, a Jew and a survivor, along with the financial and existential problems he ran into.

Elias Canetti's View on the English

When writing about his experiences in England over the thirty years he lived there, Canetti takes up a rather dismissive attitude to the land and its people in his journals and in *Party in the Blitz*. He never loses one word when writing about the absolute worst in the English life that he calls "the desiccation, the life as a remote-controlled mummy,"[108] or, "the prescribed desiccation, that begins with moderation and fairness, and ends up in emotional impotence."[109] He goes on saying:

> In order to be absolutely truthful, I should have to track down every *needless* humiliation I was offered in England, and relive it in my memory for the torture it

[106] Adler 2015, p. 67. My translation. Original text: "Einmal war es liebe, einmal hass, die Franz an England banden, sehr widersprüchliche Gefühle, die doch mit dem Worte Haßliebe nicht die Wahrheit kennzeichnen. Als Heimat hat er es gewiss nicht anerkannt […], aber so sher England und die Engländer von ihm beschimpft wurden und seinen Spott ernteten: entbehren konnte er beide nicht mehr, mochte er sich das auch fast nie oder nur halb eingestehen. Franz ist in das englische Wesen tief eingedrungen, er war und blieb ein Fremder, der deutschsprachiger Jude aus Prag […], aber er gehörte zu England und England zu ihm; sein Wesen und das Gastland berührten und durchdrangen sich."
[107] Ibid., p. 68. My translation. Original text: "Bestimmt gehöre ich zu London [...], doch gehört auch London zu mir? Da bin ich nicht so sicher, aber zumindest glaube ich es. Ich denke schon, dass [...] London mir, dem aufgeregten Mitteleuropäer, viel on seiner zwar seit meiner Ankunft sich leider verringernden, trotzdem jedoch noch vorherrschenden inneren Ruhe vermittelt hat; [...] ich habe mir in London ein sich zur Dauer verlängerndes Provisorium eingerichtet [...]"
[108] Elias Canetti, *Party in the Blitz: The English Years* (London: The Harvill Press, 2005), p. 4.
[109] Ibid.

> was; and then seek out every instance of sensitivity with which someone sought to save me from humiliation; hold them together, weigh them up, and have them cancel one another out, as happened to me.[110]

There are many points in Canetti's journals in which he expresses the annoyance as a German-Jewish refugee towards the English old-fashioned colonialism, its middle-class snobbery, its xenophobia, and its ignorance toward real suffering or guilt that was shared by those refugees who both mentally and physically survived the war and the Holocaust.[111] He writes in a 1943 journal entry:

> The English wants to come to a verdict, as it is required by the circumstances, and does not want to string any abstract judgments together. Thinking to him is right away an exercise of power. Thinking for its own sake to him is suspicious and revolting; the one who thinks is always a stranger to him, and even more so in his own language. He likes to pick out one small district where his own knowledge is superior, and here he has really no one to overpower. One, who forecasted it in many such districts, dislikes the English; one senses in him a land-hungry conqueror, and one is not wrong. One is mystified by people who aim nothing to do with their knowledge. Such people, they do not want to be ridiculous here, would rather keep their light hidden.[112]

We can see that Canetti has a much harsher critique about the English way of life, a view that is shared by Steiner in many ways. Both Canetti and Steiner see England as a slaveholder, a *conqueror* culture that rests upon its past of power, authority, and oppression, i.e. "an inescapable reiteration,"[113] the form, the manifestation, the mask of civilizstion under which power time and again tries to hide its real face and which is used to legitimize violence against the oppressed. The English in this sense are unable to see other people, refugees, sufferers, because

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[110] Ibid.
[111] See Elias Canetti, *Aufzeichnungen 1942-1985* (München/Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1993).
[112] Canetti 1993, p. 47. My translation. Original text: "Der Engländer will zu *einem* Urteil kommen, wie es durch due Umstände gefordert ist, und will nicht abstrakte Urteile aneinanderreihen. Das Denken für ihn ist unmittelbare Ausübung der Macht. Denken um seiner selbst willen ist ihm verdächtig und zuwider; immer ist ihm der Denkende ein Fremder, und in der eigenen Sprache erst recht. Er sucht sich gern einen kleinen Bezirk aus, wo seine eigenen Kenntnisse überlegen sind, und hier muß er sich wirklich niemand unterwerfen. Einer, der es auf viele solche Bezirke abgesehen hat, mißfällt dem Engländer; er wittert in ihm einen landhungrigen Eroberer, und er hat nicht unrecht. Rätselhaft sind ihm Menschen, die nichts mit ihrem Wissen bezwecken. Solche Leute, sie hier nicht lächerlich werden wollen, halten ihr Licht besser verborgen."
[113] Ibid.

they refuse to see. Canetti further explains his attitude *Party in the Blitz*, when he talks about many centuries of conquest of the English over other cultures, spicing his argument with the rhetorical question that "[t]here were slave owners all over, but where, except in the plantations of England, was there such an implacable urge to freedom?"[114]

Interestingly, when writing about Iris Murdoch, Canetti associates the ugliness of England with her, saying that "[e]verything I despise about English life is in her."[115] In his memoir, Canetti describes Murdoch rather cruelly as "a type of total parasite from Oxford,"[116] an embodiment of that side of the intellectual élite of Oxford that felt an unusual hunger for stories of refugees, just to chew them up and fashion them according to the general taste of the English culture.[117] "You could imagine her speaking incessantly, as a tutor, and incessantly listening in the pub, in bed, in conversation with her male and female lovers,"[118] writes Canetti, adding that Murdoch's novels are nothing more than sketchy exploitations of the knowledge she gained from others, himself included.[119] Being a power figure himself, Canetti might not have taken it lightly that in her novels, Murdoch refused to give a sweetened version of the magicians based on him, who, albeit Central European, many times traumatized, refugees in essence, possess the capability of exerting the same oppressive power on others they had to endure.[120] At this point, Canetti's attitude is far removed from Steiner's: whereas for Canetti, Murdoch is the epitome of English society in its worst, for Steiner, being herself an Irish-born outcast and a worker for the U.N.R.R.A., she clearly stood out of her contemporary English élite.

Survival and Displacement in H.G. Adler's Novels

[114] Canetti 2005, p. 163.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., p. 165.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Canetti 2005, p. 163.
[120] It might be worth noting that in his biography on Murdoch, Peter J. Conradi takes up a *vice versus* hostile position when talking about Canetti, claiming that as a worker to the U.N.R.R.A., she understood much more about suffering than Canetti did, and that she is a writer more gifted in portraying suffering in her 26 novels than he could, therefore it is no accident that he never was able to publish another one after *Auto da-Fé*. Conradi's observations are right on many levels, especially when arguing for Murdoch's wartime efforts. Still, he overlooks the fact that Canetti *did* publish many plays and essays. Evaluating the richness and the power in the narrative of the two writers to the cost of one of them is simply unfair on either side, since both of them tended to talk about the human condition after the war and the possible way out of the moral chaos that the war effected on human civilization.

In his novel-trilogy (*Eine Reise*, *Panorama. Roman in 10 Bildern*, *Die unsichtbare Wand* - 1989), Adler portrays yet other sides of exile. Although each novel depicts different levels of time and historical experience, there is an interesting flow that connects them. *Eine Reise* focuses on the horrors of the camps through the fate of a Jewish family, from the nightmare of suffering and destruction to the liberation of the camps. *Panorama* depicts the moments of its hero's life, from his bourgeois upbringing, his youth and his devastating experiences in a concentration camp, to his exile in England. *Die unsichtbare Wand* compellingly examines the refugee life in England, with all its difficulties, raising the question that how humanity might be restored in the present, and the past might be made sense of after the most horrible times in history. The trauma of the Shoah in these books is eerily realized through the fusion of the Kafkaesque absurd with the stream-of-consciousness method, which Adler might have taken over from such pre-war English modernist authors as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Ruth Franklin cites Adler, who summed up his ars poetica in one of his last interviews, recollecting his thoughts as he entered the Theresienstadt concentration camp: "If I survive, then I will describe it […] by setting down the facts of my individual experience, as well as to somehow describe it artistically."[121] A noteworthy aspect of Adler's novels is that they convey some of his primary concerns that are perhaps the closest to Theodor Adorno's and Zygmunt Bauman's ideas: that culture and progress were not only incapable of preventing the Holocaust, but they even contributed to it.

Eine Reise, Adler's first novel gives a very articulate portrait of both the physical and the spiritual destruction of this contribution. It tells the tragic story of the Lustig family, their deportation after being categorized as "forbidden", to a Theresienstadt-like camp where they are forced to face their own dehumanization, suffering and extinction. The novel presents displacement in several ways. First, there is the taboo of being "unclean", "forbidden", or "dangerous", a notion that drove Nazis to put an entire population of Jews into the ghettoes and to dispatch them to their death. Their losing their names, becoming numbers, nothing more than inhuman creatures working up to the point of exhaustion in modern factories, as it is also explored in Adler's *Theresienstadt* book, justifies this argument. Then, there is displacement of another kind, the rootless wandering of the lonely survivor through the ruined post-war streets without a home, without an identity. The physical displacement that Paul, the novel's only survivor hero, must experience cannot be equalled with the displacement of the mind that ultimately leads to an utter void. In the following passage, Paul echoes Adorno's words by saying: "You

[121] Ruth Franklin, "The Long View," *The New Yorker*. 31 January 2011. Available: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/01/31/the-long-view. Access: 1 May 2019.

don't have to understand. There's nothing to understand. You only have to know it because it's simply what happened. We were no longer allowed to exist, and now my dearest ones are dead! Gone! Gone! That's all you have to understand!"[122]

Without question, Adler would have agreed with Adorno to some extent, who sees Auschwitz as the ultimate end of everything. For Adorno, there is no point of understanding, and so every word that is uttered, every thinking and writing is barbaric because all these allude to a culture within which genocide and could take place,[123] and because all words serve as proof of a kind of perpetual existence in a world in which living on after the perish of many others, is simply not permissible. However, Adler challenges Adorno's dictum by evoking the figures of those who were lost, and through the multitude of voices that permeate the narrative, he manages to give back the human dignity of the father Leopold and his family, and by that of those, who were deprived of it in the camps.[124] The writer's role is some kind of a mingle of the witness, the theoretician, and the observer here,[125] recording the voices of commanders, citizens, victims, the "voice[s] of disdain and mockery"[126], thereby giving back the social reality surrounding the Lustig family. With it, Adler is the first in the string of later Holocaust writers to pull down the general post-war myths of fascism, concentrating on the insanity that turned ordinary people into mass murderers. His position is that of the survivor's, who saw his way of living on as a mission, and imagination as a responsibility, as Filkins puts it, "to elicit even a glimmer of the true nature of what had been suffered, and yes, survived."[127]

The idea of displacement and the critique of modernity that bear with a remarkable emphasis in *Eine Reise*, are further discussed in Adler's following two novels. Although the concept of exile as another form of displacement are much present in the first novel, it is more extensively discussed in both *Panorama* and *Die unsichtbare Wand*, therefore these two novels deserve some greater attention.

Panorama, Adler's second novel in the trilogy, contains references to his own bourgeois education in Prague, his own experiences in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, and finally his London exile. In ten scenes, the novel portrays the life of Josef Kramer, the literary alter ego of Adler, whose name is altogether a clear allusion to Kafka's Josef K. The kind of cultural criticism that Adler places in Josef's story can be tracked down to the stages hero's childhood within

[122] H.G. Adler, *The Journey* (New York: Random House, 2009), p. 245.
[123] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), pp. 353-354.
[124] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," in Adler 2009, xix.
[125] Peter Filkins, "Both Sides of the Wall: Theresienstadt in H.G. Adler's Scholarship and Fiction," in Adler and Dane, p. 88.
[126] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," xix.
[127] Adler 2009, xi.

a middle-class bourgeois family in which card games and family celebrations are nothing more than soulless rituals, and to his early youth when anti-Semitism as a repressed hatred (Burg Landstein) slowly increases to an organized mass murder. History appears here in a series of montages, in the various stages of Josef's life, and the cyclic circles of the novel are structured through the collage of life, from morning to evening, from waking up to going to sleep: at the beginning of each chapter, Joseph wakes up into a different moment in history, and time is running through his waving and swirling stream of consciousness. This stream of consciousness blurs every barrier between time and space, past and present. Time itself, as Adler argues, is no more and no less than a way of "picturing"[128].

Adler's experimental style suggests that he was not only familiar with, but also was influenced by the works of modernist authors, and indeed, some of the nightmarish snapshots from the moments of being call to mind Proust's *Á la recherche du temps perdu* (1913), Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1918), as well as Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). Like Joyce and Woolf, Adler considers time as a flux. He contrasts the traditional views of time highly polluted with the approaches of modern sciences that looks at time as a physically measurable motion, with the time of the mind that is temporal, flexible, and that is based upon our internal consciousness and our individual perceptions. The restless clicking of the clock of consciousness flows into a threatening hallucinatory storm of sounds in the fictional space of Langenstein concentration camp.[129]

There are some parts in Adler's depiction of the camp and its inmates that are worthy of our consideration. First, the disturbing portrayal of bodies, either living or dead, being piled up together evokes Remarque's description of the living skeletons in the *Spark of Life*, being "hardly any difference between the one and the other; hunger and exhaustion had long ago seen to that,"[130] whose bodies "were a sinking into boggy depths, from which there seemed to be no more rising to the surface."[131] However, although Adler's novel shares some of the anti-fascist views of Remarque and the rest of the *Exilliteratur*-writers, it also points beyond them. He not only describes the patterns of death, survival and humanity in inhuman circumstances to express his resistance and to give new alternatives for his fellows. As a survivor, he fictionalizes his lived experience in the past as an effort to convey the message of the Holocaust for the next

[128] Jeremy Adler, "Die Welt als *Panorama*: Nachwort," in H.G. Adler, *Panorama* (Wien: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2010), p. 613. Original text: "Panorama bedeutet die Verbildlichung von Zeit: Im Titel selbst ist die kürzeste Inhaltsangabe des Werkes."
[129] H.G. Adler, *Panorama* (New York: Random House, 2011), pp. 352-354.
[130] Erich Maria Remarque, *Spark of Life: A Novel* (New York: Random House, 2014), p. 3.
[131] Ibid.

generation, and to depict the history of modernity that resulted in it. He does it so by combining German literary tradition with the elements of English modernist literature, thereby, as Peter Filkins observes, "creat[ing] a mirror image of [Josef's] world, in which he explores the everyday nature of the nightmare that he himself came to experience and to survive."[132] The personal tragedy in Adler's novel reflects on the collective tragedy of the 20th century: for the unsuspecting reader, the suspenseful nature of events in the book point at the chain of moments in twentieth-century history, in which the Holocaust seemed inconceivable for both the individual and the cultural environment that brought it about. [133]

Josef's exile in England represents another side of the world that Josef gets imprisoned within. As a survivor, while bearing the stigma of being an outcast, of being a Jew, he cannot get rid of the sting of the past, i.e. he "cannot look forward without looking back"[134]. He has no home to return to, and the freedom he gains through his liberation leads to yet another trap, the trap of belonging nowhere. In addition, Josef, like Adler, cannot turn a blind eye on his past: in fact, the past proves to be a key component of his identity. The panorama at the end of the novel represents a return to the past, yet a certain detachment from it. For Adler, one cannot break away from the past, yet one needs to look at it in a certain distance to be able to give meaning to it. Although Adler claims that "Jews should not feel at home anywhere,"[135] it is memory for Josef that creates "a gulf [that] remains between him and the images of the panorama"[136] and by which his identity might remain intact. Only this way can any barriers dissolve "between yesterday and today, all the colored threads having run together, an immense gushing, an overflow and a rippling stream"[137] merging the past with the present through the remembrance of it.

English exile as a point of departure from the present to the past is the central theme of *Die unsichtbare Wand* (1989; transl. to English as *The Wall*, 2015), the final novel in Adler's trilogy. As in the case of *Panorama*, this final book is yet again hailed for its apparent intersections between autobiography and fiction, and like its predecessor, this novel also refers in several ways to its author's life and personality. It recounts its hero Arthur Landau's life in English exile, who, like Adler did, tries to gain a foothold in the post-war London, while always and inescapably living backwards, in the past, ceaselessly aiming to make sense of it. Arthur's loss

[132] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," in Adler 2011, xii.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Peter Demetz, "Afterword," in Adler 2011, p. 442.
[136] Adler 2011, p. 432.
[137] Adler 2011, p. 439.

of his first wife, Franziska, refers to Adler's own grief over the dead of his own first wife, Gertrud Klepetar, in Auschwitz. Arthur's relationship with his second wife, Johanna, by whom "I have been restored to life here,"[138] reflects Adler's own with his second wife, Bettina, whose loving attention to him helped and cured Adler, and without whom "he could hardly have fought his way through."[139] Arthur's economic and existential difficulties also reveal Adler's own struggles to find security in the foreign world. His disillusionment with his refugee peers clearly affirms Adler's feeling of being betrayed by his own circle of friends, among them Canetti and Steiner, who, for many reasons, "stayed away at the crucial moment"[140]. Yet, Peter Filkins rightly argues that although biography and fiction arguably merge in the novel, there are some notable differences in Adler's life and what is portrayed,[141] and while developing the book's narrative and Arthur's troubled mind, the author chooses to keep distance, rather than living through all the pain again.[142] In so doing, the author voices the essence of the Holocaust novels: namely, that the coping with the trauma of the Holocaust is equally essential for all, and to give meaning to the past, one must try to move from a subjective to an objective vision of it, from the private to the collective.

The wall represents here spatially and temporally what Jeremy Adler describes as the "eradication of borders": it not only stands for the wall between the past and the present that is to be repositioned but also the wall between the English society and its German refugees as well as the wall erected between the refugees themselves. Here, the wall indicates a gap between those who went through the most horrific events in the concentration camps, who suffered and survived, and those who in time managed to escape from the genocide under National Socialism to the safety of the foreign country. The gap exists because the trauma of the past prevails in those who suffered, whereas it constitutes an absence for those who did not. As Filkins claims, the feeling of the survivor's guilt is "disguised as disdain"[143] against the people having emigrated before the war broke out, enjoying the comfort they had brought with them, and paying no attention to their surviving peers. This bitter recognition is highly emphasized throughout the novel. Arthur Landau, the fictional alter ego of the survivor Adler, is estranged both from a

[138] H.G. Adler, *The Wall* (New York: Modern Library, 2015), p. 10.
[139] Grete Fischer, "Reinheit setzt sich gegen Zynismus durch," in H.G. Adler, *Buch der Freunde: Stimmen über den Dichter und Gelehrten mit unveröffentlichter Lyrik* (Köln: Willehad P. Eckert und Wilhelm Unger, 1975), p. 11. My translation. Original text: "Wäre Bettina nicht gewesen, was sie war, seine Frau, die ihn unter allen Opfern stützte und erhielt, er hätte sich kaum durchkämpfen können."
[140] Ibid., p. 11. My translation. Original text: "Er hatte ein paar literarische Freunde, Franz Baermann Steiner, Anthropologe und Dichter, in Oxford, Elias Canetti, den Adler sehr bewunderte; aber im entscheidenden Augenblick hielten sie sich fern."
[141] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," in Adler 2015, xiii.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Filkins 2019, p. 219.

different culture and from his own community. Writing his thesis in the exile entitled as "The Sociology of the Oppressed People", he finds rejection everywhere. As an intellectual, his work is dismissed by his colleagues, with a Professor Kratzenstein, a mocking literary embodiment of Adorno, saying that as a survivor, his position might be dangerously subjective, i.e. "he is too close to the material to be objective."[144] Landau is the personification of what Iris Murdoch calls the modern man who is not at home even in his own world of refugees, so although he turns to his friends for support, he only receives empty promises and painful denials. They fail to attend to him, and the wall that is established out of this lack of attention symbolizes the guilt that was felt by many survivors, as well as the lack of grief and the indifference to suffering that was shared by those who did not experience it. In the novel, Arthur's isolation is complete through his nausea of the wealthy Jewish families who treat him like "an exotic mythical beast"[145], a stranger having come only with a suitcase in his hands, whereas they lived their wartime lives in a luxurious seclusion. He observes: "I was too late. The time for refugees was past; they had all attached themselves to something or someone, and there was nothing left for foreigners."[146] This realization of being entrapped and concealed "within nothingness"[147], is the basis of his existential crisis. He says:

> It's unimaginable to me what would remain of Arthur Landau without Johanna, because I have ceased to exist, called it quits, am completely spent, the vestige of a memory of who I no longer am, maybe even a message from nowhere, someone who can never find his footing, never land in one place. Other people are just as dubious, I am at least aware of that, but I never even rise to the level of that dubious existence, the fragile being of a single nature, because I am homeless in every sense, belonging nowhere and therefore expendable, never missed, because no one knows anything about me.[148]

Arthur's tragedy is that as a survivor, he feels scapegoated and existentially degraded by his community in a similar manner that he used to be handled in the camps. Filkins cites Anthony Grenville, claiming that the trauma of the Holocaust and the extermination of friends and relatives was so fresh, "with which many refugees could only cope by treating it as a taboo subject

[144] Ibid.
[145] Adler 2015, p. 93.
[146] Ibid., p. 361.
[147] Ibid., p. 451.
[148] Ibid., p. 8.

never to be discussed."[149] This refusal of discussing the past resulted in the treatment of survivors, the embodiments of this past, with a "passive rejection"[150], an attempt of escape from being confronted by the trauma of the past.[151] Arthur's task as a survivor is therefore to give meaning to his life, his struggle is "to remain a unified person alive to the present,"[152] to become once more a human after the inhumanity he went through in the past and despite economical and existential difficulties he is forced to face in the present.

The way of giving meaning to one's life is an important step for the coping with the past, and as much as the novel is about how human existence might be restored after the horror of the past, it is also about how the walls of self-protection, that are altogether the walls between the past and the present, might be abolished. This argument justifies the question of why and how the spirit of the past intervenes in Arthur's stream of consciousness, and as Filkins observes, the non-linear narrative, although it might make for some readers difficult to catch the thread of the plot, "[is] meant to show how the duress of Arthur's past constantly informs the present in much the same way that flashbacks occur to those suffering post-traumatic stress."[153]

H.G. Adler's and Franz Baermann Steiner's Approaches to Survival, Suffering and Making Sense of the Past

In their treatment of the past and their outlook on their exile, there lies a major difference between Steiner and Adler. Iris Murdoch recalls her discussion with Steiner in the Golden Cross pub, citing him: "A cut-off past is in a way easier to convey to another than a continuous one. You have a shorter unit. When the past is continuous it mixes with present consciousness and is harder to comprehend."[154]

Murdoch's view is in stark contrast to Adler's, for whom the past is everything but "cut-off" from the present consciousness. On his part, Adler had to wrestle all through his career with the dilemma to identify himself with "what is all too often clumsily and simply falsely called 'coming to terms with the past'," [155] arguing that "a person must live in his time, for he cannot help

[149] Filkins 2019, p. 220.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., pp. 220-221.
[152] Adler 2015, xii.
[153] Ibid., xv.
[154] Conradi 2001a, p. 318.
[155] Filkins 2019, p. 96.

but do so, rather in times past, not even his own past."[156] Yet, his effort to distance his present self from the past, thereby creating his own "invisible wall" allows him to employ an objective angle from which he is able to "take away the bricks to see what they hold when he turns them into living beings representative of the fates of those trapped behind the brick walls of Theresienstadt, or even those who, like Adler himself, worked as bricklayers."[157]

In Steiner's works, making sense of the past and the suffering for the lost ones is a complex political and moral problem. What is interesting about them is that Steiner's decision of breaking away from the past seems to be a symptom of a psychological repression of trauma, rather than a conscious creative intent. On 24 July 1945, he received a letter from Adler, who was on his return from Auschwitz, that his parents had been gassed in Treblinka. The trauma of losing his parents as well as the guilt that he could not save them by passing to them a transport through his contacts as did so many other of his friends, shook Steiner. His guilt is clearly felt in his anthropological studies on slavery and in his poetry where the Holocaust has a ghostly presence in his choice of speaking about "dangerous" people and society's effort to clear them away, as well as his insertion of his Jewish heritage, the martyrdom, and the witnessing, that are fundamental elements of the Judaist tradition. As Fardon and Adler argue, the annihilation of much of the European Jewry and the suffering of Jews on their way to Palestine made Steiner incorporate the suffering of his own people. It is likely that it is the internalization of collective suffering that gives the power to Steiner's poetry, the trauma of the past and his weak physical condition that contributed to Steiner's heart disease and ultimate death in 1952, at the age of forty-two.[158]

In addition, there was a general silence about the Holocaust instigated by the guilt that was commonly felt by every German, victim or perpetrator, refugee or not. This silence swept over an entire generation of German families and such catchphrases as "we didn't know it" or "the Nazis were the others"[159] served as a convenient rejection of any responsibility and a refusal to confront with the crimes committed. A major drawback of it was that for many years there was a caricature-like view on the past, in which genocide was committed under Hitler's power by some aliens coming from a spaceship, deceiving German people, instigating war, killing

[156] Ibid.
[157] Adler and Dane, p. 87.
[158] Michael Hamburger, *A Mug's Game: Intermittent Memoirs* (London: Littlehampton Book Services, 1975), p. 187. cited by Conradi 2001a, p. 322.
[159] Harald Welzer,'"Ach, Opa!": Einige Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von Tradierung und Aufklärung." In Wolfgand Meseth et al. *Schule und Nationalsozialismus. Anschpruch und Grenzen des Geschichtsunterrichts* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2004), p. 53. My translation. Original text: "Nazis, das waren immer die anderen; im sozialen Nachbereich, der von uns befragten Familien treten aus Sicht der Enkel keine Personen auf, die identifiziert mit Nationalsozialismus waren, die antisemitische Einstellungen hatten oder gar zu den Tätern gehörten."

millions of Jews, disappearing so trackless as they came, and leaving behind a number of corpses as well as German people, "embarrassingly touched, somehow diffused, but already occupied by other worries."[160] The treatment of the Holocaust as a taboo is illustrated by the fact that when Alain Resnais completed his documentary *Night and Fog* in 1956, the film's producer Anatole Dauman told Resnais that although he was "delighted to have produced the film,"[161] he could guarantee that "it will never see a theatrical release."[162] Upon its distribution, the film was subjected to a notable scandal, as the German embassy, out of fear that the movie would portray German people as insensitive monsters, proposed its withdrawal from the Cannes Film Festival, while, at the same time, former prisoners threatened to boycott the festival unless the film would be shown.[163]

Within the refugee circles, the past was treated like an open wound, a shocking and painful presence, and Adorno's dictum that the unspeakable should never be spoken, took root in the minds of many Central European Jewish exiles. Yet again, there was a strong desire to find a way out of the social, political, and moral chaos that the war resulted in, a restoration of life after the destruction, and it necessitated the introduction of new approaches and initiatives in philosophy, literature and the political life.

Thus, it is no wonder that any portrayal of the Nazi power and the concentration camps in the immediate post-war period existed either in a caricature-like or mystified form in literature, or was stuck within social and philosophical theory, or entirely absent from the literary works. In Germany, such novels as Christine Brückner's *Ehe die Spuren verwehen* (1954), or Hans Scholz's *Am grünen Strand der Spree* (1955), or even Remarque's *Spark of Life*, aimed at restoring the German social and spiritual life from its negative connotation, offering new interpretations of the Nazi character. Yet, behind the intended and sometimes overindulged realism of these books, one can recognize some larger-than-life Nazi figures, as if the writers themselves were reluctant to face the fact that genocide under Hitler was carried out by their own neighbours, friends or family members, ordinary Germans who enacted evil at the behest of a political power in a particular historical situation. In philosophy, Hannah Arendt in *The Origins*

[160] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Trotz aller gelungener pädagogischer Anstrengungen der vergangenen beiden Jahrzehnte erscheint das Geschichtsbild der Jugendlichen heute so, wie wir es als erledigt geglaubte Karikatur aus den fünfziger Jahren kannten: 1933 landete das Raumschiff, aus dem die Nazis ausstiegen, das deutsche Volk verführten, einen Weltkrieg anzettelten, die Juden umbrachten, um dann 1945 so spurlos zu verschwinden, wie sie gekommen waren."
[161] "Excerpt from a 1994 audio interview with director Alain Resnais," the Blu-ray edition of *Night and Fog* (The Criterion Collection, 2011).
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ewout Van der Knaap ed., *Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of Night and Fog* (London, New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), p. 8.

of Totalitarianism (1951) and Albert Camus in *The Rebel* (1951) give impressive accounts on the mechanisms of the two great power regimes of the 20th century, yet, without paying any attention to how these political powers and legislations were perverted in the camps. Similarly, the Holocaust is referred to only casually in English literature and the writings of German-speaking refugees in England or the United States. It was not until Arendt's theory on the "banality of evil"[164] that the Holocaust got to be increasingly embedded in the collective cultural memory. It is particularly telling that from the existing manuscripts of the unknown group of exile poets, only Adler's two poems ("Die Nacht ist Endlos", "Nichts") are preoccupied explicitly with the Holocaust. There is at least one recorded incident in which Steiner told Adler "that he should 'have taken better care' to prevent what had happened to him."[165] Ruth Vogel-Klein cites a letter from Adler to Steiner, in which he responds to his friends' refusal to identify himself with the concentration camp victims: "You all, who fortunately did not experience all that, cannot possibly imagine, what in fact happened to us. The misery, the hunger, the dirt, the hatred, illnesses, horror, all sort of pain - but all this is superficial, what it has inflicted on the inner self cannot be put into words."[166]

In this respect, the concept of survival is to be understood differently for Adler as for either Steiner or Canetti. As Jeremy Adler puts it, Adler's literary and scholarly work aspire to bear witness not only to the horrors of the past and his life as an exile, but "above all, to the capacity of the human spirit to survive, and in so doing, to rise above the unspeakable."[167] With it, Adler's works not merely re- and deconstruct the origins of the political power that was at work in the camps but they also conquer the physical death of those who were killed. Adler's voice in his poems is that of a prisoner, the one who was forced to join a common fate with those deported. In his novels, he takes exile as a departure point, a window from which one always can look back to the past, a period that should never be forgotten.

In his poetry, Steiner refuses to look back directly on the past. In the introduction to his translation of Steiner's selected poems, Michael Hamburger calls to mind Steiner's specific requirement to publish the English version of "Gebet im Garten", an elegy most exclusively about the Holocaust, as a collection of his other poetic works, rather just as a poem in itself,

[164] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (München: Piper, 2007).
[165] Filkins 2019, p. 220.
[166] Ruth Vogel-Klein, "Bilder der Shoah in Gedichten von H.G. Adler und Franz Baermann Steiner," in Adler and Dane, p. 77. My translation. Original text: "Ihr alle, die Ihr zum Glück all das nicht erlebt habt, könnt Euch unmöglich vorstellen, was uns tatsächlich geschehen ist. Das Elend, der Hunger, der Dreck, der Hass, Krankheiten, Horror, alle Arten von Schmerzen – doch all das ist oberflächlich, was es dem inneren Selbst zugefügt hat, läßt sich nicht in Worte fassen."
[167] Bolbecher, p. 177.

suggesting that Steiner rejected any labels that might render him as a Holocaust poet, since he was afraid that such labels might narrow the scope for interpretation of his poetry.[168] This view is challenged by Jeremy Adler, who criticises Hamburger for looking upon Steiner with a contemporary eye, highlighting that, since Holocaust literature became a trend only about three decades after Steiner's death, no such literary waves or a range of widely acclaimed material existed at his time that would recollect the Holocaust as a historical event.[169] Steiner's choice is rather that of reviving the suffering for the Holocaust, an endeavour that is understood by Adler as a conscious effort "[to seek] new ways of developing his poetry,"[170] transforming "his ethnographic studies into modern poems,"[171] but also as a sign of a repressed trauma that makes his poetic self constantly negate its relationship with the past, making his survival dependent upon this compulsive rejection. As Peter J. Conradi writes on Steiner, "Franz would say that the news of his parents' deaths finally 'broke his heart', and this seems no idle metaphor."[172] Conradi cites a 1943 journal entry from Steiner in which he notes that "A life without suffering is useless. A world without suffering is useless."[173] For Steiner, Judaism and silent daily prayers are the only means of "transvalu[ing] his suffering"[174].

"Gebet im Garten am 1. Oktober, dem Geburtstag meines Vaters" was written in 1947. It is a rather complex poem that touches on personal and collective matters. It is an elegy to the lost parents, a meditation on Jewish tradition and Jewish life, on suffering that could only healed in prayer, and an acknowledgment of Jews who lost their lives in the gas chambers or during their immigration to Palestine. The first verse presents the seemingly undisturbed and idyllic picture of the symbolic values of culture and human life, a life to which Autumn brings a painless and soundless end, a life whose "fruits have been harvested, apple and pear detached from the branches"[175] and which is apparently left untouched by the shadows of suffering and destruction. However, Steiner's view of the world is quite the opposite, and the next stanzas are set in the middle of a violent sea storm full of misery, cries and the darkness of death.

Steiner's approach to the value of suffering, without which survival is not only worthless but simply not possible,[176] is obvious in his depiction of grief and anguish. In a particularly

[168] Michael Hamburger, "Introduction," in Franz Baermann Steiner, *Modern Poetry in Translation* (London: King's College, 1992), p. 10.
[169] A conversation with him in London, 15.10.2019.
[170] Ibid., p. 175.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Conradi 2001a, p. 322.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Franz Baermann Steiner, *Am stürzenden Pfad* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2000), p. 311.
[176] See "Letter to Georg Rapp," in *Selected Writings 2*, pp. 115-122.

distressing series of images, the poetic "I" finds itself in the middle of a violent sea storm that is filled with endless cries and distress. Here, the nostalgia for a peaceful end is destroyed by the suffering of many, the "souls half pulled out of the bodies,"[177] women and children "between kicks and waves"[178]. Curiously, the poem lacks any direct allusions to Nazism, and "all the suffering on the sea"[179] refers to the Jewish émigrés lost during an attack of their ship by the British navy on their way to Palestine in 1948. Steiner's emphasis here falls on the motive of moving or transformation ("wandeln", "Verwandlung"), a word game that has both spiritual and political implications. It accentuates that historically, Jews have needed to be constantly on the move, to transform for their survival and that the poet has to be the lonely, i.e. spiritual, religious "guardian of the metamorphosis"[180]. As a poet, Steiner altogether points to a crucial point, the desire for coming home to the ancestral land of Israel, and thereby fulfilling the biblical promise of the gathering of Israel,[181] an assignment that terminates the many years of wandering and being exiled that is so fully described in the Exodus. In so doing, Steiner seems to identify himself somewhat more with Jews living in exile, in diasporas than with the victims of the Nazi genocide. Iris Murdoch summed up the basic thought of Steiner's Zionism in a 1 August 1952 journal entry: "F[ranz] said: The Jews identified themselves more with the illegal immigrants than with the concentration camp victims. It was the people in motion, the archetype. This was a propos of 'Gebet im Garten' – I said, why pick on us. Charming story of young Jew who started to eat pig after the farmer had killed a calf for him!"[182]

At the heart of the poem stands the father figure, his presence "the noblest that I found on this earth"[183], his face simple and precise, his words quiet and barely perceptible. Here, Steiner picks out his personal tragedy, his personal loss, and extends it to the tragedy and the loss of human existence. Steiner's contribution to the aesthetic approaches to the Holocaust lies in his tendency to make silence a central motive in his poem. His father is a nameless man whose

[177] Steiner 2000, p. 313.
[178] Ibid., p. 316.
[179] Ibid.
[180] *Selected Writings 1*, p. 78.
[181] "30 When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, [2] and return to the Lord your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, [3] then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the Lord your God has scattered you. [4] Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world,[a] from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back. [5] The Lord your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors." Deuteronomy 30:1-5. Available: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+30%3A1-5&version=NRSV. Access: 13 June 2019.
[182] Iris Murdoch's Journal 1 August 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[183] Steiner 2000, p. 315.

voice could never be heard, not unlike those of many Jews who perished in the Holocaust. In this respect, this father who is to be commemorated here is the father of every Jewish people dedicated to Judaism, a sacred being who must be revered (Leviticus, 19: 1-3), and whose honour, according to the Torah, is the honour of God (Kiddushin 30b).[184] Like Adler, Steiner seems to argue that since the fathers of every Jewish people have been "robbed of self-expression"[185], it should be the task of the children to at least "provide an imagined utterance with no recorded text"[186]. What makes Steiner's poetry interesting is that he does not address the issue of whether it would be relevant to speak the unspeakable but rather the method that entitles him to do so. His way of isolating of his poetic "I" from what is described in this long poem manifests his mournful struggle to turn away from the past, yet he feels he cannot do it entirely and without much responsibility.

Steiner's response to the Shoah is present in his anthropological views on taboo and slavery. In his anthropological study *Taboo*, he calls for a study of the manifestations of danger in social relationships, writing:

> Taboo is concerned 1) with all the social mechanisms of obedience which have ritual significance; 2) with specific and restrictive behaviour in dangerous situations. One might say that taboo deals with the sociology of danger itself, for it is also concerned 3) with the protection of individuals who are in danger, and 4) with the protection of society from those endangered – and therefore dangerous – persons. As I suggest tentatively later, taboo is an element of all those situations in which attitudes to values are expressed in terms of danger behaviour.[187]

Steiner here lists and analyses all those social conditions and situations under which taboo is formulated. He recognizes two social roles of taboo: the recognition and classification of transgression, i.e. the act against the law and the institutionalized localization of danger, which involves both the definition of what it means to be dangerous and the protection of society from people who are deemed dangerous. Taboos as restrictions and prohibitions function as "the

[184] This is a particularly impressive blend of reality and fiction since Steiner's father was an atheist and a social democrat. Nevertheless, in Steiner's imagination, he became an ideal father-figure of Jewish people and an epitome of Judaism. *Selected Writings 1*, pp. 29-30.
[185] Carol Tully, "Franz Baermann Steiner and Spain: 'The Prayer in the Garden' and Manrique's 'Coplas a la muerte de su padre'," in Adler, Fardon and Tully, p. 143.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Franz Baermann Steiner, "Taboo," in *Selected Writings 1*, pp. 107-108.

social manifestation of power"[188], and by claiming it, Steiner altogether argues that the power of the ruler that primarily, if not absolutely, rests on the taboos, i.e. social restrictions, he imposes, these restrictions "can be rendered invalid and overruled only by the taboo of a higher official"[189]. Although in his study, Steiner aims at challenging the traditional approaches to taboo, his own research of the primitive tribes had a painful relevance with the rise of the Nazis, a political power that marked Jews as "dirty, filthy, not nice, putrid, impure, defiled"[190], i.e. tabooed subjects from whom society must be purified. In his doctoral study "A Comparative Study of Forms of Slavery", he gives a complex analysis of the forms of enslavement in modern societies, whereby the word itself was used as a justification for Western culture to exercise power above other communities, a theory that came to a shocking reality during the Holocaust.

It can be seen therefore that for Steiner, survival is an extension of suffering without which the survivor who has seen so many of his people killed, simply cannot exist. George Szirtes describes the agony of the survivor in a similar way, when he says that "[a]fter the sudden end to suffering there is a numbness, the haze of recovery, that suspension of time between events when you know next to nothing of one moment's relationship to another, when it's all present tense, a succession of present tenses without context."[191] For Steiner, only the healing power of silent religious prayer can decrease the feeling of remorse and misery one must pay for outliving.

Canetti's Survivor

In *Crowds and Power*, Canetti describes the survivor in the following way:

> The moment of survival is the moment of power. Horror at the sight of death turns into satisfaction that it is someone else who is dead. The dead man lies on the ground while the survivor stands. It is as though there had been a fight and the one had struck down the other. In survival, each man is the enemy of every other, and all grief is insignificant measured against this elemental triumph. Whether the survivor is confronted by one dead man or by many, the essence of the situation is that he

[188] Ibid., p. 122.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., p. 119.
[191] George Szirtes, *The Photographer at Sixteen: The Death and Life of a Fighter* (Quercus, London: Maclehose Press, 2019), p. 142.

> feels unique. He sees himself standing there alone and exults in it; and when we speak of the power which this moment gives him, we should never forget that it derives from his sense of uniqueness and from nothing else.
>
> All man's designs on immortality contain something of this desire for survival. He does not only want to exist for always, but to exist when others are no longer there. He wants to live longer than everyone else, and to know it; and when he is no longer there himself, then his name must continue.
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> […]
>
> [T]he survivor knows of many deaths. If he has been in battle he has seen those around him fall. He went into battle with the conscious intention of maintaining his ground against the enemy. His declared aim was to despatch as many of them as possible and he can only conquer if he succeeds. Victory and survival are one and the same to him. But a victor also has a price to pay. Many of his own people lie among the dead. Friend and foe share the battlefield; their dead are heaped together and often, indeed, can no longer be distinguished; a common grave awaits them.
>
> Fortunate and favoured, the survivor stands ill the midst of the fallen. For him there is one tremendous fact: while countless others have died, many of them his comrades, he is still alive. The dead lie helpless; he stands upright amongst them, and it is as though the battle had been fought in order for him to survive it. Death has been deflected from him to those others. Not that he has avoided danger; he, with his friends, stood in the path of death. They fell; he stands exulting.[192]

As Michael argues, for Canetti, survival is a matter of power and death.[193] In the power dynamic between the ruler and his crowd, survival is a form of triumph over the dead, an exertion of power that can only be accomplished "by threatening a crowd of people with death."[194] Freud gives a remarkably similar picture in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he describes the power dynamics between the ruler and the ruled, the king and his son, as reversible. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes that a king should equally be protected and watched on by his subordinates "to see that he makes a proper use of his powers,"[195] and in case he does not do so, he could be "[w]orshipped as a god one day, he is killed as a criminal

[192] Canetti 1981, p. 227-228.
[193] Michael Mack, *Anthropology as Memory: Elias Canetti's and Franz Baermann Steiner's Responses to the Shoah* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 158.
[194] Ibid
[195] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 51.

the next."[196] In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud takes up the Oedipal concept of the hero as "the son of parents of the highest station, most often the son of a king,"[197] whose father receives warning that the child's birth might contain a threat to his life, exposes his newly born baby to extreme danger, and surviving them, the hero returns, takes revenge on his father and enjoys great success as a ruler.[198] Suggesting that Moses was born in an Egyptian household, Freud recalls a legend from the Pentateuch, according to which a three year-old Moses playfully tossed the crown from the Pharaoh's head, saying that "the ambition of the man Moses,"[199] murdered later on by his own Jewish people, "had already displayed itself in his childhood,"[200] and that "[t]he king was startled at this omen and took care to consult his sages."[201] What is striking in these portrayals of power is that both Freud and Canetti approaches it as something fragile, easily lost, therefore should be preserved by sacrificing those meaning danger to it.[202] In Canetti's theory, this compulsive will to survive, to conquer is inherent in human nature. The motto of "either you kill, or you are killed" is nowhere more recognizable than in the battlefield where this hunger for survival suppresses every norm that society and civilisation might bind us to. A similar argument is articulated by the narrator in Elie Wiesel's *Dawn* (1961), a Jewish executioner, himself a Holocaust survivor, ordered to kill a British officer, who says that "[i]n the days and weeks and months to come you will have only one purpose: to kill those who have made us killers."[203] As Mack notes, the triumph of survival is finely captured in Steiner's poem "Nach der Wüstenschlacht" ("After the Battle in the Desert"). Steiner writes:

> Destiny passes through the sieve of opportunity,
> Tickets are distributed and survival
> sticks to the driest of mouths, no-one
> Grudges death its great empire.[204]

[196] Ibid.
[197] Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism (London: The Hogarth Press, 1939), p. 16.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., p. 52.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] A somewhat similar power dynamic is illustrated in the fool's monologue about the king whose crown will be tossed by his men in Michel de Ghelderode's *Escurial* (1927). Michel de Ghelderode, *Barabbas, Escurial* (Brussels: Editions Labor, 1989).
[203] Elie Wiesel, *Dawn* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), p. 23.
[204] Mack, p. 158. Translated by Mack. Original text: "Das Schicksal ist gesiebt durch die gelegenheiten, / Lose sind ausgeteilt, und überleben / Steckt in der münder trockensten, keiner / Mißgönnt dem tod sein großes reich."

Mack argues that the genius of Canetti and Steiner lies in their ability to use this theory as a mirror to the post-war loss of moral values. They see the war as a twist in history that "corrupts man"[205]. For Steiner, this post-war existence is a perverted form of outliving, since "the sheer pleasure of having survived the death of others offers nutrition."[206] For Canetti, it is an integral part of what we call as "normal" or "healthy" in human nature. Mack claims that what Canetti takes as given in this side of human behaviour is a subject for outrage in Steiner, i.e., the infuriating realization that "not a single person can be found who does not pay homage to the power of death, who does not take pleasure in the workings of its power."[207]

However fascinating Canetti's view on survival might appear, there are still some notable gaps that they are simply incapable to fill. When claiming that survival is a form of victory, he fails to consider the number of people coming from the camps, including Adler, whose survival is anything but "victorious". He uses the example of the military and the battlefield, yet he turns a blind eye on the soldiers returning from the frontlines, many of them mentally and physically broken, alienated from the civilized life they were pushed back into after they had felt the closeness of death and the destruction of human beings during the war.

In Canetti's description of power dynamic, it is particularly important to point out the dichotomy between the surviving ruler and the crowd he is ruling, where the ruler not only stands above his people but stands *alone*. Elaine Morley claims that for Canetti, "isolation and the exercise of power go hand in hand."[208] She says:

> In the figure of the autonomous, powerful man, the power drive is not curbed. The aim of the survivor is to be alone, the last person standing. The aim of the Nazis was to eliminate all others so that only the 'master race' survived, involving the elimination of 'crowds' of Jews, for example. The king is always characterized by his solitude and inaccessibility. On the other hand, in order to transform, others are required since the concept emphasizes one's empathy, respect, and tolerance of others, of difference, of that which is indeterminate as epitomized by an amorphous crowd. Crucially this requires the individual both to be connected to the other, but also to respect their separateness. The problem of the isolated, powerful human is the reason why Canetti places some hope in the crowd.[209]

[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Morley, p. 70.
[209] Ibid.

Crucial to Canetti's theory on power is his employment of Freud's idea on *transference*. Although Freud's name is never brought up by him in *Crowds and Power*, his idea of the command as "the kernel of all power"[210] and his description of the ruler as a power-driven paranoiac owes much to the Freudian notion. Based on his case studies, especially on a patient under the pseudonym Dora,[211] Freud describes transference as a re-direction of the patient's, often erotic, feelings and attractions for another person to the therapist. Central to this point is that the therapy itself is like a stage-play with already settled roles. Here, the therapist plays the role of a parent, the master of erotic desire, a father-figure, or a God, who dictates where the course of the therapy should go, and the patient is like a puppet, a child, or a slave who needs to follow the rules of the game, showing unquestioning servitude to the command that is given. What is at stake is the success or the failure of the therapy, which is a power dynamic with the threat of a symbolic death if the patient fails to obey the command. Toril Moi describes this power as dynamic and patriarchal in nature. In her analysis about Freud's Dora case, Moi describes the psychoanalyst as a power figure, a ruler keeping knowledge on the one hand, yet being unable to get rid of his fear of being castrated in case he fails to unlock the secret his patient possesses.[212]He depends on his patient's will to maintain the picture of him in her as a God for his own survival the same way his patient depends on him.

Such power struggle is brilliantly explored in Iris Murdoch's *A Severed Head*, where the psychoanalyst Palmer Anderson, a parody of the Freudian character, "uses his position as perceived possessor of a deep knowledge of human nature to justify his affair with Martin Lynch-Gibbon's wife, his patient, Antonia"[213] in a novel that is full of sexual entanglements. It should be a mistake to call Murdoch a psychoanalyst since she sees the dangers when the therapist as a "priestly figure"[214] abuses the power he possesses. Therefore, although she finds some sympathy with Freud's views for its view on the human nature as inherently egocentric led by ambiguous and enigmatic sexual impulses,[215] she urges her readers to observe psychoanalysis with suspicion.

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[210] Ibid., p. 74.
[211] Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).
[212] Toril Moi, "Representation of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora," in Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane eds., *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 194-195.
[213] Nicol, p. 25.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 341.

There are significant parallels between Moi's portrayal of Freud as a power figure and Canetti's account on "the possession of knowledge" and the drive to "disclose and unlock secrets" as the basic conditions for power. Canetti writes:

> Everyone who knows something is watched by a second person who, however, is never told precisely what he is watching for. He has to record each word and movement, and by full and frequent reports, enable the ruler to assess the loyalty of the suspect. But this watcher is himself watched and his report corrected by that of yet another. Thus the ruler is always currently informed on the capacity and reliability of the vessels to which he has confided his secrets and can judge which of them is likely to crack or overflow. He has a filing system of secrets to which he alone keeps the key. He would feel endangered if he entrusted it entirely to anyone else.[216]

Canetti's thought is arresting in case we reflect it on the countless surveillances and interrogations conducted by secret police agencies engaged in operations against the suspected enemies of the ruling political powers, and who were not afraid of torturing or murdering people to eliminate their opposition. In this political game, knowledge was a dangerous tool, and the threat of death made relatives, friends and neighbours mutually traitors.

Such subordination to power, the obedience to a command, is what Canetti explains with the metaphor of the sting. This image of power is central to Canetti's and Murdoch's thought as his detailed analysis of it in *Crowds and Power* and her ruler figures in her novels might demonstrate it. Elaine Morley cites Murdoch who noted down in her journal on 31 March 1953 a conversation that she had with Canetti on this subject:

> He spoke about giving orders. How every order leaves a stachel in the spirit, of the exact form of that order, how the primitive form of the order is the roar of the hunting beast that makes others flee. I said – but if you gave me an order, I should obey it with joy. He said – you think you would. I gave orders to Friedl for years – and in the end she built up a tremendous resentment & resistance – tho' at times she had asked to be told what to do.[217]

[216] Canetti 1981, p. 292.
[217] Iris Murdoch's Journal 31 March 1953, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/8, cited by Morley, p. 73.

There are at least two things that might be important to note here. First, there is the voluntary enslavement to power that both writers focus on in their works that bounds crowds of people to their rulers as it was observable in Hitler's and Stalin's regime. The sting that the obedience of their commands involves left many ordinary German people serving under Hitler, who did nothing but obeyed the commands they had received without the slightest feeling of responsibility, morally accountable for their actions against Jews. This moral downfall of society is perfectly captured by Steiner's father, who wrote in May 1939: "The horror of the time is in which people fall. All their worst characteristics multiply, so that the neighbour on whom you were counting suddenly disappears or just walks over you. Everyone thinks only of themselves."[218]

It should be argued therefore that the human tragedy of the Holocaust with all its evil sources, lie not merely in the order that has been given out by higher authorities to execute Jewish people, but also in the active or passive involvement of local people, both in Germany and in the occupied territories, ordinary citizens who either took part in the killings, or simply turned a blind eye on the atrocities that were going on in front of them. Yet, the question of where a sense of responsibility should be, remains unsolved. To answer this question, Canetti gives a meticulous theory that bears some striking similarity to Hannah Arendt's conceptualization on the banality of evil along with the Freudian idea of the transference:

> It is well-known that men who are acting under orders are capable of the most appalling deeds. When the source of their orders is blocked and they are forced to look back on what they have done, they do not recognize themselves. They say, "I never did that", and it is by no means always clear in their minds that they are lying. When they are faced with witnesses and begin to waver, they still say, "I'm not like that. I couldn't have done it". They search themselves for traces of the deed and cannot find them. It is astonishing how unaffected by it they seem. The life they lead afterwards really is another life, in no way coloured by their previous actions. They do not repent and do not even feel guilty. What they have done never really comes home to them.
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> […]
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> Every command that is carried out leaves a sting in the man who does it. But this, though in him, remains as alien to him as the command itself was in the moment when it was given. However long it lodges in him, it is never assimilated, but

[218] Fleischli, p. 21., cited by Adler and Fardon in *Selected Writings 1*, p. 60.

> remains a foreign body. It is indeed possible, as I have already shown, for several stings to fuse together and form a new conglomerate entity, but this, too, remains quite distinct from its surroundings. The sting is an interloper who never settles, an undesirable one wants to get rid of. It is what one has done and has, as we have seen, the exact shape of the command given to one. It lives within its host as an alien, not subject to his authority, and thus does not cause him any feeling of guilt. He does not accuse himself, but the sting; this is the true culprit, whom he carries with him everywhere. The more foreign to his nature the original command, the less guilt he feels about what it made him do; the more autonomous and separate the existence of the sting. It is his permanent witness that it was not he himself who perpetrated a given wrong. He sees himself as its victim and thus has no feeling left for the real victim.[219]

Canetti's account on the stings of guilt, suffering and the lack of responsibility is a pillar of the theories about the Holocaust and the processes of the German and Jewish coming to terms with the past. On the German side of history, it was the sting of guilt for being involved in the annihilation of a considerable number of the European Jewish population that made it difficult for entire generations in the families to cope with the Nazi past of their fathers and grandfathers. On the side of the surviving Jewish people, it was the survivor guilt, the suffering they received in the camps and in exile that was passed on to other generations. The shortcoming of Canetti's theory is that while pays remarkable attention to the former, he almost completely forgets to take mention of the latter problem.

On another level, it is amazing and appalling to see from Murdoch's journal entry how Canetti *lived out* the form of power he was theorizing about. The conversation that Murdoch records shows a man who is fully in control of others, who is capable of manipulation, transformation and giving orders that others are willing to follow, all that are features of a self-absorbed tyrant. It might be in any case true, even if Michael Mack defends Canetti from the line of attacks that he as a writer has received, arguing that "instead of understanding the brutality of fascism while refraining from attacking it, Canetti himself uses force."[220] For his argument, Mack cites Canetti, who noted down in his aphorisms: "I would never really have gotten to know power if I

[219] Canetti 1981, pp. 331-332.
[220] Mack, p. 25.

hadn't practiced it and if I hadn't become the victim of my own individual practice of it."[221] It is known from Canetti's biography that, at least during his time in England, he orchestrated many emotional and sexual intricacies, and betrayals against his friends Franz Baermann Steiner and H.G. Adler and his female companions, such as his wife Veza Canetti and his lovers that included setting them against one another, not answering their letters,[222] forcing them to make phone calls "code-wise"[223], or simply stealing their ideas and inserting them in his works as his own.[224] In his biography on Murdoch, Peter J. Conradi calls Canetti "jealous, paranoiac and a mythomaniac who, in the words of Benedikt's sister Susie, "loved creating and undoing human relations and toying with people, watching their reactions as a scientist might watch his white mice'."[225] This tendency brings Canetti closer to Freud than it would at first appear. Both Freud and Canetti flew from the horrors of Nazism and lived in exile in the United Kingdom, being victims to a power regime that either annihilated their peers in the gas chambers or dispatched them from their home. Yet, both men had a great knowledge about power, and both acted out the same form of power on others that they had witnessed.[226]

As we will see in the second chapter, this vulnerability of the enchanter constitutes some of the core themes in Murdoch's fiction. In *The Flight from the Enchanter*, the reader learns about Mischa Fox's European past from a series of photographs recapturing his childhood. The evil Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1971) manipulates people and destroys relationships in a similar way that Canetti did, only to reveal at the end of the novel that he is a concentration camp survivor himself.

Iris Murdoch's Encounters with Elias Canetti, Franz Baermann Steiner and H.G. Adler

[221] Canetti 1993, p. 113. Since Mack's translation has some grammatical inconsistencies, the citation above is translated by me. Original text: "Ich hätte die Macht nie wirklich kennengelernt, wenn ich sie nicht ausgeübt und nicht selber das Opfer dieser eigenen Übung geworden wäre."

[222] As Peter Filkins points it out, H.G. Adler was frustrated by the fact that Canetti ignored many of his letters, complaining to Steiner that he and his wife are after all, not true friends. In his recollection of Murdoch, Canetti prides himself with the fact that he consciously left many of Murdoch's love letters to him unanswered. Filkins, 2019, p. 196., and Canetti 2005, p. 224.

[223] "A letter to Elias Canetti, early November 1958," in Horner and Rowe, p. 184.

[224] Richard Fardon and Jeremy Adler takes account on Canetti's inherent jealousy of Steiner's ideas his interest in "demonstrating both his independence from Steiner and the latter's intellectual dependence on him." Steiner 1999a, p. 77.

[225] Conradi 2001a, p. 355. The citation is an extract from the letter of Susie Ovadia to the author, 11 February 1998.

[226] I find it all the more important to emphasise, since many of the Murdochian scholars recently tend to approach Canetti in a more positive light, seeing him as a fatherly inspiration for Murdoch, and turning blind eye on the fact that this "fatherliness" can be seen as a manifestation of power.

In his memoirs on Murdoch, John Bayley takes note on his wife's string of affairs with intellectuals, "so-and-so with whom she had first been to bed, and so-and-so and so-and-so who had wanted to marry her."[227] While Bayley, perhaps out of loyalty, does not identify anybody with names from her wife's old loves, he refers to Canetti as the "Dichter", who is "not actually a poet but a master-spirit of literature,"[228] a man holding a secret court in Hampstead who had pleasure in keeping Murdoch "under his sway"[229] and who "made love to Iris, possessing her as if he were a god."[230] Conradi echoes this view in a BBC documentary on Murdoch, adding that "[Iris] was very much a fly in his spider's web, but at the same time she was a writer in the making, and that was capital that was made out of this."[231] Although she both symbolically and physically ended her relationship with Canetti by writing him out in *The Flight from the Enchanter* as the mischievous magician Mischa Fox, and by marrying John Bayley in the same year as the novel was published, it was this image of the demonic power figure that imprinted itself in her head, and that always appeared as central to the plots of each of her novels. Conradi says: "[Canetti] is there in all her best books, whenever her novels have real juice, real blood in them, Canetti is to be found."[232] All this contradicts Elaine Morley's view of Canetti as a "literary master"[233] who "wished to encourage [Murdoch's] talents"[234], and of Murdoch as an "obsequious, flirtatious female"[235], pointing to the torment and the sadomasochism this erotic affair entailed.

Although Murdoch had already read *Auto-da-Fé* in around 1946,[236] it was Franz Baermann Steiner, through whom she got to know Canetti in person, their affair starting not long after Steiner's death. In stark contrast to her tormenting relationship with Canetti, her love for Steiner was highly passionate, loving and intellectually fruitful. While Steiner found Murdoch's presence emotionally and intellectually inspiring, she saw in him the father-figure and the guru that she was craving for. Canetti credits Steiner as the true discoverer of the novelist Murdoch, recording that it was Steiner who first recognized her talents upon reading the manuscript of *Under the Net*.[237]

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[227] Bayley, p. 77.
[228] Ibid., p. 75.
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] "Iris Murdoch: Strange Love," *BBC Four* 20 December 2003: 23.00.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Morley, p. 18.
[234] Ibid., p. 19.
[235] Ibid., p. 73.
[236] Ibid., p. 17.
[237] Canetti 2005, p. 167.

The romantic relationship of Murdoch and Steiner was a frail and a tragically short one. Murdoch's journal reveals that they had met briefly in 1941 but their relationship deepened only in the summer of 1951 and lasted until Steiner's death on the evening of 19 November, 1952. Yet, Bayley recollects an old joke about Steiner that delighted Murdoch, even when the Alzheimer's disease had robbed her of any recollection of the past, indicating that Murdoch preserved her love to Steiner to the end of her life.[238] In fact, Fardon and Adler raise the possibility that Murdoch in her 1989 novel *The Message to the Planet* returned to the early preoccupations from her time with Steiner and Canetti through her Jewish characters Alfred Ludens and Marcus Vallar, two scholars whose "concerns exist in the light of the attempt to annihilate the European Jewry"[239]. Adler and Fardon track down many sides of Steiner's character this novel illuminates, most notably in Ludens's recognition that Vallar would never be able to "commit his experience of suffering to paper in a philosophical tract"[240]. Murdoch's effort to recapture Steiner's personality in her fiction therefore demonstrates that she held a deep commitment to him even more than 40 years after Steiner's death.

The fact that they both detested and were treated as outsiders of the contemporary Oxonian scholarship, might have been decisive for their bonding. For Steiner, Murdoch differed greatly from the superficial and ignorant English academia that she needed to teach at, for the reason that while her fellows had never participated in the war and the aiding of refugees in any ways, Murdoch, for her Irishness and her experiences in the refugee camps, felt much in common with the displaced persons living in England.[241] Richard Fardon argues that Steiner's conflict with the contemporary British anthropology is based on the fact that while his interest lied in analysing the varieties of human condition out of which totalitarianism and the power that deemed marginalized people dangerous, emerged, the anthropologists in Oxford turned blind eyes to this approach. As Fardon claims, "the anthropologists were studying and comparing peoples […] but they were hardly studying the states in which those peoples lived, within which demands for independence were being articulated."[242]

On her part, Murdoch was hailed for her first book on Sartre's existentialism (1953), yet she was regarded by Oxford philosophy, led by such figures as Gilbert Ryle and A.J. Ayer, as a rather "European" novelist with more interest in the French thought than in the disciplines of

[238] Bayley, p. 76.
[239] *Selected Writings 1*, p. 90.
[240] Ibid.
[241] This argument is evidenced by Valerie Purton, arguing that Murdoch "felt herself from childhood to be a 'refugee' – Irish in England – and her novels are full of refugees and displaced persons of many kinds." Valerie Purton, *An Iris Murdoch Chronology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. xiv.
[242] Richard Fardon, "Steiner as a Contemporary Anthropologist," in Adler and Dane, p. 210.

analytical philosophy or logical behaviourism. Miklós Vető notes in his memoirs on the thirty-five years of friendship he had with Murdoch, that "[s]he knew Oxford Philosophy very well, her first writings had been composed in the setting of that world, but she was more and more severe in her judgement of it."[243] Vető's recollection shows that, unlike many of her fellows in Oxford, even 15 years after the war, Murdoch warm-heartedly welcomed and supported refugee students flying from the political oppression of the Eastern bloc.[244] In a letter to Hal Lidderdale dated 29 December 1948, she expresses her delight in teaching[245] her contempt of "[t]he donnishness of people, the cleverness – all the bleeding intellectuals (underline by Murdoch). What a relief to board the London train & see those damn spires disappearing."[246] Her aversion to the Oxonian philosophy and her growing sympathy with moral philosophy and religious thought allied Murdoch to Steiner not just personally, but also intellectually.

Steiner's complex character and his interest in many anthropological, literary and religious disciplines enthralled Murdoch. As Conradi recounts, Steiner was "[a]n idealist and mystic – influenced by Boehme, Lao Tse and the Bhagavad Gita – Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish and Muslim ideas converge in his poetry."[247] Although herself an atheist, Murdoch was captivated by religious thinking. In "Against Dryness" (1961), she complains:

> We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age in which the dogmas, images, and precepts of religion have lost much of their power. We have not recovered from two wars and the experience of Hitler. We are also the heirs of Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Liberal tradition. These are the elements of our dilemma: whose chief feature, in my view, is that we have been left far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality.[248]

Interestingly, while Murdoch expresses a traditional criticism to the Enlightenment and modernity as chief enemies of metaphysics and religious thought, she is altogether hostile to romanticism. It might appear as odd at first but might be relatable, if we pay attention to Gabriel

[243] Miklós Vető, "Thirty-Five Years of Memories of Iris Murdoch," in Miles Leeson ed., *Iris Murdoch: A Centenary Celebration* (Wiltshire: Sabrestorm Fiction, 2019), p. 50.
[244] See Dávid Szőke, "Letters from Iris Murdoch to Miklós Vető: thirty years of friendship," *Iris Murdoch Review* 9 (2018) : 4-16.
[245] Murdoch received Fellowship in St Anne's College, Oxford and taught philosophy from 1948 to 1963.
[246] Iris Murdoch's letter to Hal Lidderdale, 29 December 1948, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS78/13. The letter, among other items, was displayed in the Somerville College exhibition for the 2019 Iris Murdoch Centenary Conference, Oxford, 13-15 July 2019.
[247] Conradi 2001a, p. 319.
[248] Iris Murdoch, "Against Dryness," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 287.

Pearson, who claims that "[r]omanticism, it is sometimes said, has turned increasingly upon itself and offers self-sufficient images and symbols as a consolation for the loss of the real world which had been the exclusive concern of the 19th century novel."[249] In contrast to the romantic tradition, Murdoch turns to the Russian realists, approaching the novel as "a house fit for free characters to live in"[250] and aiming at creating a form of realism "with all its odd contingent ways"[251], independently from the sleight of hand of the author, such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky did. Whether she managed completely and without faults to maintain the distance between herself and her characters and plots, is yet another question.

More challenging are Murdoch's views on religion. Despite not being a follower of any religion, Murdoch believed that "[r]eligious experience is something we should be having all the time in fact"[252]. Her views on religion are that of a moralist. In an undated letter to Miklós Vető, whose PhD-dissertation on Simone Weil she had supervised,[253] she expressed her deep fascination with the theological thought of Weil's approach to metaphysics, finding her ideas on "the Trinity, Incarnation, etc. as 'somehow written in to the structure of the universe' […] so convincing […] she practically converts me!"[254] She told in an interview with Jeffrey Meyers:

> Traditional religions, Judaism and Christianity, have given us contexts in which to think about love and compassion and the overcoming of self, the difference between illusion and reality. Both Hinduism and Buddhism too, in different ways, offer a tremendous structure which I see no reason to jettison. So one is really wanting to keep the structure and the stories, but to live religion without the problems which a lot of people worry about—whether the old literal beliefs are true or not. I think the old literal beliefs are picturesque. I can't make any sense of the idea of another life or another place or of a person called God. I grew up in Anglican Christianity and I feel in a way I'm still inside the Anglican church. Some Anglican clerics come very near to saying this sort of thing. But I think this sort of thing should be said more. People should realize that when you lose the literalistic beliefs of your

[249] Gabriel Pearson, "Iris Murdoch and the Romantic Novel," *New Left Review* I/13 (1962) : 137.
[250] Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 286.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Jonathan Miller, "My God: Iris Murdoch interviewed by Jonathan Miller," in Gillian Dooley ed., *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Conversations with Iris Murdoch* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 215.
[253] Miklos Veto, *From Budapest to Paris (1936-1957): An Autobiography* (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2020), p. 76.
[254] Szőke, p. 8.

> religion you are not losing religion, that religion is a deeper matter. It is not the same as lofty morality. Matthew Arnold said that religion was just morality plus emotion, and this seems to me to be an entire misunderstanding of the human situation. I thought of becoming a Buddhist, but I'm really a Christian Buddhist. I see no reason to lose my Christianity. Whether Christianity can survive and "demythologize" itself, to use that horrible modern term, in time to go on appealing to people and being significant, I don't know. I think it's one of the most important problems on the planet—what's going to happen to religion.[255]

Murdoch's view is that both literature and religion have ultimately the same moral agenda: to lead people out of the moral chaos initiated by the twentieth-century political powers, and to look for new ways in which the idea of goodness and the efforts to be good might be applicable. Her understanding of these roles of literature and religion were possibly fuelled by her conversations with Steiner on the subject. In his biography, Peter J. Conradi recognizes in Steiner one of Murdoch's first Jewish teachers to deepen her understanding of the links between poetry and philosophy, noting that "Rilke's sensibility overwhelmed his poetic thought, she learnt, while in Eliot, often, there is mere versified thought."[256] Murdoch recorded her growing affection for Steiner on 22 May: "[Franz], adorable, tender. We did a lot of German. I notice in him now a curious grace. (Like Shah, it occurs to me.) He is brown & extremely unsalaried, considering he can take no exercise."[257] With deep admiration to him as a poet, she transcribed the third part of his cycle *Becherlaunen* (1948) to her journal on 22 October ("Enzian brachte sie mir…").[258] As Conradi claims, "a sure sign [Iris's] heart opened"[259] to Steiner was that in her conversations with Franz, "[t]hey talked of a thousand things at the same time, crouched on the floor like children, pressing against each other, and he spoke further about *Under the Net.*"[260] In light of this, it is no wonder that Murdoch, when writing in the 1960s on her Royal College of Arts colleague Frederic Samson, remarked that he "is the latest of my Jewish teachers, of whom the first was Fraenkel and the most beloved Franz'."[261]

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[255] Jeffrey Meyers, "'An Interview with Iris Murdoch,' *Denver Quarterly* 26 (1991) : 102–111.," in *Remembering Iris Murdoch: Letters and Interviews* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 108-109.
[256] Conradi 2001a, p. 325.
[257] Iris Murdoch's Journal 22 May 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[258] Iris Murdoch's Journal 22 October 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[259] Conradi 2001a, p. 328.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Ibid.

The last conversation between Murdoch and Steiner, which took place on 22 October but was recorded on 17 November, involved a debate on the questions of religious belief. Murdoch notes: "On Saturday I talked of religion with F[ranz]. He said, in answer to my asking if he believed in God, that he *loved* God. In him, it seemed no affectation."[262] The difference between their theological views rested on the fact that while the young Murdoch held a form of secularized affiliation to the Anglican Church, as "[o]nly within the framework of *that* Church could she imagine a realisation of the religious life,"[263] Steiner remained devoted to Judaism, finding Christianity "a heathen-Jewish religion"[264] and the New Testament "worrying as a literary document, contradictory and lacking in depth"[265]. Despite this fact, Murdoch's sympathy for Judaism is detectable in her handwritten copy of a poem that Steiner had written to her as a birthday present on 15 July 1952:

> I give you this wine-glass,
> Drink from it, drink from me.
> Preserve the beautiful balance
> And don't break either of us.[266]

As Adler and Fardon argue, the poem refers to the Jewish custom of breaking wine-glass at wedding ceremonies to bring good luck.[267] The poem might therefore be seen as a celebration of their love and a reminder of their tie that should not be broken. That Murdoch found this poem essential to record shows that the feeling was mutual on her side and also that she made efforts to identify herself with the Jewish tradition Steiner stood for. In this respect, although she was charged by several Jewish people with anti-Semitism for her portrayal of the magician Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*,[268] she had an "ancient, deep-rooted pro-Semitism which I've always had,"[269] and which was secured through her love and admiration for Steiner.

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[262] Iris Murdoch's Journal 17 November 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[263] Conradi 2001a, p. 335.
[264] Esther Frank, "Memories of F.B. Steiner," recorded by H.G. Adler (4-8 May 1964), in Adler, Fardon and Tully, p. 245.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Iris Murdoch's Journal 15 July 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7., translated by Sue Summers, "The Lost Loves of Iris Murdoch," *Mail on Sunday* 5 (1988) : 20. Original text:
[267]*Selected Writings1*, p. 88.
[268] Jean-Louis Chevalier ed., "Closing Debate, *Recontres avec Iris Murdoch*," in Dooley, p. 73.
[269] Wendy Lesser, "Interview with Iris Murdoch," *The Threepenny Review* 19 (1984) : 14.

There is no evidence about how far-reaching the encounter between Murdoch and H.G. Adler was. There is a copy of *The Flight from the Enchanter* in the H.G. Adler Collections, King's College dedicated "to Gunther".[270] She records on 28 November that she attended Franz's funeral "with Canetti & Gunther"[271]. On December 7, Adler was helping her divide Franz's things for two days, and "I said to Adler: you have known Franz so long and so well. He said: yes, but you loved him & one day of love tells you more from years of friendship. And he said: Franz was loved for the first time."[272] In her deep grief for Steiner's death, Adler and his wife Bettina tried to console her. She wrote on December 10: "Last night I was with the Adlers. Bettina wanted to speak to me alone. She spoke of a great light, and how F. was happy & protected at the last. I felt moved by her sincerity & simplicity. But it was no use."[273] In answer to an e-mail from me, Jeremy Adler argues that the personal contact between Adler and Murdoch was rather occasional, yet "[s]he was much indebted to him for her understanding of the camps"[274], recalling Murdoch's efforts to get an English publisher for "Panorama".[275] In their "Introduction" to the first part of a collection of Steiner's work, entitled as *Taboo, Truth, and Religion* (1999), Adler and Richard Fardon observe that in Murdoch's *The Flight from the Enchanter*, while Canetti and Steiner appear in the fictional characters of Mischa Fox and Peter Saward, Adler is "partly refracted in John Rainsborough"[276], and that Murdoch's virtuoso imagination mixes the physical features of Canetti, Steiner and Adler "in other characteristics, some of them derived from English sources; in pursuing this creative alchemy, she affectionately transfers Adler's height and full head of hair to the short and balding Steiner."[277]

Despite the lack of further evidence to prove any personal acquaintance between Murdoch and Adler, there are many points to argue for Adler's integration to my work. Owing to their influence on each other, their lively debates, the close-knit intellectual circles of Central and East European Jewish émigrés, their shared, albeit different, experience of displacement and exile, it would be rather difficult to understand how the works of Steiner and Canetti evolved without Adler. Moreover, since survival in its manifold ways, the suspicion toward modernity, the problem of alienation, uprootedness and the loneliness of the individual in a transforming

[270] H.G. Adler Collection, Foyle Special Collections, PR6063.U7 F5.
[271] Iris Murdoch's Journal 28 November 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[272] Iris Murdoch's Journal 7 December 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[273] Iris Murdoch's Journal 10 December 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[274] An e-mail from him, 14 June 2019.
[275] Ibid.
[276] *Selected Writings 1*, p. 90.
[277] Ibid.

post-war world, as well as the indifference of the English society toward its refugees are central to Murdoch's and Adler's writings, the consideration of Adler's works are much needed here. Jeremy Adler evidences this idea, suggesting that although their contact was occasional, "Iris and Guenther shared a modernist aesthetic, a temperament, and above all a belief in the sovereignty of the good which enabled them to get along."[278] Thus, due to their shared interest in bringing elements of the English literary tradition and modernism to their works, it is challenging to see how the responses of Murdoch, Adler, Canetti and Steiner to the Holocaust, modernity and exile were enrichened by this effort. Additionally, as Jeremy Adler suggested it to me, what linked Murdoch, Canetti, Steiner and Adler was their "selfless intellect",[279] their incomparably deep concentration upon details that is revealed in Adler's Theresienstadt book, in Steiner and Canetti's preoccupation with taboo, power and slavery, and also in Murdoch's philosophical interest in "unselfing", i.e. the individual's effort to turn his/her attention to the world by moving away from his/her egoistic perceptions. This intellectual attitude proved to be enlivening and indispensable in the immediate post-war world where the challenge for philosophy, anthropology and literature was to find a better alternative for societies the horrors of the war.

During my research on the influence of Canetti, Steiner and Adler on Murdoch, Katalin G. Kallay drew my attention to the moral implication of the Holocaust. In her understanding, the Holocaust should be imagined as a triangle. The two edges of the triangle signify the victim and the perpetrator, while the "I" is located on the top of the triangle, between the two characters.[280] The ethical problem represented by this triangle-metaphor is that history and human decision in some political circumstances can determine to which edge would the "I" of the triangle might get closer. This is a complex moral question that sums up, without expending it, the idea of goodness, the battles of good and evil within one person, and the possibility that the barriers between these two forces are actually not that difficult to cross, are central to both Murdoch's philosophy and the works of the three authors discussed.

Interestingly, her identification with and approaches to the Shoah, an exclusively Central European event that has its moral implications on morals and humanity in general, is that of the intellectual, the one working in the camps, and that of the Irishwoman, feeling outcasted for her own identification with Ireland.[281] Her relationship with refugees could have been fuelled by it, and curiously, she merges these varieties of refugee experiences and notions of exile in her

[278] An e-mail from him, 14 June 2019.
[279] A conversation with him in London, 15.10.2019.
[280] A conversation with her in Budapest.
[281] Adler 2015, p. 67.

novels. In the following chapters, I will discuss how these experiences and notions return in her early novels along with the ethical questions of the Holocaust raised by Canetti, Steiner and Adler.

Chapter Two

Uprootedness and the Search for Identity in *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head*

All, all of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a Beast in view:
Thy Wars brought nothing about;
Thy Lovers were all untrue
'Tis well an old Age is out,
And time to begin a new.
John Dryden, *A Secular Masque*[282]

Breaking New Grounds

This chapter will address the issues of post-war rootlessness and search for identity in *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head*, two novels by Iris Murdoch with first-person male narrators. Both novels speak about the dilemmas of the post-war individual, rootless, alienated from his society and locked up in his delusional fantasies of the world. In both novels, there is a serious endeavour to break with the past, to find new ways on the ruins of post-war society, and the quest for the heroes is to recognise the world as different from their fixed ideas and masculine delusions about it. In my analysis, I will explain how these books reflect the problem that many other post-war novels deal with, i.e. the quest for moving away from the past, to build out new options for existence after the catastrophe of the 20th century civilisation that made masses of people spiritually and physically displaced and isolated from their society. Thus, before I would turn my attention to the novels, it is necessary to reflect on the general post-war atmosphere in English literature and culture in the immediate years after 1945, since this was the period from which the novelist Murdoch emerged. In my argument, I will also explain how the Central European exile writers like Steiner, Canetti and Adler, contributed to the transformation of the post-war British culture and British identity.

[282] John Dryden, *The Secular Masque*. Available: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44184/the-secular-masque. Access: 30. 07. 2019.

In *The Modern British Novel* (1993), Malcolm Bradbury describes the post-war era in the following way:

> The post-war world knew it was post many things. It was post-Holocaust, post-atomic, post-ideological, post-humanist, post-political, and indeed, some declared, post-Modern – for it was not surprising that this now ever more influential term should already in play by this date. Modernism was over, even tainted; the deaths of Joyce, Woolf, Yeats and Freud had reinforced the feeling. In critical circles, it was already being historicized, defined, monumentalized, given its name and structure; it was no longer *avant*, as it had always meant to be, but *arriére*. Meanwhile the new dominant tone in Western thought became one of chastened liberalism – a guilty, vigilant "new liberalism" not always distinguishable from conservatism. […] It was no longer politics, now largely discredited for its ideological simplicities, but the novel, with its awareness of difficulty, contradiction, ambiguity, that spoke to the difficult age. But many writers now felt nearer to muteness: if the outbreak of the war had brought many close to passive silence, its ending only seemed to prolong the silence in perpetuity. […] When the post-war arts did begin to emerge, as they did, they often found language, form and literary humanism inadequate to deal with the horrors committed, and the nihilism and meaninglessness they invoked. Thus they were frequently marked with a spirit of absurdity and extremity, an air of nihilism, an instinct toward minimalism – as if human nature betrayed itself, human character collapsed. If, after 1945, there was a felt "postmodern condition," these were the things that notion implied.[283]

At the intersection of all these "posts" stands the mid-century, or "intermodernist," novel and novelist, a category in which recent literary criticism also includes Murdoch's writings, "not properly modernist or postmodernist; therefore, it must be, at best, a literature of regrouping and readjustment, or, at worst, lost in the wilderness."[284] "Intermodernism," as coined by Kristin Bluemel is a "new" historical period[285] that socioculturally separates from the modernist and postmodernist experimentalism and that reflects the sociopolitical realities of the war and the

[283] Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1993), pp. 268-269.
[284] James Clements, *Mysticism and the Mid-Century Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrace MacMillan, 2012), p. 2.
[285] Kristin Bluemel, *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 5.

immediate post-war years.[286] As a character in Stevie Smith's *The Holiday* (1949), cited by Bluemel, says: "It cannot be said that it is war, it cannot be said that it is peace, it can be said that it is post-war."[287] Furthermore, intermodernism signifies a shift in the philosophical, spiritual and moral interest of the writers of the immediate post-war years, as well as the general intellectual need for a new and refreshing philosophy.[288] As Murdoch responds in a 1988 interview with Jeffrey Meyers, to her interviewer's observation that "the breakdown of moral authority, the disappearance of religion and a sense of chaos"[289] are themes central to Murdoch's book on Sartre and her novels:

> Well, it's a long way back to the Sartre era. His popularity immediately after the war was extraordinary. People who had nothing to do with philosophy felt that philosophy had been invented for them. The war had been so terrible and so destructive, and the Hitler era had been so unimaginably awful. People wanted to find a way of having some kind of spirit come back to their life. Sartre's existentialist ethic with its notion of complete freedom, and the notion that you should get yourself into a state where you can make a choice which transcends conventions and the dull feeling of being contained, submerged, and so on – this (and his novels, too) reflects a, in a way, heroic ethic. It cheered people up a lot. I don't particularly go along with this myself, but it had a revivifying effect.[290]

Such arguments by Bradbury and Murdoch are remarkable for many reasons. They set up the diagnosis of the post-war Western culture where the traditional moral issues of the Enlightenment could not function anymore and where a new approach to morals had proven to be needed. Murdoch recalls in many places the time when working for the U.N.R.R.A., she read Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943) with great enthusiasm. She says in an interview with Michael Kustow:

> I hadn't read a book in all this time. I was pretty exhausted by the camps. But I got a great whiff of philosophy on the way out. I was in Brussels, Sartre was there, I

[286] Kristin Bluemel, *George Orwell and the Radical Eccentrics: Intermodernism in Literary London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 1.
[287] Stevie Smith, *The Holiday* (London: Virago, 1980) p. 13., cited by Bluemel 2004, p. 1.
[288] Clements, p. 3.
[289] Jeffrey Meyers, "Two Interviews with Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 227.
[290] Ibid., pp. 227-228.

> met him… beautiful. There was a wonderful bookshop man who had all the philosophy books. He pressed *L'être et le néant* [*Being and Nothingness*] into my hands. I read it with the greatest interest, it was wonderful. People were liberated by that book after the war, it made people happy, it was like the Gospel. Having been chained up for years, you were suddenly free and could be yourself.[291]

Murdoch's approach to Sartre's philosophy as something "cheerful" is rather odd. Yet, it is an important for its reassessment of French existentialism that presented itself as something fresh, something new that, according to Bradbury, "had expressed, from the very heart of wartime and the German occupation, a philosophical vision based as much on the anguish, forlornness and terror of the contemporary historical situation as it was on the fading tradition of humanism and liberalism in Europe."[292]

What is more important is that both Murdoch and Bradbury aim at putting the phenomenology of art on new grounds. In so doing, they recognize that the tragic result of the war entailed a paradigm shift that demanded a "moral realism"[293], i.e. "a renewed awareness of the danger of history, the unreliability of human nature, a return to 'the tragic sense of life'."[294] They altogether express their concerns about language as a reliable conveyance of moral truth, and about the idea of modernity that empowered men to be the lords of nature and technology.

The war rewrote the relationship between man and machine, and the slogan triggered by the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution that man could master machine and with it, the entire industrial development, was replaced by the general view that machine is not only controllable but is *vice versa* able to control and even destroy man. Gottfried Leibniz's observation in *Theodicy* (1710) that "how amazingly small is the entity of evil"[295] and the general optimism about scientific and technical improvement, as well as the notion of humanity as inherently noble proved to be unwarranted by the Holocaust. It is the confidence in man, reason, technical revolution and civilization for which Iris Murdoch reproaches the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the liberal tradition, since they left us with a rather optimistic picture about the human personality without the necessary warnings about the everyday existence of evil.[296] Freud

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[291] Michael Kustow, "Boundary Breaker and Moral Maker," in Dooley, p. 242.
[292] Bradbury, p. 228.
[293] See Heather Widdows, *The Moral Vision of Iris Murdoch* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016) and Bradbury, p. 268.
[294] Bradbury, p. 268.
[295] Gottfried Leibniz, *Die Theodizee* (Berlin: Karl-Maria Guth, 2017), p. 346. My translation. Original text: "Auch die Stoiker scheinen erkannt zu haben, dass das Sein im Uebel ausserordentlich klein ist."
[296] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 294.

expressed his fear in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), his last work written in English exile at the outbreak of the war that "progress has concluded an alliance with barbarism."[297] As Bradbury points it out, "[o]n the biggest battlefield in the history of the world, tanks rolled, jackboots marched, overflying bombers and unnamed rockets smashed great cities with mass aerial bombardments."[298] During the Holocaust, millions of people disappeared in concentration and labor camps, or suddenly got displaced from their home.[299]

Men returned from the frontlines, physically and emotionally broken by their experiences of the annihilation during the war. In literature, a new type of man appeared, wounded by the past, which altogether indicated a waning belief in man as a master of his world, a mentally and physically strong hero whose existence can never be fractured. In England, the immediate post-war years saw what Deborah Philips calls "a sharp transition in gender roles in the aftermath of war service for men and women."[300] Several women writers, among them Iris Murdoch, Monica Dickens or Stella Gibbons, received wide attention for the question they posed through their heroes, i.e. the question of how could post-war human existence be restored after the tragedy of the war and "what it means to be a man in the post-war context."[301] The male hero, "unengaged and isolated,"[302] undertaking a series of travels or daydreaming about travelling and getting entangled with a string of love affairs, serves for their writers as an instrument for reflecting on the past with an eye that altogether aims at looking toward the future, as well as for discussing the role of art in a socially and morally transforming post-war world.

To emerge from the void of rootlessness and loss of identity, the need to create an alternative reality came forward whereby the post-war years "saw a concentration of talented young writers trying to expand the possibilities for fiction,"[303] representing reality in its contingent and infinite form. Murdoch argues in "Against Dryness" that, since "[r]eality is not a given whole"[304] but rather a series of contingent occurrences, literature should reflect on this contingency. Frank Kermode evokes Murdoch's determination to create unique and free characters and situations with "respect for the contingent"[305], an effort without which the novelist "sinks into fantasy,

[297] Freud 1939, p. 89.
[298] Bradbury, pp. 264-265.
[299] Meyers, "Interview with Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 231.
[300] Deborah Philips, *Women's Fiction: From 1945 to Today* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 15.
[301] Philips, p. 15.
[302] Ibid., p. 35.
[303] Bran Nicol, "Murdoch's Mannered Realism: Metafiction, Morality and the Post-War Novels," in Rowe and Horner, p. 19. Although Nicol discusses this paradigm shift within the context of the beat generation of the 1960s and early 1970s, I see it as a process that has its roots in the 1950s, since this period had already initiated a way of finding new perspectives for the role of the novel.
[304] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 294.
[305] Ibid., cited by Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 130.

which is a way of deforming reality […] We must not falsify it with patterns too neat, too inclusive; there must be dissonance."[306] In *Reading after Theory* (2002), Valentine Cunningham gives voice to his concern that Theory would "get in the way of the respect for the otherness of the other person and the other person's text, which in Iris Murdoch's compelling vision is the only ground of a fruitful relationship, because it's the only ground of love, is the only ethicity."[307] His argument is that Theory disregards the contingent relationship between author and text, a relationship that is based on "the author letting 'others be through him'"[308], that is, a form of love and forgiveness.[309] These observations are important, since, in the own ways, they convey the paradigm shift the post-war novel was going through, its break with traditions in form and its attempt to find new ways of creating characters and situations. This shift is signalled by the fact that upon its publication in 1961, even *A Severed Head* was criticized for its relatively traditional style compared to the French *nouveau roman* that vividly deviated from the established and normative characteristics of the novel.[310]

Breaking new grounds after the war in England involved the sociocultural restoration of the human condition. Tamás Bényei raises three sociocultural aspects that contributed to this restoration.[311] Firstly, there was the general slogan of "the people's war", i.e. that the battle against evil represented by Nazi Germany was fought with "an unprecedented national collaboration"[312] leading to a general hope that the rigid class differences would be eliminated and a more democratic society would be established.[313] Secondly, the fight against the Nazis "brought about the alarming totalitarian bureaucratisation of the English military system, whereby the

[306] Kermode, p. 130.
[307] Valentine Cunningham, *Reading after Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 140.
[308] Ibid. Here, Cunningham takes a curious position as he describes the author as a "he" rather than a "she", thereby trying hard to push back literature into the patriarchal canon by marginalizing and displacing women writers from it. Cunningham gives voice to his dismissive attitude to post-colonial and feminist theories, calling them "canon-busting" or "canon-revising dispositions". He says that while they helped the involvement of writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker or Angela Carter into school syllabuses, "[m]ost of the top 26 NAS authors of 1964-5 have lost ground, including Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Eliot, Hardy, with Dry den, Am old, Ben Jonson, Spenser, Keats, Byron and Coleridge dropping out of the top 25 studied authors altogether […] [a]nd it is a bit disquieting to see these sharp declines." Cunningham, pp. 45-46., see also Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010).
[309] Cunningham, pp. 140-141.
[310] Jeff Billington ed., "Three Severed Heads," Booklet for the Blu-ray Limited Edition of *A Severed Head* (Powerhouse Films, 2019), p. 23.
[311] Tamás Bényei, *Az ártatlan ország: Az angol regény 1945 után* (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadója, 2005), p. 21.
[312] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "[A]z ismert szlogen szerint a németek ellen "a nép háborúját" vívták (*the people's war*), vagyis egy pontosan meghatározható és egyértelműen "rossz" ellenséggel szemben korábban soha nem tapasztalt nemzeti összefogás jött létre, ami széles körű optimizmushoz vezetett a megmerevedett osztálykülönbségek esetleges felszámolását egy igazságosabb társadalom lehetőségét illetően."
[313] Ibid.

efficiency and power of liberal democracy, the ideology against fascism, proved to be questionable."[314] Another, third experience was the Holocaust and the humanly inconceivable horror of the camps "that somewhat merged in the English language with the experience of the nuclear war."[315] To these three experiences, Bényei adds a fourth one "that the English did not have to take on"[316], namely the experience of military occupation and collaboration with the conquering Soviet totalitarian regime that East Europe was about to go through.[317] Accordingly, from the birth the welfare state to the late 1970s, the post-war English society was characterized by a social and political stability.

Such restoration however would not have been, or at least just partly would have been possible without the assistance of the German-speaking exiles coming to England between 1933 and 1948. Although Bényei observes that "there is no better revelation to the suffocating air of English provincialism than the numerous immigrant writers, from D.H. Lawrence to Graham Greene, Anthony Burgess and Martin Amis,"[318] he also takes note of those European Jewish scholars and intellectuals, including Ernst Gombrich, Karl Popper, or Nikolaus Pevsner, setting foot in England during the war.[319] Their influence on the British culture is best described by Michel Espagne who introduces the term cultural transfer, i.e. the exchange of knowledge between two cultures in the history of colonisation and migration that rests on "mutual contact and plural interaction"[320] and that altogether invites us "to rethink the relationship between the center and the periphery, incoming and outgoing parties, and the relationship between influence and power."[321] With this definition, Espagne rejects any interpretations that approach colonialism and any other forms of movement between two cultures as a merely one-sided conquest, arguing that cultural transfer is a "two-sided and creative process,"[322] therefore "[i]n the process

[314] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "[Ú]gy tűnt, a háborús erőfeszítés, a fasizmussal szembeni harc maga is cask totalitárius eszközökkel folytatható sikeresen: az évekig tartó háborús berendezkedés az angol hadigépezet ijesztő, totalitárius bürokratizálódásához vezetett, s ennek láttán a fasizmussal szembenálló ideológia, a liberális demokrácia hatékonysága, ereje is megkérdőjeleződhetett."
[315] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "A harmadik tapasztalat a haláltáborok szörnyűsége, az abszolút rossz tapasztalata volt, amely az angol nyelvben valamelyest összeolvadt az atomrobbanás tapasztalatával (a holocaust szóval mindkettőre utalhatunk)."
[316] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Egy lehetséges negyedik tapasztalat megszerzésére az angoloknak nem volt módjuk: a bombázások és a légi csata ellenére a kontinentális Európával ellentétben nem kellett elszenvedniük a katonai megszállás és a kollaboráció megalázó és morálisan lealacsonytó élményét."
[317] Ibid.
[318] Ibid., p. 145. My translation. Original text: "Az angol provincializmus fojtogató levegőjét mi sem jelzi jobban, mint a rengeteg emigráns angol író, D.H. Lawrence-től Graham Greene-ig, Anthony Burgessig és Martin Amisig."
[319] Ibid.
[320] Adler 2019, p. 15.
[321] Olga Yakushenko, "What is Cultural Transfer?," European University at St. Petersburg. Available: https://eu.spb.ru/en/news/14094-what-is-cultural-transfer. Access : 26.07.2019.
[322] Ibid.

transfer and the migration from one cultural situation to another, any object falls into a new context and takes on a new meaning."[323]

In his symposium "The Great Transformation: The Contribution of German-Jewish Exiles to British Culture" (2019), Adler explains how "cultural transfer" came to existence through the German-speaking exiles in England, listing up those whose contribution to the English scientific and cultural life reshaped and reinterpreted the British identity. He argues:

> Peter Hennessy's view of the era defined by the motto "never again" provides an all-embracing scenario for positive change: the country, preoccupied by the need to prevent a new war, pursued a plan for peace. The mood that swept the Labour Party to power in 1945 to effect a post-war settlement was the very one that enabled the exiles to prosper. As Ernest Bevin wrote in 1940: "there will have to be a great recasting of values". That is exactly what occurred, making room for otherness. In Central European philosophy "value" had long held a key role. Now it came to Britain. […] If there was going to be a change, Britain was not just ready, but desired it, and the immigrants were at hand to help society refashion its identity. In so doing, they contributed to a major transformation in what Jürgen Habermas calls "the public sphere": an intellectual and public arena free from state control, in which society can develop a new moral and political discourse. When "value" became a vital concept in this sphere, it fostered a new morality that later contributed to the mood of the 1960s, and shaped the new era."[324]

In the light of the recent political situation, both in and out of Europe, the various attitudes toward asylum seekers, range from pure ignorance to hate crimes, this is an especially powerful statement. Exiles took their own cultures and values with them, thereby "enrich[ing] the arts and sciences, politics, education and public life."[325] Escaping from the unimaginable monstrosity of Nazism, they "represented society in its purest form"[326], and their purpose with telling the truth about the true nature of Hitler's power, with special regard to the works of Canetti, Adler and Steiner, was to prevent its recurrence.[327] Intellectuals like George Steiner, whom

[323] Ibid.
[324] Adler 2019, pp. 5-6.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid., p. 8.
[327] Ibid.

Adler calls "a veritable one-man university"[328], redefined British literary theory and philosophy with his idea of freedom that embraces cultural differences.[329] Only with the mutual agreement between the English society and its exiles was post-war revival possible. The notion of mutuality is highlighted by István Fehér M., who claims that any construction of identity is possible only "through the assessment of the experience of otherness"[330]. Thus, "it is [o]nly through encountering something other than myself, something different, and through experiencing this other as such, as other, that I become aware of my difference from this other, of my otherness from this other, of who and what am I, and obtain a sense of my (transforming) identity."[331] Jeremy Adler echoes this view by saying:

> Mutuality is key. Both sides need to reach a new self-understanding. Both sides renew. It is the last resort, this is a matter of ethics. To borrow a phrase from E.H. Carr, "to establish methods of peaceful change is […] the fundamental problem of […] morality, and this was happily resolved in the mid-century. It can be called the Talmudic style; or the English model, following what Barringon Moore Jr. calls "the age of peaceful transformation" which helped to create modern Britain as a democratic nation. So the second half of the twentieth-century formed a peaceable consensus in reaction to the inhumanity of the Third Reich, and reinvigorated modernisation, not least by absorbing formerly German-speaking Jews into the polity.[332]

The English novel implied this absorption of the Central European exiles in many ways. The figure of the exotic foreigner is central to works like Philip Larkin's *A Girl in Winter* (1947), or Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter* (1967).[333] Foreigners such as the Hungarian Arthur Koestler, redefined the concepts of rootlessness and displacement. They carried a sense of

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[328] Ibid., p. 16.
[329] Ibid., p. 16-17.
[330] István Fehér M., "'A tiszta önmegismerés az abszolút máslétben, ez az éter mint olyan…': Ideneségtapasztalat mint az önmegismerés útja és közege," in Gábor Bednanics, Zoltán Kékesi and Ernő Kulcsár Szabó eds., *Identitás és kulturális idegenség* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2003), p. 11. My translation. Original text: "'[i]dentitásképzés' másképp, mint 'idegenségtapasztalat feldolgozása' révén nem lehetséges."
[331] Ibid., p. 25. My translation. Original text: "Csak azáltal, hogy valami mással, valami idegennel találkozom, s ezt a mást mint olyant, azaz mint mást tapasztalom, ébredek tudatára annak, hogy én ettől a mástól különbözöm, hogy más vagyok, mint ez a más, s hogy voltaképpen ki vagy mi is vagyok, azaz teszek szert (változó) azonosságomra."
[332] Ibid., p. 29.
[333] Pauline Paucker, "Image of the German Jew in English Fiction," in Julius Carlebach, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Aubrey Newman, Arnold Paucker, and Peter Pulzer eds., *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991), pp. 330-331.

realism the English intellectual life was longing for, and their sheer presence, their visibility in the intellectual circles carried a reality previously unseen by the British.

Born to Anglo-Irish parents, Murdoch always felt closer to the Central European exiles in England than some of her British peers. In an interview with John Haffenden, she claims that "I've only recently realised that I'm a kind of exile, a displaced person. I identify with exiles."[334] In the same place, she identifies her time in the refugee camps and her witness to the social collapse of European countries as "instructive"[335], while she was trying to be compassionate with people in great torment. As Kate Larsson asserts, it is no wonder that after the war, Murdoch returned to moral philosophy "as though there were no stability to be found outside."[336] In both her philosophical work and her novels, her primary quest is to find an antithesis to the terror of the modern world and to discover new, different paths for the post-1945 humanity.

Under the Net and *A Severed Head* are "post-war" novels in terms of their direction of "moving on from the past"[337]. Although the aftermath of the war is perceived in both novels, there is a sense of hope, an energy to start life anew with fresh eyes on the future.[338] It explains the touch of comedy both novels linger on, the *funniness* of their characters that is for Kiernan Ryan to be understood "in both senses of the word: funny because they are peculiar and funny because they make us laugh."[339] The events of both novels are presented by first-person male narrators, heroes who are in every sense antitypes of the pre-war and pre-modern ideal of masculinity. In this sense both Jake Donaghue and Martin Lynch-Gibbon are epitomes of post-war masculinity in their suffering from their own uprootedness, their self-serving solipsistic deception that "has made [them] misconstrue the motives and emotions of everyone close to [them],"[340] and their desperate attempts to restore their identity. The shadow of Steiner is observable in Murdoch's commemoration of her "beloved dead"[341], her "private pantheon of martyrs"[342] to which both Frank Thompson, Murdoch's fiancé murdered by the Germans in Bulgaria, and Steiner belonged,[343] as well as in her employment of Steiner's view of the past, and his idea on taboo and the sociology of danger. As we will see, her conceptualization of power in Western societies, represented by the various couplings in these novels, shows striking resemblances to Canetti

[334] John Haffenden, "John Haffenden Talks to Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 130.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Kate Larsson, *"Everything important is to do with passion": Iris Murdoch's concept of love and its Platonic origin* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2009), p. 14.
[337] Martin and Rowe, p. 28.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Kiernan Ryan, "Introduction" to Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. xxiv.
[340] Ibid., p. xiii.
[341] Boddington 2015, p. 26.
[342] Conradi 2001a, p. 341.
[343] Ibid.

and Adler. Thus, the novels are poofs for the cultural transfer that was going through in England at the time. It can be suggested therefore that although it is difficult to find any identification between Murdoch's characters and her real-life friends,[344] their presence might be felt in the ideas they stood for.

Pathfinding and Commemoration in *Under the Net*

Under the Net is Iris Murdoch's first novel. Published in 1954, the novel came out two years after Franz Baermann Steiner's death and during Murdoch's tumultuous affair with Elias Canetti. It is known from her biography that as early as 1941, Murdoch "was now starting to conceive of herself as an apprentice writer"[345] and wrote numerous manuscripts of novels, all of which were eventually destroyed by her in 1986.[346] At the time *Under the Net* was written, Murdoch had been a fellow of St Anne's College at Oxford, was preoccupied with European fiction and philosophy, most notably with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Raymond Queneau, had published several essays on French existentialism and a monograph on Sartre. *Under the Net* finely recaptures elements of existentialism, that is, the individual's alienation with his society and his delusion of the world, and finely combines them with Simone Weil, who diagnosed alienation in *The Need for Roots* (1949) as the ill of modern society. *Under the Net* is both a book of pathfinding and a memorial. Jake Donaghue, its hero is a flat-seeking penniless writer trying to find his place and make sense of his existence in the post-war world. Looking for his one-time girlfriend, Anna, and revoking his intellectual companionship with the mysterious Hugo, Jake gets embroiled in the most amazing adventures that include an eavesdropping at the kitchen door of Sadie, Anna's movie-star sister, kidnapping a celebrity hound, seeking out his lost love on the streets of London and Paris, or getting unwittingly involved in a political riot on a film-set. All the while, Jake expects answers from everybody and everything to his questions about art and the post-war human condition and struggles to be a good artist himself.

In *Under the Net*, there are many references to Murdoch's lost loves, Frank Thompson and Steiner, and there is a sense of melancholy that casts shadow on Jake's picaresque journeys. The novel is regarded by Priscilla Martin and Anne Rowe as the most self-reflexive one in her

[344] *Selected Writings 1*, p. 90.
[345] Conradi 2001a, p. 170.
[346] Ibid.

oeuvre.[347] Although Murdoch always emphasized that fiction should be filled with free characters as liberated from "the will of their author"[348] and the autobiographical self of their author[349] as they can be, it is not essentially the case here. The novel compellingly recaptures the autobiography of its writer. Like her hero Jake, Murdoch was a writer with Irish origins, trying hard to finish her novel while translating Raymond Queneau's *Pierrot, Mon Ami* (1942) with whom Murdoch had begun a friendly correspondence during her years at the Treasury.[350] *Under the Net* also recalls her early philosophical interests, including her impression on the philosophy Wittgenstein, Sartre and Weil.[351]

The novel, with its theatrical and movie settings, is also with the themes of performance and personification, "masks and roles"[352], among which, according to Deborah Johnson, "the most important 'mask […] is the hero Jake"[353]. In this respect, says Johnson, the entire narrative is in itself a form of "impersonation" [354], i. e. a mask-making under which the female author is hiding.[355] What many times troubles the feminist literary critics about Murdoch's work is that she arguably did not believe in the "female predicament", observing "[w]omen who think of themselves as something separate"[356] as "joining a kind of inferiority movements like women's clubs."[357] In an interview with Jack Biles, she argues that "I'm not interested in the 'woman's world' or the assertion of a 'female viewpoint',"[358] meaning that such categorisation distort our picture on the human spirit that is essentially genderless. Such argument leads Sabina Lovibond to call Murdoch's work dedicated to old-fashioned male sexism and conservatism, saying that "it is one thing to assume with critical (and darkly comic) intent the voice of an unlikeable male character (as in *A Severed Head* or *A Word Child*); another thing to write, no less convincingly, in a persona of a highly pompous elderly man just because you know how (the shadowy narrator 'N' in *The Philosopher's Pupil*)."[359] This view is challenged by other scholars, with Avril Horner saying that Lovibond had better "deconstruct a novel's world without judging a novelist as somehow lacking in political foresight or levelling accusations of inconsistency across the

[347] Martin and Rowe, p. 15.; see also Boddington 2015, p. 30.
[348] Ibid., p. 279.
[349] Christopher Bigsby, "Interview with Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 102.
[350] Boddington 2015, p. 30.
[351] Martin and Rowe, p. 16.
[352] Deborah Johnson, *Iris Murdoch* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Ltd., 1987), p. 20.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.
[356] Sheila Hale, "Interview from 'Women Writers Now: Their Approach and Their Apprenticeship'," in Dooley, p. 32.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Jack I. Biles, "An Interview with Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 61.
[359] Sabina Lovibond, *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 6.

fiction and the non-fiction, something [she] is inclined to do."[360] Certainly, neither Murdoch's way of portraying women's lib as a subject of mockery at best (such as the elderly suffragists in *The Flight from the Enchanter*), and of suspicion as a destructive force at worst (Millie Kinnard in *The Red and the Green*), nor her way of calling women's studies a "rubbish"[361] help any attempt discuss her work without assuming that it articulates the same old patriarchal views on the politics of sexuality. Yet, I am much closer to the notion that some of Murdoch's defenders, including Daniel Read, Tammy Grimshaw and Rachel Johnson, express: that Murdoch's novels, especially those with a first-person narrator, are "critiques of society's vision of femininity,"[362] whereby they describe "the manner in which the power of society and social expectations affect the roles that […] women are expected to play out in their relationships, as well as in their communities."[363] This argument is all the more suggestive, in case we consider that each of her first-person male characters faces similar situations in the course of events, whereby they must redefine their "assumptions about maleness, femaleness, sexual glamour, personal and political power"[364].

Thus, it is important to emphasize that Iris Murdoch is not just a writer in a traditional sense, but a *woman* writer. It is all the more essential to note, since upon of her debut novel, serious attempt was made to categorize Murdoch as one of the "Angry Young Men", a group occupied by such all-male literary novelists and playwrights as John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, John Wain, Harold Pinter, John Braine, or Alan Sillitoe.[365] *Under the Net* ended up winning a runner-up prize at the Cheltenham Literary Festival in 1954 to Brigid Brophy's *Hackenfeller's Ape* (1954).[366] This later event let us suggest that from the early 1950s, a change was about to happen in terms of incorporating women writers into the literary canon. Nick Turner wisely asks the question: "would things have been different had Murdoch used a female narrator for her debut?"[367] His answer is that in Murdoch's case, it is not primarily the gender of the narrator-hero that is to be questioned but rather the patriarchal discourse in which the

[360] Avril Horner, "Review of *Iris Murdoch: Gender and Philosophy*, Sabina Lovibond (London: Routledge, 2011)," *The Iris Murdoch Review* 4 (2013) : 58.
[361] Dooley, p. 62.
[362] Read, p. 194.
[363] Tammy Grimshaw, *Sexuality, Gender, and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction* (Madison: Farleigh Dickenson University Press, 2005), p. 19.
[364] Johnson, p. 25.
[365] Angela Hague, "Picaresque Structure and the Angry Young Novel," *Twentieth Century Literature* 32 (Summer, 1986) : 209-220., Ryan, p. xvi.
[366] Martin and Rowe, p. 13.
[367] Nick Turner, *Post-War British Women Novelists and the Canon* (London: continuum, 2010), p. 45.

novel takes part: in Murdoch's case it is her response to the philosophy of Sartre, Wittgenstein and Beckett.[368]

Under the Net is characterized by Johnson as "an elegant novel of surfaces which emphasises the extent to which we all play roles."[369] With this argument, Johnson suggests that the novel skilfully uncovers the masks of civilized manners, under which "the ungraspable fluid reality"[370] lies. Jake's task is to register this reality and to recognise:

> Events stream past us like these crowds and the face of each is seen only for a minute. What is urgent is not urgent for ever but only ephemerally. All work and all love, the search for wealth and fame, the search for truth, like itself, are made up of moments which pass and become nothing. Yet through this shaft of nothings we drive onward with that miraculous vitality that creates our precarious habitations in the past and the future. So we live; a spirit that broods and hovers over the continual death of time, the lost meaning, the unrecaptured moment, the unremembered face, until the final chop that ends all our moments and plunges that spirit back into the void from which it came.[371]

Thus, *Under the Net* is about post-war pathfinding in the sense that, under its comical surface, "[Jake's] wanderings, bizarre adventures, and the unexpected twists"[372] depicted in the novel reflect the rootlessness of the post-war generation, their questioning of pre-war moral values, masculinity and their need for new, alternative ways of artistic expression. This need is suggested by an extract from John Dryden's *The Secular Masque* (1700), serving as the novel's epigraph:

> All, all of a piece throughout:
> Thy Chase had a Beast in view:

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[368] Ibid., p. 46. In the same breath, Turner discusses the novels by Doris Lessing and Barbara Pym, arguing that while Murdoch was welcomed with critical acclaim, these novelists suffered for long from a relatively cold reception. In Lessing's case, it was the use of female protagonists framed within a political discourse that took her novels to be academically recognized only in the course of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, while the stylistic simplicity of Pym's novels and their focus on middle-class domestic life made her invisible from the academic literary discourse, despite Philip Larkin's praise of her, her election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and her novel *Quartet in Autumn* (1977) having been nominated for the Booker Prize.
[369] Johnson, p. 24.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Vintage, 2002), p.
[372] László Báti, "Introduction" to Iris Murdoch, *A háló alatt* (Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1971) p. 5. My translation. Original text: "[…] bolyongások, bizarr kalandok és váratlan események […]"

Thy Wars brought nothing about;
Thy Lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old Age is out,
And time to begin a new.[373]

In structure and depiction, this epigraph to the novel shows striking similarities with Steiner's poem "8. May 1945" (1945), that goes in the following way:

People have buried their wickedly pampered war.
Poppies bloom out of beer.
Paper-chains lace up the bodies of feverish houses.

The wet flags drip into sultry, festive air.
Behind the roll of drums
A skater zigzags over a frozen lake of blood.[374]

The comparison of Steiner's poem and Murdoch's use of *The Secular Masque* as the epigraph of *Under the Net* is curious for at least two reasons. Both Murdoch and Steiner portray the general atmosphere of the immediate post-war years where "people have buried their wickedly pampered war", a war that had "brought nothing about". Moreover, both writers exercise a sharp criticism over the Bohemianism that characterised the social scene in England, and primarily in London, the "sultry, festive air" behind which "[a] skater zigzags over a frozen lake of blood". By that, both authors raise the question that what new foundations should human society and the morals be built on, and whether the new age would be able to do so.

With the character of Jake Donaghue, described by Volker Rieger as a "cultural parasite"[375], Murdoch personifies this post-war new age. In her study on Murdoch's early novels, A.S. Byatt calls Jake "to a great extent a standard fictional hero of our time."[376] Although he is free from all social, political and emotional norms, his is a form of "negative freedom"[377], which is evident in his isolation from society. Arriving back in London from a trip to France, he learns from

[373] John Dryden, *The Secular Masque*. Available: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44184/the-secular-masque. Access: 30. 07. 2019.
[374] *Modern Poetry in Translation*, p. 51.
[375] Volker Rieger, *Iris Murdochs 'philosophische' Romane* (Tübingen: Fotodr. Präzis, 1969). p. 11. My translation. Original text: „… gesellschaftliche Parasit…"
[376] A.S. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom – The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 13.
[377] Ibid.

his attendant Finn that they are being displaced by Madge with whom they have been living rent-free in a flat Earl's Court. This displacement leads to a series of picaresque journeys and erotic entanglements during which Jake escapes from his solipsism, his disenchantment and, as Conradi says, "ends the book with a newly-won joy at such withering into the truth, ready to write a book of his own, and trying to eschew theory."[378] It is this "special use of picaresque convention"[379] that distinguishes Jake from the heroes of the 19th century novel. As Martin and Rowe note, while the male protagonists of the traditional English novel are all "rooted in society, heritage and family, Jake travels light"[380] between London and Paris, his "few possessions […] usually at Mrs Tinckham's shop, […] carr[ying] minimal baggage of any kind."[381] Although each trip he undertakes "promise excitement and intellectual engagement"[382], Jake stays mentally remote in each case.[383] He has the same attitude to politics, money, work, or even women. As it turns out, he used to be a member of the Communist Youth League, but, disillusioned by English socialism, which he sees as "welfare capitalism"[384], since [i]t doesn't touch the real curse of capitalism,"[385] is reluctant to get involved in politics as a means of being integrated into a social system he is unable to identify with. He rejects Madge's job offer in Paris and, with it, "the key to the world in which money comes easily, and where the same amount of effort can produce enormously richer results,"[386] with a "confused lassitude"[387]. Although he detests loneliness, he is equally afraid of emotional commitment. Thus, when the idea of marriage with Anna crops up, he dismisses it, looking at it as "an Idea of Reason, a concept which may regulate but not constitute my life," [388] "a communion of souls"[389] he lacks longing for.

Interestingly, Jake is cut off from his past in the same way that he is isolated from the present. When describing his experiences in the war, he says: "I have shattered nerves. Never mind how I got them. That's another story, and I'm not telling you the whole story of my life. I have them; and one effect of this is that I can't bear being alone for long."[390] Although we are informed

[378] Peter J. Conradi, *The Saint & the Artist: A Study of the Fiction of Iris Murdoch* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 37-38.
[379] Ibid., p. 38.
[380] Martin and Rowe, p. 28.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Philips, p. 35.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Murdoch 2002, p. 110.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Ibid., p. 198.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid., p. 34.
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid., p. 23.

that he was born in Dublin, no ancestry or family ties are revealed. However, some remnants of the past are exposed, even if for just a few short glimpses. Jake takes a "nocturnal walk"[391] among the ruined streets and churches of London in the night:

> From the darkness and shade of St Paul's Churchyard we came into Cheapside as into a bright arena, and saw framed in the gap of a ruin the pale neat rectangles of St Nicholas Cole Abbey, standing alone away to the south of us on the other side of Cannon Street. In between the willow herb waved over what remained of streets. In this desolation the coloured shells of houses still raised up filled and blank squares of wall and window. The declining sun struck on glowing bricks and flashing tiles and warmed the stone of an occasional fallen pillar. As we passed St Vedast the top of the sky was vibrating into a later blue, and turning into what used to be Freeman's Court we entered a Henekey's house.[392]
>
> […]
>
> Across a moonswept open space we followed what used to be Fyefoot Lane, where many a melancholy notice board tells in the ruins of the City where churches and where public houses once stood. Beside the solitary tower of St Nicholas we passed into Upper Thames Street. There was no sound; not a bell, not a footstep.[393]

Pamela Osborn attributes this depiction of London to a "survivor's euphoria"[394], a term that Murdoch takes from Canetti who notes in *Crowds and Power* that "the attraction of cemeteries and graveyards is so strong that people visit them even if no one belonging to them is buried there."[395] Osborn adheres to the idea that Jake is traumatized by his wartime experiences, claiming that "and the influence of war is borne out in his frequent use of war-related metaphors,"[396] such as in his portrayal of Anna's office in the theatre as "a vast toy shop that had been hit by a bomb,"[397] his friend Finn as a person having "the air of a man donning a parachute for a dangerous jump,"[398] articles in the *Evening Standard* that are "like distant cries or the sounds

[391] Martin and Rowe, p. 83.
[392] Murdoch 2002, p. 106.
[393] Ibid., p. 117.
[394] Pamela Osborn, "Another country: bereavement, mourning and survival in the novels of Iris Murdoch," unpublished PhD-dissertation, Kingston University, 2013. p. 119.
[395] Canetti 1981, p.321., cited by Osborn, p. 119.
[396] Osborn, p. 117.
[397] Murdoch 2002, p. 42., cited by Osborn, p. 117.
[398] Murdoch 2002, p. 224., cited by Osborn, p. 117.

of battles far away in time and space,"[399] or his own heart as "beating like an army on the march"[400]. In a footnote, Osborn remarks that all Jake's references to the war have striking similarities with Raymond Queneau's novel *Pierrot, Mon Ami*, the Ur-text to *Under the Net*, where the hero's military past comes to life in his brief remembrance of it.[401] It should also be noted that this view of the past as "cut-off" that is "in a way easier to convey to another than a continuous one"[402] is something Franz Baermann Steiner explained to Murdoch and that is nowhere more clearly represented than in *Under the Net* (see the first chapter).

What adds autobiographical layer to the book is Murdoch's evocation of Steiner and the German-speaking refugees she had contact with.[403] We learn that Hugo is a son of German immigrants and that his father found his adopted English name on a tombstone in a Cotswold churchyard, founding "a flourishing armaments factory, and the firm of Belfounder and Baermann, Small-arms, Ltd."[404] As Boddington points it out, the tombstone in *Under the Net* is a forerunner to the grave in *The Nice and the Good*, where there are four elements of memorialisation: "a graveyard, a character who bears a striking resemblance to Steiner, his final passing into the graveyard, and an episode in the graveyard which contains significant elements from the story of Frank Thompson."[405] The small allusion to Steiner in *Under the Net* can be seen on Murdoch's part as an act of love, a form of moving on from the past while paying tribute to Steiner.[406] As Murdoch's biography suggest, it is possible that Steiner was the only person to whom Murdoch showed the novel's manuscript,[407] a gesture she was later reluctant to make with anybody in her career as a novelist.[408] On 1 August 1952, Murdoch noted in her journal that Steiner delighted her by praising the novel for its "Slav type of humour"[409]. Steiner wrote in his diary on 16 October 1952: "We were talking about thousands of things at the same time, crouching on the ground like children, nestled together […] We were talking about [*Under the*

[399] Murdoch 2002, p. 233., cited by Osborn, p. 117.
[400] Murdoch 2002, p. 242., cited by Osborn, p. 117.
[401] Osborn, n117.
[402] Conradi 2001a, p. 318.
[403] Boddington 2015, pp. 31-32., idem, *Iris Murdoch's People A to Z* (Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd., 2018), p. 32.
[404] Murdoch 2002, p. 60.
[405] Boddington 2015, p. 8.
[406] Boddington 2015, pp. 31-32.
[407] Conradi 2001a, p. 327.
[408] Bayley, p. 17.
[409] Iris Murdoch's Journal 1 August 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.

Net]. I said something only about the settings that I loved, and we agreed about the things that should be revised. I encouraged [Iris] not enough, I reproached myself a lot."[410]

Steiner's views on civilisation and the oriental are recaptured in the image of the theatre. Theatre and performance here symbolize all those social manners that conceal the hidden and ambiguous nature of the human mind. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), Murdoch claims that "Platonic philosophy and some religious positions take ordinary egoistic consciousness to be a veil which separates us from the order and true multiplicity of the real world: reflectively understood this is obviously true." [411] In *Under the Net*, the Platonic cave takes shape in the dark and enchanting world of the theatre where the audience is unable to see through the masks the actors are wearing. Left alone in Anna's dressing room, Jake comes across a set of masks "made of a light wooden material, and slightly painted, some full face and some in profile"[412], having "something a trifle oriental in their mood, something which spoke more even perhaps in the subtly curving mouth than in the slanting eyes,"[413] some of them vaguely reminding him of Indian Buddhas. These latter images slightly recapture Steiner's enthusiasm for the *Bhagavad Gita* and his passion for Eastern religions that was inspired by his reading of it, and that "took its most concrete form […] in the religious syncretism evident in the autobiographical *Conquests*, where Buddhist, Taoist, Jewish, and Muslim ideas are combined."[414]

What brings Murdoch's thinking close to Franz Baermann Steiner's is that both saw civilisation and civilized behaviour as a form of masquerade standing for a set of norms that are inherently Western, and that serve as a cover up for its underlying enigmatic forces. In "On 'God' and 'Good'" Murdoch acknowledges Freud for his "important discovery on the human mind"[415], "see[ing] the psyche as an egocentric system of quasi-mechanical energy, largely determined by its own individual history, whose natural attachments are sexual, ambiguous, and hard for the subject to understand or control."[416] In "On the Process of Civilization" (1999) Steiner claims: "The individual is stricken and helpless when confronted by the forces of

[410] Franz Steiner's diary 16 October 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS6/1/54. My translation. Original text: "Wir sprachen über tausend Dinge gleichzeitig, auf dem Boden kauernd, wie Kinder, aneinandergeschmiegt […] Wir sprachen über den Roman. Ich sagte nur etwas über die Stellen, die mir sehr gefielen und wir stimmten überein, was umzuarbeiten wäre. Ich ermutigte sie nicht genug, machte mir nachher viele Vorwürfe."
[411] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 165.
[412] Murdoch 2002, p. 53.
[413] Ibid.
[414] *Selected Writings 1*, pp. 34-35.
[415] Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 341.
[416] Ibid.

society. He has no rational weapon. No means to defend himself – let alone 'control' anything."[417] What comes out of these observations is something that strictly resonates with Murdoch's view, i.e. that reality is entirely separate from the self, it consists of many bizarre and overpowering forces, and the individual's task is to arrive from its delusional solipsistic vision to the understanding of the world that he can in no way have a hold over, from the "[morally] questionable but socially sanctioned norms of emotional life"[418] to the true path of existence "to which we can never get close enough, however hard we may try as it were to crawl under the net."[419] The "net" here refers to the net of discourse in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1922), in which Wittgenstein identifies language as a barrier to any adequate expression of the world of abstractions.[420]

Such identity crisis of the modern man is a central theme in H.G. Adler's *Panorama*. The hero Josef Kramer's life appears here in a series of panoramic images and sounds, whereby it "seems more intricately constructed than even he realises"[421]. To find "the true path for humankind"[422] therefore is in accordance with the modern man's acceptance that he is not more and not less than an "Anschauer", an onlooker. As "the master" Johannes Tvrdil enlightens it to Josef:

> Man's path is a pilgrimage, but one that ends within itself. There are two ways of approaching the world. In the first, one looks at the world through a peephole. One yearns for the world all the more, until somehow you step into it. But then the ground is swept from under your feet, or in fact what really happens is you lose your way, as you cannot merge with the world by striving to enter what you want to get lost inside of. Only through the second approach can one unite with the world. In this, one closes his actual eyes and looks inside himself at the same time. The real world that then arises is the true world. The observer is stuck in the middle, and here he recovers the entire world once again, only more beautiful and complete. In this it is also possible to unite with the entire world. Much more wonderful than any gaze is not to look at all. This you learn when you first learn the second approach.

[417] Franz Baermann Steiner, "On the Process of Civilisation," in *Selected Writings 2*, p. 127.
[418] László Báti, "Iris Murdoch," in Murdoch 1971, pp. 7-8.
[419] Murdoch 2002, p. 91.
[420] See Murdoch 2002, pp. 66-68 and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 81.
[421] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," in Adler 2011, xvi.
[422] Adler 2011, p. 187.

> Then you recognize how everything repeats itself and always remains the same: it is all one.[423]

For Adler man's pilgrimage appears in a series of repetitions. Peter Filkins notes that the path Tvrdil points toward for Josef reappears as the path Josef takes as a forced labourer in Lager Langenstein camp and that the magical gong that Tvrdil plays in the tower room scene reemerges as an iron rail gong hanging from a gallows-like rack, pointing to the "intricate web of themes and motifs that continually circle back upon one another"[424]. The novel thereby represents life as a series of constantly recurring and contingent events which modern man can only witness and suffer, but in no way is able to command, and the modern world whose solipsistic vision was shattered by the Holocaust.

A fundamental part of this solipsistic delusion is the individual's urge *to unmask* the world he desires to possess, a term that Murdoch takes from Elias Canetti.[425] As Morley notes, Canetti describes the process of unmasking being "of fundamental importance for the paranoiac"[426], a statement Murdoch underlined, including the term in her index on many occasions.[427] To gain knowledge above everybody else, "to tear the mask from their faces"[428] like Menelaus did it with Proteus, "the old man of the sea, when he refused to be frightened by any of the forms he adopted to escape, and held him fast until he became Proteus again,"[429] is the paranoiac drive of the despot. This paranoia for unmasking is, for Murdoch, another form of solipsism, since "[t]he paranoid's delusion of masks and his drive to unmask,"[430] i.e. his egocentric vision of the world and his wish to rule the world does not allow the world to reveal itself in its "otherness" to him.[431] Watching a stage performance of Anna's theatre group, Jake is mesmerized from the masks the actors are wearing, aiming to explore Anna's face behind some of them, while being terrified from their gaze.[432] Working as an orderly at a hospital, Jake encounters

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[423] Ibid., p. 192.
[424] Peter Filkins, "Introduction," in Adler 2011, xvi. It is curious to see that Adler uses motifs and images that have striking similarities with Kafka's *The Trial* and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947). In both Kafka and Adler, the world appears in a nightmarish, peephole-like series of images where the individual helplessly flounders under the weight of the judgment upon him. Like Mann, Adler found inspiration in classical music and opera, with a particular respect to the music of Robert Schumann and Arnold Schönberg, and the music-like composition of sounds and images all represent the major motive of the cyclic nature of life returning back to itself.
[425] Morley, p. 122-123.
[426] Canetti 1981, p. 453.; Morley, p. 122.
[427] Morley, p. 122.
[428] Canetti 1981, p. 378.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Morley, p. 123.
[431] Iris Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 444.
[432] Murdoch 2002, pp. 40-41.

Hugo, whose "darkened face"[433] appears to him as being "masked, as ever, by a sort of innocence"[434].

It is noteworthy that much of the characters in Murdoch's novels are driven to recognise the "otherness" of the world through a series of erotic entanglements. Murdoch describes love as "the perception of the individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real."[435] In *Under the Net*, Hugo deconstructs Jake's masculine delusions of the world, shedding light to the truth of the quartet of love affairs they both are engaged in: while Anna pursues Hugo, Hugo himself is obsessed by Anna's film star sister Sadie, and Sadie with Jake.[436] This revelation drives Jake to the admiration of reality as non-stable and impenetrable, and the novel ends with a stoical openness[437] to "the wonders of the world"[438]. From the moment he realises that he is a subordinated participant in, rather than a master of the events, he can enjoy each moment of being with all its accidents and contingencies, and of giving up his self-centred masculine ideals of the world, including that of women. As he concludes:

> I had no longer any picture of Anna. She faded like a sorcerer's apparition; and yet somehow her presence remained to me, more substantial than ever before. It seemed as if, for the first time, Anna really existed now as a separate being and not as a part of myself. To experience this was extremely painful. Yet as I tried to keep my eyes fixed upon where she was, I felt towards her a sense of initiative which was perhaps after all one of the guises of love. Anna was something which had to be learnt afresh. When does one ever know a human being? Perhaps only after one has realized the impossibility of knowledge and renounced the desire for it and finally ceased to feel even the need of it. But then what one achieves is no longer knowledge, it is simply a kind of co-existence; and this too is one of the guises of love.[439]

Anna's waning picture can be observed as the hero's step forward the world and, also, as the writer's poignant farewell to her lost loves. *Under the Net* was being completed at the time of

[433] Ibid., p. 258.
[434] Ibid.
[435] Iris Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 215.
[436] Murdoch 2002, p. 256.
[437] Martin and Rowe, p. 28.
[438] Murdoch 2002, p. 286.
[439] Ibid., p. 268.

Steiner's sudden death, which was altogether a beginning of Murdoch's tumultuous love affair with Canetti. In her unpublished 1958 poem "Invocation"[440], Murdoch wrote:

> Precious dead,
> I cannot follow there where you go on
> Nor love you quite so finely as I did once.[441]

A sign for her enduring devotion is that she wrote above the title of this poem "WFT" and "FBS", the initials of William Frank Thompson and Franz Baermann Steiner, two "precious dead" who wanted to marry her, and whose death filled her with particular grief.[442] Nevertheless, *Under the Net*'s positive ending suggests an effort on her part to overcome the past with all its pains, the lost loves, the abandoned hopes, the destructions of the two wars, and to wake up in "the morning of the first day"[443]. Her inclusion of Steiner's orientalism, his views on civilisation, his name and origin, as well as Canetti's view on unmasking let us suggest that a form of cultural transfer was going on that made *Under the Net* more European in style[444] and remarkably different from the English novels that had been published before.

Power and Emasculation in *A Severed Head*

A Severed Head is Iris Murdoch's fifth novel. It was published in 1961, in an era marked by the questioning of traditions and the sexual revolution that was increasingly invading the Western world. Although, as Derek Jarman recalls it, gay sexual activities were considered as illegal at the dawn of the decade,[445] almost each side of culture was ruled by heterosexual men,[446] the novel powerfully prefigures the legalization of homosexuality and the liberation of women.[447]

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[440] Iris Murdoch's Journals, Poetry Notebooks, and Other Documents (1939-1997), Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202.
[441] Boddington 2015, p. 5.
[442] Ibid.
[443] Murdoch 2002, p. 283.
[444] Martin and Rowe, p. 105.
[445] Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk* (London: Vintage, 2019), p. 38.
[446] Ibid., 42-43.
[447] In her interview with Jack I. Biles, Murdoch expresses her deep sympathy with women's lib, mostly, on the grounds of education. In his memoir *Family Matters* (2019), Peter J. Conradi describes Murdoch as "a vigorous crusader for the abolition of sodomy laws, and in her fiction, depicted gay couples as fighting an uphill struggle or love and self-respect in a society that makes fun of them, or worse." Jack I. Biles, "An Interview with Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 61., Peter J. Conradi, *Family Business: A Memoir* (Bridgend: Seren, 2019), p. 80.

This period is also characterized by the recurring interest in Freudian psychoanalysis with its emphasis on the sexual and mysterious nature of the psyche. A key event was the obscenity trial against the publisher Penguin Books following its unexpurgated edition of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), which resulted in the publication of a series of overtly erotic novels that aimed at breaking every taboo of gender and sexuality.[448] Tamás Bényei calls the 1960s "the age of cultural diversity and prosperity often defined as the period of 'cultural revolution' in such areas as pop music, fashion design, television genres, movies, theatre productions, pop art, experimental genres, and the happening."[449] As Bényei points it out, although this period brought about the extension of democracy and sexual and social freedom that involved new forms of legislation about suicide, homosexuality and racial discrimination, "it altogether intensified the contradictions of the welfare state: the permissive society, the proliferation of the youth subcultures and the social tensions lead to '1968'," [450] even if this year in England was much less turbulent and traumatic than either in France or the United States[451].

A Severed Head is the story of sexual entanglements, the story of power and disempowerment, of exerting control above others and yet being enslaved to other people. In the spirit of the 1960s, the novel deals with such themes as adultery, incest, violence and suicide, and the various forms of power struggles within an apparently civilized upper class community. The novel tells the story of Martin Lynch-Gibbon, a wine merchant, whose confidence that he can handle both a beautiful marriage and a charming mistress is shattered when his wife, the neurotic Antonia, unexpectedly leaves him for her psychoanalyst, Palmer Anderson. Martin's attempt to react and behave in a civilised manner to the emotional turmoil that comes afterwards, gets challenged and ultimately demolished when he meets Palmer's half-sister, the demonic anthropologist, Honor Klein.

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[448] An example for it is Gore Vidal's *Myra Breckinridge* (1968), a satirical novel on a theatre group owned by a transsexual woman, that was dismissed by its critics as a book of sheer pornography that exercises a major assault on the assumed gender roles and sexuality. Dennis Altman, *Gore Vidal's America* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), p. 148.

[449] Bényei, p. 23. My translation. Original text: "A hatvanas évek (*swinging sixties*) Angliában elsősorban nem a politikai radikalizmus kora, hanem a kulturális sokszínűség és virágzás gyakran 'kulturális forradalomként' számon tartott időszaka volt, például a popzene, a divattervezés, a televíziós műfajok, a film, a színház, a pop art, a kísérleti műfajok, happening területén."

[450] Ibid., pp. 22-23. My translation. Original text: "A hatvanas évek változási egyfelől a demokrácia és a szabadságjogok érzékelhető kiterjesztését hozták (például a cenzúrával, az öngyilkossággal, a homoaszexualitással, a faji megkülönböztetéssel kapcsolatos törvénykezésben), másfelől viszonyt az évtized során egyre inkább kiéleződtek a jóléti társadalom ellentmondásai: a megengedő társadalom (*permissive society*), az ifjúsági szubkultúrák elterjedése és a társadalmi deszültségek növekedése vezetett '1968'-hoz, a szimbolikus év azonban Angliában sokkal kevésbé hozott drámai eseményeket, mint Franciaországban vagy az egyesült Államokban."

[451] Ibid.

Murdoch's genius lies in her ability to portray the internal power struggles in Western societies in which there is no clear difference between victim and perpetrator, and that is characterized by power dynamics in both the private and the public spheres of life. The novel's structure, settings and atmosphere, including the permutations and variations of erotic entanglements between its six characters, has allowed its critics to call it "a contemporary Restoration comedy"[452], "a sexual square dance"[453] where each character falls in and out of love in a highly patterned way.[454] The opening of the novel's movie adaptation finely recaptures these dance-like entanglements in the book, with a series of dolls resembling the leads coolly circling on large round turntables,[455] a conception that has a slight reference to the 1950 French film version of Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde* (1897).[456]

The couplings in *A Severed Head* reflect something on her own love entanglement, and it should be emphasized that on her way to become a novelist, her relationships with Steiner and Canetti, that were not merely intellectual but also physical, were equally essential. With Steiner, she experienced the nurturing form of love, "having to act as nurse as well as lover"[457] as his heart condition deteriorated. In contrast, Canetti showed her the dark, obsessive and sadomasochistic side of love resting on authority and the dynamics of power. Margaret Drabble argues that Murdoch's novels are "socially realistic"[458] in that "the circular love is partly, you could say, on a frivolous level, is to do with Oxford, and that people who live in a cycle of closed society do live within a small social circle,"[459] they also reflect "her feeling of the arbitrary terror of love which she writes about a lot, that anybody within this circle can suddenly fall in love with anybody else within it."[460] It can be no wonder that the novel first appeared in Germany with the title *Maskenspiel*[461]: like *Under the Net*, this novel also exposes the complex nature of love, sex and power under the masks of civilized manners. This form of disguise is even emphasised by the wine merchant Martin Lynch-Gibbon, the novel's hero and narrator, who describes his relationship to his wife, Antonia, at the beginning of the novel as "a prolonged

[452] Martin and Rowe, p. 49.
[453] The Times, 8 May 1963., cited by Martin and Rowe, p. 49.
[454] Martin and Rowe, p. 50.
[455] Pamela Hutchinson, "A Severed Head: A Study in Bourgeois Perversion," Booklet for the Blu-ray Limited Edition of *A Severed Head*, p. 11.
[456] "Guise and Dolls: A Discussion with Artist and Sculptor Saskia de Boer," the Blu-ray Limited Edition of *A Severed Head*.
[457] Purton, p. 61.
[458] "Iris Murdoch: Strange Love," *BBC Four* 20 December 2003: 23.00.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.
[461] Iris Murdoch, *Maskenspiel* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1963).

and successful masquerade"[462], a self-deception he needed to rely on as a nourishment of his ego.

Ethically, *A Severed Head* focuses on the shift from the individual consciousness that operates the world, and that is basically a masculine self-deception, to the loving attention and openness to the world. The novel begins with Martin, leaning on the couch of his lover Georgie Hands, pleasing himself with the delusion that he is capable of simultaneously controlling his world of adultery. His self-deception reflects a post-1945 re-evaluation of the traditional patriarchal self-consciousness, which identified women as subordinate to men, passive and powerless, yet pious and self-sacrificing human beings, and the angels in the house.[463] Martin's patriarchal self-centeredness is reinforced by the fact that while he describes Georgie's pregnancy with his child as " [t]here was nothing to be done but to get rid of the child"[464], with Georgie "gone through with the hideous business in the manner that I would have expected of her, calm, laconic, matter-of-fact, even cheering me along with her surly wit,"[465] in the second chapter, he expresses some sorrow for his childless marriage with his wife Antonia ("My marriage with Antonia, apart from the fad. which was a continuing grief to me, that it was childless, was perfectly happy and successful"[466]).

Thus, Murdoch reflects in Martin's character on a general patriarchal worldview, whose fragility, in fact, was revealed by the war and the Holocaust. In this respect, *A Severed Head* can be read as the destruction of the pre-war heteronormative patriarchal ideals, which becomes more and more palpable from the point when Martin and the reader become aware of his wife, Antonia's relationship with psychoanalyst Palmer Anderson, leading him to a descent to hell, whereby he is forced to realise that he has spent his life so far in the shadow of seemingly comfortable but false pretences, avoiding the reality of the world that is inexplicable and independent from the control of his will. Accordingly, his downfall is a symbolic disempowerment of post-war masculinity: while at the beginning, he identifies himself as a survivor, a master of the women around him, it quickly turns out to him that he is actually no more and no less than a helpless puppet in the stream of events, a victim dominated by the women around him. His marriage to Antonia resembles rather to a mother-son relationship than to a romantic partnership based on equality.[467] The novel's irony is that while Martin's selfish masculinity is falling

[462] Murdoch 2001, p. 21.
[463] Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2010).
[464] Iris Murdoch, *A Severed Head* (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 9.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid., p. 11.
[467] Miles Leeson, "Iris Murdoch's *A Severed Head*: A Revision of Ideas: Freud and Nietzsche," *The McNeese Review* 47 (2009) : 60-78.

apart by the overpowering force of heterosexual love, the only harmonious relationship in the novel is represented by a lesbian couple, Miss Hernshaw and Miss Seelhaft.[468]

In *A Severed Head*, what constitutes the centre of the drama is the struggle between the two Eroses, the low Eros, i.e. the sexual instinct and the high Eros, i.e. spiritual love. Martin's battle with these two manifestations of love represents Plato's view that the two Eroses are the parts of two Aphrodites, the high Eros belonging to the celestial Aphrodite and the low Eros associated with the ordinary or earthly Aphrodite. What distinguishes the two Eroses is that while for the celestial Aphrodite, love is a spiritual, divine and pure element that rejects any physical pleasures, the low Eros is an earthly element of lust and restlessness, and, as such, is violent and oppressive.[469] For Freud, Eros is not merely a sex drive but a live-giving force, the basis of procreation, as opposed to Thanatos, the death-stimulus, and the history of mankind is the result of the unending uninterrupted fight between these two powers.[470]

For Freud and Nietzsche, humanity and civilisation are affected by the constant extremes of the Apollonian desire for the preservation of life versus the Dionysian tendencies for chaos and destruction.[471] This drive, which Freud calls the "id" in the structural model of the personality, seeks to constantly in compliance with our instincts.[472] As a result of his guilt based on his urge to rebel against all social constraints, man suffers from several forms of neurosis.[473] As his instincts remain unsatisfied, he retains the desire for wholeness. Meanwhile, for him, everything turns out to be worthless, he becomes indifferent to ethics, and his dissatisfaction causes aggression, frustration, and constant unhappiness.[474] The struggle between the two forces is constant, and since neither of them is capable of definitively winning over the other, they are in constant course with the universe.[475] F.M. Cornford sees Freud's and Plato's ideas on Eros as "diametrically opposed"[476] in that while "[m]odern science is dominated by the concept of evolution, the upward development from the rude and primitive instincts of our alleged animal ancestry to the higher manifestations of rational life, […] Plato had deliberately rejected this

[468] Ibid., p. 59.
[469] Plato, *The Symposium* (London: Penguin, 1999).
[470] Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013).
[471] Steven Kreis, "Nietzsche, Freud and the Thrust Toward Modernism." *The History Guide: Lectures on Twentieth Century Europe*. 21 October 2002.
[472] Ibid.
[473] Ian Johnston, "On Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents." Lecture for Liberal Studies 402. January 1993. Available: http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/lectures/freudlecture.htm. Access: 05.08.2019.
[474] Ibid.
[475] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontent* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1962), p. 19.
[476] F.M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium," in *The Unwritten Philosophy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 78.

system of thought. Man is for him the plant whose roots are not in earth but in the heavens."[477] Peter J. Conradi argues that the merit of Murdoch's thought is that "[she] combines the different pessimism of both thinkers with a high valuation of the idea of a spiritualized sexuality, and the unconditional love which is its ultimate if unreachable goal."[478] In an interview with Simon Price, Murdoch claims:

> The distinction between Apollo and Dionysus has always interested me; well, it interests everyone who comes across it, especially from Nietzsche onwards. Many people, in a casual way, prefer Dionysus because he's jollier and more comprehensible and he's taken to represent the emotional part of the soul which people tend to prefer to the rational part. Whereas Apollo is regarded as a kind of god of light and reason. The fact that he's a most terrible murderer and rapist and so on, like Mr Loxias [in *The Black Prince*], is passed over. He's become a symbol of a kind of cold rationality. I would want to reverse it for my own mythology. I regard Dionysus in a sense as a part of Apollo's mind, and I would want to exalt Apollo as a god who is a terrible god, but also a great artist and thinker and a great source of life. An ambiguous figure, certainly.[479]

Peter J. Conradi evokes Nietzsche, who "appointed Apollo and Dionysus mutually twin deities and saw the birth of tragedy as the result of the struggle and fusion between them."[480] Nietzsche says that human life involves the constant struggle between these two divinities, whereby "wherever the Dionysiac broke through, the Apolline was suspended and annulled."[481] Yet, since both the Dionysiac and the Apollonian contained a part from one another, their victory could never be full, and precisely this "bond of brotherhood between the two deities"[482], i.e., the alliance between the Apollonian order, clarity and reason, and the Dionysiac formlessness, brings, as Conradi puts it, "the aesthetic joy in whose light we can apprehend the vulnerability of individual aspiration, as well as the savage strength of the life-force itself."[483] For Murdoch, since "art is terribly deep and dark – it's not to do with getting drunk or with unbridled emotion:

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[477] Ibid.
[478] Conradi 2001b, p. 107.
[479] Simon Price, "Iris Murdoch: An Interview with Simon Price," in Dooley, p. 153.
[480] Conradi 2001b, p. 175.
[481] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 27.
[482] Ibid., 104.
[483] Conradi 2001b, p. 175.

it's to do with emotion which cuts much deeper than that."[484] The union of the two deities is apparent in Apollo's flaying of Marsyas, "itself a Dionysian rite, a tragic ordeal of purification by which the ugliness of the outward man was thrown off and the beauty of his inward self revealed."[485] Since Apollo is both the god of art and an embodiment of "the black Eros itself"[486], the flaying of Marsyas can both be seen as the punishment of the artist for his "hubristic ambition"[487] and also as "a divine liberation"[488], whereby the artist is exposed to "the pain and final joy gained from loss of self and loving attention to the world."[489]

The struggle between Eros and Thanatos (Freud), or Apollo and Dionysus (Nietzsche), is present at several points in *A Severed Head.* The Dionysian tendencies are palpable in Martin's profession as a wine merchant that makes him "a servant of Dionysus"[490]. Honor describes him as "a violent man"[491], who "cannot get away with this intimacy with your wife's seducer."[492] Although Palmer never ceases to emphasize the importance of lucid, honest and civilized manners, he appears for Martin as "some half remembered picture of Dionysus"[493]. The wine spilled on the carpet, Martin's interest in boxing, his interest in military history, and his fight with Honor point to the Dionysian side of his personality. Even his surname (Lynch-Gibbon) suggests the brutal side he sets free during his fight with Honor in the cellar.[494] The destruction of Martin's masculine delusions, the punishment for his hubris, leads to his realization that the mechanisms of the world are completely independent from and resistant to his will to control, and, as such, are always ready for his loving attention.

The Apollonian-Dionysian duality, which plays a central role in Murdoch's novel, can be integrated into the power discourse that renders all power positions relative. In 1938, a year

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[484] Price, "Iris Murdoch: An Interview with Simon Price," in Dooley, p. 153.
[485] Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Toronto: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 173-174., cited by Conradi 2001b, p. 238.
[486] Conradi 2001b, p. 238. and Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince* (New York: Penguin, 1979).
[487] Justin Broackes, "Introduction," in *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 92.
[488] Ibid.
[489] Elizabeth Dipple, *Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spirit* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 43., cited by Conradi 2001b, pp. 238-239.
[490] Martin and Rowe, p. 51.
[491] Murdoch 2001, p. 62.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Ibid., p. 165.
[494] This fight between Martin and Honor recalls Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846), a chilling story of a man taking vengeance on his friends whom he believes to have offended him. In Poe's narrative, although the motive of murder is unspecified, it might be suggested that the hero's paranoia, his own egoistic fantasy of the world as hostile to him and his destructive fantasy of himself as a moral agent who has the right to restore his pride by turning the table on others, have a pivotal role in his action. In both works, the wine has an allegorical appearance, an instrument of terror and the lack of restraint on the one hand, and a tool for rapture and seduction on the other. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado," in *Selected Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 278-284.

before the war, Murdoch wrote an untitled poem where she already meditated on the complexities of power, as if she would have foreseen what was going to sweep over the world:

> Power is a beautiful thing.
> Strength of the singing steel,
> Delicate might of the wheel,
> Cloud-cleaving grace of wing.
>
> Peace is a beautiful thing.
> Quiet curve of the plough,
> Red fruit on orchard bough,
> Calm that fair cities bring.
>
> Why then the screaming
> Horror of death that flies –
> Fear with its blood-bright eyes?
> Wake, world, you're dreaming![495]

The resemblance of this poem to Franz Baermann Steiner's *Gebet im Garten* is striking. Both poems evoke the idyllic picture of peace, with the "Quite curve of the plough/Red fruit on orchard bough", where "fruits have been harvested, apple and pear detached from the branches,"[496] to which war brings "the screaming/Horror of death that flies -/Fear with blood-bright eyes," "all the suffering on the sea,"[497] "souls half pulled out of the bodies,"[498] the endless suffering of women and children.[499] Murdoch's idea is that every conflict in the world, including the two world wars, is the result of the battle between the Apollonian rationality and the Dionysian formlessness, whereby Apollo "is a figure of power"[500] and thus "is by no means simply to be regarded as a 'good' figure."[501] As Lance Lee claims, "[o]ur history has taught us that the Apollonian in the social realm can become pure repression as dictatorship hardens and

[495] Yozo Moroya and Paul Hullah eds., *Poems by Iris Murdoch* (Okayama: University Education Press, 1997), p. 52.
[496] Steiner 2000, p. 311.
[497] Ibid., p. 316.
[498] Ibid., p. 313.
[499] Ibid., 316.
[500] Conradi 2001b, p. 239.
[501] Ibid.

forces its removal from without or collapses from within, while the Dionysian in the form of a mass movement and hysteria can lead to the Holocaust."[502] Speaking of the German character that "has lost its mythical home for ever,"[503] Nietzsche expresses hope in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) that once Dionysiac song rises from its abyss, the German spirit "will find itself awake, with all the morning freshness that comes from a vast sleep; then it will slay dragons, destroy the treacherous dwarfs, and awaken Brünnhilde - and not even Wotan's spear itself will be able to bar its path,"[504] an idea that explains why his philosophy could be used and abused by the Nazi propaganda. The fact that the crimes against the Jews were committed by ordinary German citizens under Hitler, themselves subjugated to the power of Hitler, underlines this argument. As the magician Julius King says in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*: "Few questions are more important than: who is the boss?"[505] That the same power that brings about the demise of certain communities can be seen by others as "a beautiful thing", a "cloud-cleaving grace of wing", can be illustrated by the slave labour used at Auschwitz and Buchenwald by the Siemens Electric Company, "a leading corporate participant in Hitler's 'death through work program'"[506], which assisted to the economic stability of Nazi Germany, while using human beings "like animals, with twelve to fourteen of them pulling a huge roller to pave the streets."[507]

Murdoch's portrayal of power is coupled with her critique of psychoanalysis and the power struggles in Western societies, a view that she borrows from both Canetti and Steiner. Georgie observes on Palmer and psychoanalysts in general at the beginning of the story, that "[a]nyone who is good at setting people free is also good at enslaving them, if we are to believe Plato."[508] In "On the Process of Civilization", Steiner describes Western culture as inherently oppressive whose survival rests on their "power over other people, that is to say military, political, economic power, power which guarantees the exploitation of other groups or permits their annihilation."[509] For Canetti, Nazism was a result of a mass psychosis, whereby in a given historical, social, or political situation, the crowd voluntarily surrenders to the will of its leaders. According to Canetti, an essential condition of this voluntary slavery is the promise of freedom and immortality. He compares this master-slave situation to animal training, arguing that "when a

[502] Lance Lee, *The Death and Life of Drama : Reflections on Writing and Human Nature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), p. 82.
[503] Nietzsche, p. 115.
[504] Ibid.
[505] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 216.
[506] "Siemens," *Holocaust Online*. Available: http://holocaustonline.org/siemens/. Access: 07.08.2019.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Murdoch 2001, p.
[509] *Selected Writings 2*, p. 123.

horse has done what it is supposed to do, its trainer gives it a lump of sugar."[510] This reward for Canetti does not reduce the threat of death in case the command of the higher power is not fulfilled, and in this situation "the one who puts the other to flight could kill him"[511]. In his book on *Theresienstadt*, H.G. Adler powerfully describes how this subordination to power took on a rather perverted form in the camps:

> No individual could remove himself from the intricacies of the camp apparatus as long as he remained within the camp, except through death. Even those, who participated in nothing, neither good nor bad – those who seemed merely to be victims – suffered inescapably and, before they knew it, were actively involved a hundred times over. Thus the camp was in fact a coerced community. Never before, perhaps not even in a strict concentration camp, had everything so broadly immersed in a bottomless abyss of coercion as in Theresienstadt. There, freedom concretely meant death.[512]

An exceptionally horrific example for this distorted manifestation of power was the "beautification" of the circumstances in the camp on the Nazi propaganda film *Theresienstadt: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* (1944), with its delusional depiction of the joyful everyday lives of the Jewish prisoners, whereby "[t]he most deserving participants were generously rewarded by the SS with presents and perks and, a few weeks later […] were sent to the gas chambers."[513] A tragic irony of the Holocaust lies in such forms of abusing power, whereby a great number of Nazi officers hold their victims under their will by falsely promising their freedom or providing a delusional image of humanity before they entered the gas chambers. Jeremy Adler suggests that "Hitler possessed a superior power of persuasion"[514] and "a highly developed crowd control,"[515] concluding with H.G. Adler's remarkable observation in his essay "Mensch oder Masse?", that "[l]iberation results in oppression. The act of freeing the individual leads to the enslavement of society as a whole."[516]

The merit of Murdoch's fiction is that she smartly emmeshes some of the basic components of these concepts of power, giving a peculiarly harsh comment on human nature. The fact that

[510] Canetti 1981, p.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Adler 2017, p. 205.
[513] Ibid., p. 149.
[514] Jeremy Adler, "'Mensch oder Masse?' H.G. Adler, Elias Canetti and the Crowd," in Adler and Dane, p. 188.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.

Murdoch wished to employ these concepts is evidenced by the fact that she abandoned one unpublished novel called "Jerusalem" in 1958, shortly before *A Severed Head* was conceptualized, in which she aimed at concentrating on the Jewish fate and Jewish politics with an Irish setting, and with the forecasts of the Lynch-Gibbon couple.[517] Although the setting, some of the characters and themes of *A Severed Head* turned out to be different, some of her ideas on power that might be linked to the ones of Adler, Steiner and Canetti, remained. Beneath the farcical plot, she suggests that in order to have a critical eye on the constructions of power in our modern Western societies at large, we need to adopt a moral vision that allows us to how the drive to power and the submissions of power[518] are present in our ordinary human relationships. Religious establishments and psychology create a power hierarchy whereby a mass of people unquestioningly obeys the will of God and its priest, or the psychoanalyst endowed with a God-like presence. This subordinate role of the mass is manifested in its bodily situations: whereas in the church, it is the physical position of confession that expresses voluntary servitude to a higher power, in the room of the psychoanalyst, it is the act of lying on the couch that bears with an iconic symbol to this inferior-superior relation. A situation that has an eerie likeness to Canetti's triumphant survivor standing above the dead or soon-to-be-dead, appears in Elie Wiesel's *Dawn*, where the novel's narrator, a Holocaust survivor and the member of a paramilitary group, ordered in an ironic twist of power relations to execute a British officer, describes their power relations in terms of aloneness and the bodily postures between the inferior and the subordinated: "We were alone not only in the cell but in the world as well, he seated, I standing, the victim and the executioner. We were the first or the last—men of creation; certainly we were alone."[519]

What makes this power unstable and reversible is the possibility of a greater rulership that might any time defeat it. In Wiesel, it is the narrator, himself a victim of Hitler, who gets the upper hand. For Canetti, this paranoia of being overthrown fuels the ruler's will to conquer above everyone, he sees enemies everywhere around him, and his freedom depends on the servitude of the crowd.[520] In *Taboo*, Steiner reflects on the restrictions and taboos given by a ruler that can be vetoed by the taboos of a higher authority.[521] Murdoch adopts these notions of power in *A Severed Head* in a much entertaining and complex way. While in his relationship with Georgie, Martin tries hard to reinforce his patriarchal position, acting toward her as a dominant

[517] Conradi 2001a, p. 433
[518] Leeson 2009, p. 63.
[519] Wiesel, p. 67.
[520] Canetti 1981, pp. 231-232.
[521] *Selected Writings 1*, p. 122.

father figure, his power gets soon disintegrated the moment he voluntarily succumbs to an infantile and passive mode of being before Antonia and Palmer. His deprivation of power culminates in his obsession with Honor, whereby the head becomes defeated by the body. However, this variation of the power mechanism also has the potential for freedom. Accordingly, Palmer's act of enslaving Martin, as A.S. Byatt argues, can be seen as a possibility for Martin and Antonia to liberate themselves from above the emotional conventions of marriage.[522] At the same time, Martin's role as a scapegoat suggests a reversed and reversible power position, whereby his infantile position becomes a condition for the freedom of Antonia and Palmer.[523]

According to Peter Conradi, a central theme of the novel is taboo, i.e. "what is forbidden and what is sacred"[524]. The presumption that Murdoch used some of Steiner's theories is evidenced by the fact that she owned a copy of his book on *Taboo*. In the novel, Murdoch skilfully mingles Steiner's concept on taboo, power and danger with the ideas of Plato, Freud and Canetti. Honor Klein, the only Central European female magician in Murdoch's oeuvre, is an expert on taboo having an incestuous relationship with her half-brother, the psychoanalyst Palmer Anderson. Honor is seen by the novel's hero and first-person narrator Martin Lynch-Gibbon as "aloof, frightening, sacred, in a way which I now more clearly understood, taboo."[525] After Georgie's attempted suicide, Martin describes her position as something that "imposed a taboo and the limp half-inhabited body filled me with a sort of revulsion."[526]

Such reversibility of power is represented by Medusa's head, a form of taboo, that appears as a central image in the various suggestions of motherly love and in Martin's relationships with Antonia and Honor.[527] Using the Freudian model of the Medusa myth, Murdoch flawlessly merges the ideas of Steiner, Canetti and Adler on power with the theory of psychoanalysis. Martin's younger brother Alexander refers to the Medusa's head as "an illicit and incomplete relationship […] [p]erhaps an obsession. Freud on Medusa. The head can represent the female genitals, feared not desired."[528] In his essay "Medusa's Head" (1922), Freud relates the terror

[522] Byatt, p. 120.
[523] Ibid., 124.
[524] Peter J. Conradi, "Franz Baermann Steiner's Influence on Iris Murdoch," in Adler, Fardon and Carol Tully, p. 127.
[525] Murdoch 2001, p. 155.
[526] Ibid., p. 175.
[527] As Valentine Cunningham suggested in his keynote speech at the Oxford conference of Murdoch's centenary, a representation of power, the power of either enduring or domineering love, lies in Murdoch's metaphorical use of hands. Hands can provide and caress as a representation of the power of selfless and suffering love (see Georgie *Hands*). Yet, on the one hand, hands, especially big hands, which Murdoch describes in her novels as "paws", can be dangerous, punishing and overpowering. Murdoch borrows this metaphor of the hand from Canetti, who describes the human hands as entrails of power that are able to transform, to arrest and to grasp, in great detail in *Crowds and Power*. Canetti 1981, pp. 211-219., Morley, pp. 80-81.
[528] Murdoch 2001, p. 42.

of Medusa to castration complex of the young boy upon the sight of the mother's genitalia, when he realises that the mother does not have a penis.[529] The terror of seeing Medusa's head, i.e. the female genitalia, turns the viewer to stone, a moment that, for Freud, indicates erection.[530] In Medusa, Freud creates the image of the uncanny mother, based on his conviction that castration fear lies in gender differences, the "otherness" and the mysterious nature of the female gender whose overpowering sexuality induces fear and anxiety.[531] This maternal power is a force that can be linked to the traumatic state of castration, the threat of weakening patriarchal and phallocentric power, and the protection represented by the womb.[532] In Freud's interpretation, the severed head in the Medusa myth is a taboo whereby the seduction and the terror of the Medusa's head exposes for the male subject the danger of his situation.[533] For Sartre, "petrifaction in in-itself by the Other's look is the profound meaning of the myth of Medusa,"[534], i.e. the look of the other person that makes me recognize my existence as "an object, a thing in the world of things."[535]

Murdoch employs and makes fun of Freud's idea, portraying different variations of the Medusa leitmotif. It is present in the parenting relationship that ties Martin to Antonia and Palmer. Martin argues that Antonia "looks now, for all her beauty, a little older than her years, and has more than once been taken for my mother."[536] Returning to "my mother's house"[537], Martin meditates on his relationship with his brother, asserting that "though I ruled out financial fortunes and largely played my father's role, Alexander in playing my mother's was the real head of the family."[538] Martin refers to Antonia's mother as "something of a minor poet"[539] coming out of the Bloomsbury world "and a remote relation of Virginia Woolf"[540]. The uterus of the mother appears as a type of home, a point of departure and a place to return to for Antonia, who, after coming home to her mother, finally runs away with Alexander.

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[529] Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), pp. 202-203.
[530] Ibid.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Ibid.
[533] Ibid.
[534] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York, Toronto, Sydney, Singapore: Washington Square Press, 1992), p. 430.
[535] Hazel Barnes, "Sartre and the Existentialist Medusa," in Marjorie Garber and Nancy J. Vickers, *The Medusa Reader* (New York, London: Routledge, 2003), p. 92.
[536] Murdoch 2001, p. 12.
[537] Ibid., p. 30.
[538] Ibid., pp. 37-38.
[539] Ibid., p. 13.
[540] Ibid.

Honor Klein embodies another type of the uncanny femininity. Being a Central European Jew, a female version of the exotic magicians that Murdoch imagined Canetti to be. Julian Preece in *The Guardian* describes Honor as "ultimately a pathetic figure, the repeated descriptions of her Jewish features, complete with 'tawny' breasts, close to caricature, which is perhaps why Canetti recalls with such distaste at the way in which Murdoch exoticised him."[541] Peter J. Conradi notes that "[t]o Ruth Heyd in 1965 Murdoch praised Honor as a conqueror of self-deception; speaking to me in 1983 she emphasised rather Honor's demonic qualities."[542] In his unpublished PhD-dissertation, Daniel Read calls Honor an "[a]ttractive, dominant, and powerful" psychopath, whose character "resonates with such contemporary discussions, where individuals can be charmed not only by masculine but also feminine power figures, and women themselves can be psychopathic, powerful, or even evil."[543]

All these descriptions hold water. Honor, like the mysterious female characters in the Gothic novels of the 19th and early 20th century, always appears unexpectedly amidst the twists and turns in the plot.[544] She is the one revealing Martin's affair with Georgie, and Martin has an uncanny feeling of her watching gaze on him. Having been caught by Martin in bed with her brother, she calls herself "a terrible object of fascination"[545] for him, "a severed head such as primitive tribes and old alchemists used to use, anointing it with oil and putting a morsel of gold upon its tongue to make it utter prophecies. And who knows but that long acquaintance with a severed head might not lead to strange knowledge."[546] She carries out a castrating ritual by decapitating napkins in Martin's presence, who watches her with his legs crossed in order to dispel the uncomfortable sensation of Honor's spiritual exercise.[547] Thus, while for Alexander, it is Antonia who stands for Medusa's head, as indicated by his sculpture modeled on Antonia's head[548] and his assertion that "[t]he best thing about being God would be making the heads,"[549] Martin's castration anxiety is first aroused by a box of "her beautiful dark chestnut-tinted head

[541] Julian Preece, "The God-monster's version," *The Guardian*, 07 February 2004. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/feb/07/featuresreviews.guardianreview25. Access: 06.08.2019.
[542] Conradi 2001b, p. 119.
[543] Daniel Read, "The Problem of Evil and the Fiction and Philosophy of Iris Murdoch," unpublished PhD-dissertation, Kingston University, 2019. pp. 199-200.
[544] In the movie, the director Dick Clement employs a method in storytelling that is similar to Alfred Hitchcock's *Rebecca*. Honor, like Mrs Danvers in Hitchcock's film, is seen from the hero's anxious point of view. Moreover, she has a static appearance in dramatic turning points, she seems to be everywhere like a dark ghost, and always shows up unexpectedly. Alfred Hitchcock dir., *Rebecca*, written by Robert E. Sherwood and Joan Harrison, United Artists, 1940.
[545] Murdoch 2001, p. 185.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid., p. 96.
[548] Murdoch 2001, p. 42.
[549] Ibid.

of hair"[550] shipped to him moments before her attempted suicide. To Martin, it is Honor who eventually turns out to be the epitome of Medusa, the essence of his own castration complex and attraction at the same time.

Another variation of gaze comes from the overwhelming obsession with which Martin accidentally witnesses Honor and Palmer's incestuous sexual intercourse. Through this discovery of the taboo of incest, Martin is taken over by "a violence of amazement not distinguishable from horror,"[551] a sensation that comprises the death-like experience of total deprivation. At the same time, the revelation of the incest relationship gives Martin a peculiar power of knowledge, which compensates his loss of masculine self-deception with the recognition of the otherness of the world. Accordingly, while Antonia measures the first blow on Martin's masculine delusions on the world, it is Honor who becomes Martin's symbolic emasculator, subjugating him to her demonic power, and, with it, suggesting other forms of freedom. With her, Martin chooses the return to the mother's womb and altogether the chance to awaken to the world which he no longer can master.[552] Thus, although the novel's closing lines are ambivalent ("[t]his has nothing to do with happiness, nothing whatever"[553]), this ambivalence for Martin is resolved with the possibility of freedom, i.e. the move from his masculine self-deception to the acknowledgement of the world in its difference.

Although in his study on *Taboo*, Steiner makes mention neither of the Medusa myth nor Freud's theory on it, the overarching issue of *A Severed Head*, i.e. to unfold the complex nature of power and disempowerment, the cruel dance of power relations and the heartlessness of Western civilisation, might bear his influence. In their works, both Steiner and Canetti aim at abolishing the myths of power exploring its various mechanisms in Western societies that resulted in the Holocaust. In his memoir on Steiner, M.N. Srinivas recalls a discussion with him, in "Franz told me that the Jews had made a profound mistake in moving to Europe from their ancient home in Asia. Had they turned east their history would have been very different, and not marked by persecution and pogroms."[554] In his letter to Gandhi, Steiner criticizes the Indian leader for his mistake of regarding Jews as European people, drawing the image of a Western culture, for which Jews always stay foreigners, and that is based on domination and intolerance for "otherness".[555] This view is emphasized in the poem "Elefantenfang" (1951), in its metaphor

[550] Ibid., p. 173.
[551] Ibid., p. 131.
[552] Ibid., p. 208.
[553] Ibid.
[554] M.N. Srinivas, "A Letter to Mr Gandhi," in *Selected Writings 2*, p. 7.
[555] Steiner, "A Letter to Mr Gandhi," in *Selected Writings 2*, pp. 141-142.

of human civilisation as a herd of elephants, whereby it is the tamed animals that attack the wild ones, a sharp reference to the Western societies' inclination to exert oppression and violence upon the Oriental, an act that culminated in the Holocaust.[556]

In *A Severed Head* Murdoch employs this line of thought, revealing the ruthless egoism and the lack of attention that lurks beyond the different configurations of love within her group of educated British upper class. In the movie version of the novel, the characters routinely repeat such phrases like "I feel so awful", or "We have to be very lucid and honest about this situation", yet all their motivations reveal the general emptiness behind their words.[557] The outcome of Martin's symbolic emasculation is that, as opposed to the rest of the characters, he proves to be capable of getting rid of his "fat, relentless ego"[558] and appreciate the "otherness" of the world.[559]

In conclusion, *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head* are post-war novels that transformed the traditional pre-war picture of man and civilisation. Owing to the nightmarish experience of the war and the Holocaust, the concept of human rationality and the idyllic picture of man were broken. The resulting uprootedness that characterized culture and society demanded the post-war novel to reassess the concepts of morals and identity. In this respect, while both novels were applauded by some critics for their lightness and comical tones, the power structures and the question of finding new, different paths point to a deliberate writerly intent to explore the functioning of the moral ills and the modes of healing of post-war society. Thus, the crisis of Jake Donaghue and Martin Lynch-Gibbon is attributable to the crisis of a post-war generation that was responsible for finding new ways of social and individual relationships and identities in a socially, spiritually and morally transforming world.

What is suggested in Murdoch's poetry, journal entries and the references in *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head* is that neither social and cultural nor moral development would have taken significantly place without the contribution of the German-Jewish exiles. Murdoch's moral view reflects what a character in Marek Halter's *The Book of Abraham* (1989), a family saga about the exile of the Jews that she read and held in high praise, says: "History is a teacher, and that's why I think we must go on hoping and fearing at the same time."[560] This moral vision is

[556] Steiner 2000, p. 249.
[557] Dick Clement dir., *A Severed Head*, written by Frederic Raphael, Columbia Pictures, 1970.
[558] Murdoch *The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts*, in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 342.
[559] Tamás Bényei refers to the novels of Murdoch, Angus Wilson, Muriel Spark, William Golding, Lawrence Durrell and Anthony Burgess by claiming that the post-war literary discourse in these works either inwardly reflects on its own basic assumptions, or it takes an external position, from which it expresses a radical criticism toward the English ethos. Bényei, p. 12.
[560] Marek Halter, *The Book of Abraham* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1986), p. 97.

central to Murdoch's thought and the cultural transfer that she had with Steiner, Canetti and Adler enrichened her fiction and provided new possibilities for her perfection as a thinker.

Chapter Three

Displacement and Exile Identity in *The Flight from the Enchanter*

She was without identity in a world where to be without identity is the first and most universal of crimes, the crime which, whatever else it may overlook, every State punishes. She had no official existence.

Iris Murdoch, *The Flight from the Enchanter*[561]

Murdoch's View on Totalitarianism and Exile

In the present chapter, I will discuss Iris Murdoch's engagement in the issues of political displacement and her way of depicting displaced people in *The Flight from the Enchanter*. Here, I will locate her prose amidst the political and philosophical debates of the 1950s that dealt with the rising Socialism in the Eastern bloc, and that problematised totalitarianism within the framework of the two power regimes of the 20th century. Arguing that the exile is a sufferer of these two power systems, I will highlight in this chapter Murdoch's general scepticism that the 20th century was no more and no less than a theatre of war between two power regimes that kept masses of people, voluntarily or not, in enslavement, or physically and spiritually left them isolated from their home. In my analysis, I will discuss Murdoch's idea about the two types of exiles, the one who exerts the same authority on others he had to endure from other places in the past, and the other, the sufferer, who falls victim to other people's power and manipulation, claiming that that the powerful complexity of Murdoch's narrative lies in her ability to reveal the conflicts and the power struggles in the refugee groups like the one Canetti, Steiner and Adler belonged to. I will also discuss Murdoch's conceptualisation of "moral blindness", i.e. society's refusal to see its minorities and their suffering, and attention, i.e. the spiritual power that opens society's eye to the reality of the sufferer, which is also preliminary of being tolerant and doing good.

[561] Iris Murdoch, *The Flight from the Enchanter* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 264.

The Flight from the Enchanter is Iris Murdoch's second novel, and, together with *Nuns and Soldiers,* it is one of her works as a novelist in which her views on contemporary social and political issues are the most apparently present. The novel tells the story of a group of people in an English society, who are more or less outsiders to it, either socially or spiritually. Each people are struggling to be escaped, yet not all of them is capable to really flee. Annette Cockeyne flees from her finishing school to get an education from the world beyond it. Rosa is tormented by her erotic passion to two Polish brothers. The suffering Peter Saward is obsessed by an ancient script. Nina, the dressmaker lives in a constant fear from being deported. The group of characters in this novel fall and behave like helpless puppets under the spell of the novel's enchanter, the enigmatic Mischa Fox.

The flight from the Enchanter is a "post-war" novel with its melancholic reflection on the past and its sceptical recount of the political and social issues of the 1950s that were all rooted in the moral chaos the war had brought about. Having joined the Communist Party in 1939, Murdoch got increasingly suspicious of it. Like Albert Camus, Murdoch was increasingly disappointed with the rising Socialist regime in Europe after the war and was deeply concerned with "the horrors of war and the dangers of tyrannical and totalitarian regimes, with questions of good and evil and the madness that can grip both individuals and societies."[562] She said in a conversation with James Atlas: "I was a member of the Communist Party for a short time, when I was a student around about 1939, but I left it just as well in a way to have seen the inside of Marxism in a way because then one realizes how strong it is and how awful it is certainly in its organised form."[563] In "Salvation by Words" (1972) she argues that "[w]e are told that art is now under attack. Of course it has always been under attack. Tyrants always fear art because tyrants want to mystify while art tends to clarify."[564] She extends this observation in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* saying that "[a]ll tyrants try to mystify and may invent languages for that purpose. Bad artists are useful to tyrants, whose policies they can simplify and romanticise, as in Stalinist-style art. The quarrel between Lukács and the Hungarian Communist Party brought out some frank speaking on this subject."[565] In her novels, she frequently uses characters or depicts events that reflect her increasing criticism of the Communist regime, which might

[562] Maria Antonaccio, *A Philosophy to Live By: Engaging Iris Murdoch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 5.
[563] James Atlas, "Conversation with Iris Murdoch," *92Y/The Paris Review Interview Series*. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vl4SlVyGC5o. Access: 08.08.2019.
[564] Iris Murdoch, "Salvation by Words," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 235.
[565] Murdoch 2003, p. 90.

have been one reason for why her works were subjected to a strict censorship in the countries of the Eastern bloc, the others being the portrayals of homosexuality and religion.[566]

What permeates Murdoch's philosophy and fiction is her scepticism that the end of the war has not brought the promised and hoped peace and that 20th century European society has become a playground of two totalitarian regimes that, although their method of exerting their authority is obviously different, similarly use their power to oppress people. In this power struggle, exile represents twentieth century modernity where society is no longer capable of providing the stability and comfort that characterized the period after the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Her view on exile shows comparable tendencies to what Steiner, Canetti and H.G. Adler thought about it. For her, the exile's homelessness is the world. Like Jeremy Adler, Murdoch sees the exile as a sufferer at the intersections of culture, gender, politics and society. S/he is banished from the motherland, yet s/he cannot feel at home in the world that he feels not a part of. S/he is haunted by the trauma of the war, and his/her struggle is to make sense of his past and to give meaning to his/her identity in a morally shaken world.

The Pursuit of Flight in *The Flight from the Enchanter*

The Flight from the Enchanter is a post-Holocaust novel in the sense that although there are no depictions of the camps or the ghettos, their shadows penetrate the character's consciousness. The past vividly comes to life in the Lusiewicz brothers re-telling of the German invasion their village:

> "Also," said Stefan, as a kind of afterthought, "it is no more. Hitler break it. Shoot at it, then burn it. Nothing left. Perhaps we not find it, not remember where it is. All is flat land now." [567]

Coming from a world where unreality occurred in its most extreme form, the Lusiewicz brothers represent dark magic in Murdoch's romantic vision. They describe their violent ménage-á-trois with a schoolmistress with similar coldness as the brutal elimination of their home. What is striking here is that the novel apparently takes stances by being among the first to discuss the

[566] Barbora Kašpárková's conference paper "The Reception of Iris Murdoch's Work in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic," St Anne's College, University of Oxford, 14 July 2019.
[567] Murdoch 2000a, p. 66.

destruction of Poland by Hitler, and the massacre of all potential opponents to the German military forces, including communists, Jews, or Roma in Eastern Europe:

> "Was she Jewish?" asked Rosa.
> Stefan shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps was Jewish, perhaps Socialist, I don't know."
> I think she was gipsy,' said Jan. "Hitler not like gipsies either, he kill gipsies too, so they say in Poland."[568]

This dialogue in curious for at least two reasons. It shows Murdoch's interest in history not merely in the way it operates on a larger theoretical level but in the way it affects the individual. Thereby, Murdoch places emphasis on the form historical experience is recorded in memory through oral tradition, i.e. we tend to verbally re-embellish the past by our choice of talking about it. In almost each of her novels, Murdoch displays her special gift in integrating people's characters, stories and ideas. Had it been not for the cultural transfer between the English and the Central European intellectual circles, the novel would have been less powerful in mixing the personal experiences of the Nazi genocide with the political implications of it. The German-Jewish painter Harry Weinberger wrote in his letter to Peter J. Conradi that Murdoch was intensely curious about his experiences during Nazism, the atrocities he had had to suffer, and his experiences in England.[569] Elias Canetti wrote in his memoir that Murdoch was an active listener who paid attention to the smallest details in conversation.[570] Murdoch admitted in an interview with Miklós Trócsányi that to find basis for her novels, she spies on people, watching their faces, the tensions between them and the experiences that builds them up or knocks them down.[571] In his e-mail to me, Jeremy Adler recalled a conversation between Murdoch and H.G. Adler, adding that "[m]y father and Iris shared some intimate thoughts, which Iris certainly treasured. She was much indebted to him for her understanding of the camps."[572] In their diaries, both Murdoch and Steiner recount their endless discussions about literature, anthropology, philosophy and religion.

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[568] Murdoch 2000a, p. 72.
[569] Letter from Harry Weinberger to Peter Conradi 15 May 2000 Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS6/1/65/1., Letter from Harry Weinberer to Peter Conradi, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS6/1/65/2.
[570] Canetti 2005, p. 165.
[571] Miklós Trócsányi, "Mindenki különc? Londoni beszélgetés Iris Murdoch-kal," *Élet és Irodalom*, 29 October 1977, p. 8.
[572] An e-mail from him, 14 June 2019.

Lyndsey Stonebridge holds it likely that Murdoch borrowed Steiner's view that "it was the cultural identities between Eastern peoples that proved that anti-Semitism was not just local European politics, but intrinsic to the imperialist construction of the European state itself."[573] Milada Franková argues that under the mechanical patterns of her plots, Murdoch is "first and foremost […] sensitive to the human difference, and it is not the difference of the individual self but apprehending others as different."[574] What makes Murdoch's novels work is that she entwines actual stories, notions and personalities to tell a complex tale about human relationships, the nature of power, survival as well as attention and the lack of attention and tolerance toward differences.

Social and political marginalisation, displacement and the split nature of exile identity are central themes of *The Flight from the Enchanter*. Among Murdoch's twenty-six novels, this book embraces most effectively her empathy with political outcasts. *The Flight from the Enchanter* recalls some of her personal experiences as a worker for the U.N.R.R.A. in the European refugee camps and her friendships with German-speaking exiles in England. As Peter J. Conradi notes, in the early stages of writing, each of the central characters in *The Flight from the Enchanter* "were to have been refugees – not merely Mischa Fox, Nina and the Lusiewicz brothers, but also Rosa Keepe and Peter Saward who, under a different name, appeared to be a Central European writing a history of the Jews."[575] The final version of the book seizes the concept of displacement as a specificity of the Central European exiles, and extends it to one of the major concerns of the post-war human condition. Her idea that the collapse of civilisation made everyone a refugee is partly influenced by her wartime involvements and partly by her reading of Sartre who "privileged the cultureless outsider hero"[576], and most evidently by her contact with Canetti, Steiner and Adler.

Murdoch's central argument is that totalitarianism as any other forms of power is the result of a social process in which the crowd willingly subordinates itself to a higher authority. There are two types of exile characters in the novel to support this argument. One is the traumatized Peter Saward, the literary alter ego of Steiner, who is constantly haunted by the past and whose inner struggle to overcome its shadows represent the anxiety of the first and the second generations of wartime soldiers and Holocaust survivors. The other is the mysterious Mischa Fox, a

[573] Lindsey Stonebridge, "The 'Dark Background of Difference': Love and the Refugee in Iris Murdoch," in *The Juidical Imagination: Writing After Nuremberg* (Edingburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 153.
[574] Milada Franková, *Human Relationships in the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (Brno : Masarykova Univerzita, 1996), p. 71.
[575] Conradi 2001b, p. 65.
[576] Conradi 2001b, p. 13.

European exile based on Canetti, an outcast whose survival rests on his ability to subordinate other people to his power and who succeeds in overcoming his own suffering in the past by transferring it to others.

Like Canetti, Murdoch sees the totalitarian leader as a ruler whose survival is dependent upon the myth that the mass creates around him and that originates in the mass's internal yearning for being controlled. She claims:

> As for manipulating people, people are manipulated in real life, and I think the notion about power which was being hinted at in the discussion is real too, that people are not only manipulated by others but want to be so […] People very often elect a god in their lives, they elect somebody whose puppet they want to be, and a group of people can elect somebody in this sense as their leader, or their angel, or their god or whatever it might be, and then, perhaps, almost subconsciously, are ready to receive suggestions from this person.[577]

A.S. Byatt notes that some of the dominant images of *The Flight from the Enchanter* are "pursuit and flight, hunt and capture, enchantment and enslavement."[578] These images represent the dynamics of power and as such link the novel to Aesop's "The Fox and the Crow", an ancient fable on trickery and manipulation. The metaphorical names of Mischa Fox, Hunter Keepe and Calvin Blick further support this argument. However, what makes this fable-like narrative highly complex is that in this play of manipulation neither the fox nor the crow is completely innocent.[579] Shaking off responsibility by endowing somebody else with power was a typical trait of Hitler's regime in which those people, Germans and East Europeans alike, who took part in the massacre of thousands of Jews, continued to hand all the faults over to the ruling power system under which they committed their crimes and continue living without the slightest touch of guilt.

Mischa is the most enigmatic figures in the novel and perhaps the most ambiguous one of all of Murdoch's magicians. Drawn from the real-life character of Canetti, he is the embodiment of the exotic, mysterious, Faustian figure with a split identity. Mischa is the embodiment of Canetti's isolated, powerful survivor, the one who stands out of the crowd he conquers. Neither

[577] Jean-Louis Chevalier ed. 'Closing Debate, *Rencontres avec Iris Murdoch*,' in Dooley 2003, p. 74.
[578] Byatt, p. 40.
[579] Peter Conradi, "Holy Fool and Magus: The Uses of Discipleship in *Under the Net* and *The Flight from the* Enchanter," in Broackes, p. 131.

his real character nor his goals are known for his "creatures", or for the reader. We have some vague information about his past. It is mentioned that he is from a European village, that as a child he was traumatized by the death of the one-day chicken he was given as competition prizes and that he later on murdered young kittens out of pity. According to Pamela Osborn, for Mischa "killing removes both the contingency and inevitability of experiencing loss, since they gain control of when and how death occurs."[580] Thus, the trauma of the past dissociates Mischa from the other characters, arousing not only fear but also compassion, another chief source of power.

The tormented and the demonic sides of his personality make Mischa relatively helpless and one is tempted to read the novel's opening passage on the vulnerability of monsters as a reference to Mischa himself. Such a tormented Faust cannot exist without his Mephistopheles, and in this case, it is Calvin Blick who represents Mischa's evil side. Murdoch said in an interview with Wendy Lesser that "in my second novel there are two characters, one called Calvin Blick and the other Mischa Fox, who were originally one character, and then I suddenly saw they had to be two characters,"[581] whereby "[o]ne was the highly conscious creature, the other was the instinctive creature."[582]

Calvin is the embodiment of the form of power that Elias Canetti describes in *Crowds and Power*. Here, Canetti writes: "Power is impenetrable. The man who has it sees through other men but does not allow them to see through him. He must be more reticent than anyone; no-one must know his opinions or intentions."[583] The weapon of power rests on the possession of a secret. The ruler has the power to exercise authority as he is the one who has accurate information about the secret, and the revelation of this secret might be fatally destructive. The ruler's knowledge of this secret nourishes his power while he keeps other people under the control of his invisible ruling eye. His power is enigmatic to others because he can maintain control without anybody recognizing his presence. All totalitarian systems in the twentieth century rested on such ruling eyes: the control of other people without the slightest chance of recognizability took form in the secret police agencies in the time of Hitler and the Socialist era where complete populations were spied on, arrested and tortured for their actions deemed dangerous or against the regime.

[580] Osborn, p. 198.
[581] Lesser, p. 13.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Elias Canetti 1981, p. 292.

In *Flight from the Enchanter*, Calvin is the "ruling eye" that is hidden from everybody: like Honor Klein in *A Severed Head*, he appears suddenly and unexpectedly in situations of danger, he watches everybody from shadowy corners, and he makes photographs to blackmail others. His underground dark room in Mischa's hell-like house, where he exposes the photographs on his victims, has the air of a torture chamber with its tall dark machine, its hot-plate and electric fire.

The refugee in *The Flight from the Enchanter* and, also, as I will explain it, in *The Italian Girl*, appears as two sides of the same coin. Central to Murdoch's fiction is her interpretation of Canetti's theory on the sting and command. Her characters usually fall into two groups: either they are survivors who, for the success of assimilation, need to reject their own identity, passing their traumas on to other people, or they are powerless victims of the past and the lack of attention from their peers and the larger English society.[584] It is pointed out by Elaine Morley that Murdoch made several annotations and journal records on Canetti's concept of the sting that she eventually linked with survival. As Canetti writes:

> It is very difficult to get rid of the sting. It must in fact dislodge itself and can only do so if and when it reacquires force equal to that with which it originally penetrated. For this to happen there must be an exact repetition of the original command-situation, but in reverse. This is what the sting waits for through months, years and decades. It is as though each sting had a memory of its own, but of one thing only: the situation in which it was implanted. When this situation re- curs, the sting cannot fail to recognize it, for this is its sole content, the only thing it can recognize. Suddenly everything is as it was before; only the roles of the actors are reversed. When this moment comes, the sting seizes its opportunity and hastens to fall on its victim. The reversal has at last taken place.[585]

For Canetti, the survivor is the one whose conquest is based on the success of the commands he gives out, whereby "[t]he exercise and abuse of power is a kind of contagion, passed on from power figure to subject. The subject will then proceed to exercise control over others, creating an endless chain of power."[586] Examples for such characters include Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, whose mischiefs are primarily influenced by his traumatic experiences in

[584] White 2010b, p. 8.
[585] Canetti 1981, p. 327.
[586] Morley, p. 74.

Belsen. In *The Italian Girl*, David Levkin stabilizes his survival as a Jew by imposing the collective trauma of the Holocaust on his sister, Elsa. As Frances White argues, "[v]iolence has bred violence in such characters. Others are undone by their deracination. Violence has broken them."[587] In *The Flight from the Enchanter*, it is the retrospective nature of the narrative that allows the reader to reassess the true implications of the actions of Mischa and the Lusiewicz brothers, victims of Hitler's power exerting similar tendencies of power on others for the sake of their survival. Thus, the vulnerability of monsters come not merely from their compulsion to rule but also from their urge to get rid of the suffering they received from others by inflicting it upon yet other people.

The dichotomy between the suffering and the powerful exiles allows Murdoch to give a truthful account on the differences of power functioning not only between the English society and its Central European outcasts but also within the exile groups. In doing so, Murdoch's novel shows some similar inclinations to H.G. Adler's *Die unsichtbare Wand*. In *The Flight from the Enchanter*, the lack of freedom is on a par with the walls that is erected both by the English culture and those exiles who, in pursuit of better life choices or for the trauma that they were unable to handle, turned a blind eye on the suffering ones. Both Nina in *The Flight from the Enchanter* and Arthur Landau in *Die unsichtbare Wand* are forced to face the same moral emptiness that deems them exotic animals, and both are entrapped not just by a culture that is not their own anymore but also by the people for whom they remain non-existent.

Both Murdoch and Adler see the question of freedom as a way of eliminating the borders between cultures and people. As I have pointed out in the first chapter, Adler sees this problem as a survivor experiencing the lack of help from those who managed to escape the war and carried the sting of survivor's guilt under the mask of indifference. Murdoch approaches this same problem from a slightly different angle. As a U.N.R.R.A. worker, she had strong feelings toward refugees, "every sort of people who had to be identified and looked after."[588] It is likely that her experiences in the camps played an essential role in her identification with outcasts and her critical attitudes toward those English people who never experienced war, for their general inattention to exiles. However, she refuses to give a simplified and sweetened depiction of refugees, and what makes *The Flight from the Enchanter* a complex moral fable is its depiction of the dangerous and intricate power struggles within their group.

As I explained it in the first chapter, exile can be understood as a continuous existential crisis, an identity torn apart between two cultures without being able to identify itself with either

[587] Ibid.
[588] John Haffenden, "John Haffenden Talks to Iris Murdoch," in Dooley, p. 130.

of them. In Murdoch's novel, there are two pairings of characters representing this nature of exile: the duo of Mischa Fox and Calvin Blick as well as the Lusiewicz brothers. Both pairs are social outcasts, and their success to adapt to their social milieu and even to gain power over them rests on their determination to annihilate their past and, with it, their own identity. This nature of power is especially present in the Lusiewicz brothers. As twins they possess the two halves of the same identity. They arrive to England as helpless refugees, like children depending on the protection of others. Their power rests on their capability of generating pity, compassion and a sadomasochistic desire for the mysterious in Rosa Keepe, above whom they shortly get shared sexual control. The more they obtain the language and the necessary skills for survival, the more superior they become in this game of power, and their way of commanding language and asserting themselves to the foreign culture becomes for Rosa "an instrument of terror"[589]. They are also capable of violence and in a symbolic act they kill their mother by burning her the same way as Hitler burned down their homeland.

The figure of the mother is of particular importance here. Like in Murdoch's other novels written in the Gothic genre, the mother here represents the motherland and all the desires, anxieties, fears and traumas that the motherland signifies. The mother's constant presence embodies the unbreakable tie between the brothers and their Polish roots, while it also conveys the haunting presence of their traumatic past. Thus, the homeland is a symbolic place standing for the suffering from the traumas of the past and the threat of being deported, but also the hope that the homeland would once again become the land of promise that would altogether signify the end of rootlessness. Home is a signifier for the exile of loss, and when Peter and Mischa chatter over Mischa's childhood over some photographs of his home, there is a strong sense of looking back to an enchanted world forever wiped away from the face of the earth, to which there is no return:

> It was now a long time since Mischa had taken it into his head to talk to Peter about his childhood; and since he had started to talk he had sketched a picture of the most astonishing detail. At first Peter had not been at all sure that everything that Mischa told him was true; now he was certain that it was true as Mischa could make it and that the pursuit, here, of exactness and completeness was for him a terrible necessity.

[589] Ibid.

> Sometimes when they were together Mischa would sit for minutes on end trying to remember something, such as the name of this schoolmaster — and at such times his face would pucker and contract and become for the moment like the face of a child. It was Mischa who had suggested that a really good set of photographs might aid his memory further — and Peter Saward had been able to obtain some from a friend at the Warburg Institute.[590]

As a place that is highly associated with trauma, home also consists of memories that affect the individual and that should be hidden and repressed. Any attempt to betray this secret would threaten with the complete destruction "not only to the possessor, which in itself might not matter, but also to all they concern."[591] When Hunter warns Stefan Lusiewicz to reveal his knowledge about the brothers' birthplace to throw them out of the country, Stefan threatens to kill him and eventually burns his hair.

The question, which is regarded controversial even in today's immigration policy, might arise: Does assimilation involve the negation of one's identity? Luma Simms writes about this problem that concerns contemporary policy rights in the United States:

> In our politically polarized society, there are few topics that are more controversial than immigration. There are valid arguments for loosening or strengthening immigration restrictions based on economic, national-security, and cultural concerns. Of the cultural concerns lodged by those who want tighter restrictions, the most common is immigrants' seeming inability or unwillingness to assimilate to American society. Many do not speak English, and prefer to live in enclaves populated by immigrants from their home countries rather than taking on the difficult task of weaving themselves into their new communities. Many do not wish to become American at all, and would gladly return to their homelands if only they could live there in safety.
>
> […]
>
> Modern life in the secular, anti-metaphysical West has been bled dry of meaning beyond the material, and it is leading to an identity crisis not just for immigrants but for modern man in general. As an immigrant, I have felt acutely the identity crisis that comes from being a speck in a global system, untethered from any nation

[590] Murdoch 2000a, p. 207.
[591] Canetti 1981, p. 295.

> or people, and I know how intimately this experience is connected to a metaphysical understanding of the world.[592]

Simms argues that the modern world has suffered from the shallow and vague concept of freedom that has brought about, "despite its lofty rhetoric about tolerance, a Western, secular, anti-metaphysical society [that] is not a hospitable place for a large mass of immigrants who come from cultures where the metaphysical is the very foundation of understanding human nature and the universe."[593] This observation puts Murdoch's ideas on modernity and exile into the framework of contemporary theory. For Murdoch, the real danger of the modern world is that it banishes metaphysics with its understanding of the human nature, is anti-religious and ignorant toward differences.

Such blindness toward the other constitutes the main moral problem in the writings of Murdoch, Canetti, Steiner, and Adler. In *Die Blendung,* Canetti interprets the idea of blindness as a hindrance to morally see the world. As Elaine Morley points it out, Peter Kien, the hero of Canetti's novel, is "a 'Kopf ohne Welt' [a head without a world]," [594] a character who is incapable of having a true vision of the external reality. His living within his head prevents him being a good person, and his self-obsession leads him not only to be blind to the manipulations of Therese and Fischerle, but also a horrifying destruction of himself and those around him. Published in 1935, *Die Blendung* inevitably foreshadows the political and moral implications of Nazism, interpreting blindness as "born of the human being's fantastical picture of himself"[595] and its "reduced picture of the other"[596]. As Morley argues, gender differences are tightly linked with blindness, and it is curious to see how Canetti's male characters tend to objectify women and fail to recognize them as individuals.[597] Canetti's portrayal of women as powerful and monstrous has drawn some criticism, especially from feminist scholars, who have noted the author's grammatical use when describing women, his own neglect of his wife Veza as a writer and his treatment of his lovers Friedl Benedikt and Murdoch. Yet, it is essential to see that in Canetti's thought, both sexes are confined by their own egotistic fantasies that prevents their moral progress. This egotistic fantasy that tends to objectify other people had its terrifying consequences in the Holocaust, and although the conflagration of Kien's library in

[592] Luma Simms, "Identity and Assimilation," *National Affairs* 40 (2019). Available: https://nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/identity-and-assimilation. Access: 09.08.2019.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Morley, p. 15.
[595] Ibid., p. 23.
[596] Ibid.
[597] Ibid.

the novel's conclusion is inspired by Canetti's own experiences of the riots on July 15, 1927, whereby a mass of Viennese workers set fire to the Palace of Justice, this last scene in the novel altogether envisages the turmoil of the Second World War.[598]

In *Die Blendung*, Canetti challenges the previously accepted ideas of civilisation that equalised historical development with moral progress, an endeavour that is shared by Steiner. In "On the Process of Civilization", Steiner observes humanity's hunger to control nature as a straight path to self-destruction. As Michael Mack explains, Steiner understands humanity's desire to extend its domination over nature to the human sphere as a "collective suicide"[599], whereby humanity's egotistic fantasy of himself results in the blindness to his own decay.[600] Steiner says:

> The process of civilisation is the conquest of man by the natural forces, the demons. It is the march of danger into the heart of creation.
>
> Whoever recognises this lives in the blank night of despair, illuminated by but a single star, the star of dual discipline.
>
> regarding man, who has created in His image;
>
> regarding society, whose boundaries are immutably set forth in the covenant.[601]

Delusional self-absorption makes human beings ignorant to the suffering at best, or cruel tormentors of others at worst. Both human actions have an essential place in H.G. Adler's works. In "Memories of a Past Century", a short story published in his collection *Unser Georg* (1961), Adler describes human progress that has nothing to offer to the post-war world but either the feeling of misery or a blind optimism to move along with sympathy, making the past present, yet invisible.[602] "Wilful blindness"[603] to suffering is dangerous. It made an entire generation of German and Polish people to shut their eyes to the Nazi atrocities during the Holocaust. It created a psychological distance in modern bureaucracy, turning millions of Jewish people

[598] As Michael Mack argues, "[w] hether it is a head without a world, or world without a head, what we encounter is a universe which is atomized in the extreme; it is a world in which parts exist on their own and shy away from making contact with their surroundings. It is this atomization of society that undermines the validity of a combination of materialism and religiosity and which, as a consequence, disrupts social cohesion. And precisely this atomization and its social and religious consequences eventually leads to the madness of crowds." Mack, p. 36.
[599] Michael Mack, "Canetti, Steiner, and Weimar's Aftermath," in *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 175.
[600] Ibid.
[601] *Selected Writings 2*, p. 128.
[602] Filkins 2019, p. 320.
[603] Ibid.

nameless objects, numbers to add or to erase, legitimizing mass murder by a superior authority.[604] "Blinding" of other people was a central purpose of the filmmakers of *Theresienstadt*, creating the perverted reality of a happy and cheerful community to discharge any suspicion of the Western allies on genocide.[605] Zygmunt Bauman argues that "the Holocaust is so crucial to our understanding of the modern bureaucratic mode of rationalization not only, and not primarily, because it reminds us […] just how formal and ethically blind is the bureaucratic pursuit of efficiency."[606] Nobody is free in this modern bureaucracy, and "civilisation means slavery, wars, exploitation, and death camps."[607]Modern bureaucracy that enslaves the individual and create moral blindness, plays a special role in *The Flight from the Enchanter*. As A.S. Byatt argues, the moral crisis of each character in the novel is that they are "not free"[608]. Their displacement is not a matter of their ethical choice but something that is imposed upon them externally. The tragedy resulting from this situation is that although there is an agency for immigrants called the SELIB (Special European Labour Immigration Board) that "regulates immigrant permits, and holds all the immigrants' identity documents,"[609] and that allows them after five years of work to ask for naturalization,[610] "in fact once they're here no one is going to bother their heads about them."[611] This unjust procedure arouses some pity in Hunter, who also notes that "[i]t would be a sad thing for a man [...] to have his fate decided by where he was born. He didn't choose where he was born."[612] This part of the novel powerfully reflects on the lack of freedom that all refugees coming to England were forced to live through: for them, there was no chance for flight and they were forced to live with the discriminating policy of the foreign land, the everyday manifestations of prejudice and the constant fear that they can be deported any time. A higher authority of administration has made up its mind over their fate, just as it did during the Holocaust.

This lack of freedom is preliminary to the inner conflict of Nina, the dressmaker. Having no given surname, Nina is the archetype for the rootless refugee with a loss of identity. She appears to Annette Cockeyne as "'some sort of refugee' [...] [who] spoke with a charming and quite undiagnosable foreign accent."[613] As a nameless survivor, she is the most vulnerable among

[604] Adler 2017, pp. 32-61 and pp. 330-372., Bauman, pp. 83-169.
[605] Adler 2017, pp. 123-149.
[606] Bauman, p. 15.
[607] Richard L. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History* (New York: Harper, 1978), pp. 91, 195., cited by Bauman, p. 10.
[608] Byatt, p. 42.
[609] White 2010b, p. 8.
[610] Murdoch 2000a, p. 97.
[611] Ibid.
[612] Ibid., p. 99.
[613] Ibid., p. 41.

Mischa's slaves. Yet, she has the hatred toward all authorities and toward "their mysterious interconnection with each other,"[614] something that was shared by many other refugees fleeing from Hitler. Nina lives in a world of continuous torment. She tries to escape Mischa by fleeing to another continent. Her fear from Mischa is paralleled to her anxiety of being deported, of being pushed back from one form of power to another without any hope for freedom. Her frustration takes shape in her constant nightmare in which her sewing machine chases and swallows her up along with a map of all the countries in the world like a heartless beast. Nina's tragedy is that she desperately yearns for being freed, yet everybody, not only the people from her immediate social environment but also the broader English society, fails to attend to her.[615] As White claims, although "English society is politically strong,"[616] it is also "[c]allous, unthinking, accidental"[617] and indifferent to its refugees. If we read Murdoch's novel as a commentary on the contemporary English society's attitude toward refugees, the strength of this argument is obvious. For a person like Nina, "a soul without a nationality, a soul without a home"[618], there is no escape and there is no possibility to fly.[619] Nina's crisis reaches its peak point in the scene where she desperately prepares to return to her homeland, a home that represents for her both spiritual and physical extinction:

> She had finished packing her case. Everything was ready. She looked into her handbag. She had in it a very large sum of money and her passport. She stared at her passport, and it seem to her suddenly lie a death warrant. It filled her with shame and horror. She took it in her hand and it fell open at the picture of herself. It was an old picture taken in the worst days of her fear. At the Nina whose hair was golden a younger black-haired Nina stared back, anxious, haggard and fearful. Here was her very soul upon record, stamped and filed; a soul without a nationality, a soul without a home. She turned the faded pages. The earlier ones carried the names of the frontiers of her childhood, frontiers which no longer existed in the world. The later pages were covered with the continually renewed permits from the Ministry of Labour. The Foreign Office which had issued this document had disappeared from the face of the earth. Now nothing could make it new. It remained like the

[614] Ibid., p. 145.
[615] White, pp. 8-9.; Martin and Rowe, p. 32.
[616] White, p. 11.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Murdoch 2000a, p. 264.
[619] Ibid., p. 265.

> Book of Judgement, the record of her sins, the final and irrevocable sentence of society upon her. She was without identity in a world where to be without identity is the first and most universal of crimes, the crime which, whatever else it may overlook, every State punishes. She had no official existence.[620]

Nina's suicide is inevitable since there is ''[o]nly one frontier remained, the frontier where no papers are asked for, which can be crossed without an identity into the land which remains for the persecuted, always open."[621]

On another level, Nina is a voice. In her interview with Jeffrey Meyers, Murdoch recalls the refugees whom she encountered as a U.N.R.R.A. worker: "Most of these people didn't want to go back to their homeland. They'd had enough of Europe and wanted to go to America, and some of the younger ones did. The older ones, of course, just got left in the camps. Nobody wanted them and God knows what happened to them."[622] Nina stands for those refugees whose voice could not be heard and remained unobserved and deemed insubstantial by Western societies during and after the Holocaust. Murdoch's choice to give her the only point of identity by using her profession for her surname renders Nina invisible, yet, this paradox pointing to her non-existence makes her invisibility observable. These characteristics allies Nina with the nameless father figures in Franz Baermann Steiner's *Gebet im Garten* and H.G. Adler's *Eine Reise*. If the father character of poem epitomise those were silenced during the Holocaust, Nina stands for those who were unable to flee from the constraints of social and political oppression. Thus, although the Holocaust is only indirectly discussed in the novel, its traumatic blow on the individual is felt. With it, Murdoch's narrative skilfully evades the dictum of Theodor Adorno, while also giving back the human existence and freedom of those who were robbed of them.

Commemoration in Murdoch's narrative is present in both a collective and a private sense. I have pointed out previously that Franz Baermann Steiner represented for the suffering refugee whose existence is fractured by the outcome of the war. While in *Under the Net*, she preserved his memory in the theatrical masks and the firm Belfounder and Baermann, Small-arms, Ltd., in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, his character is recaptured by Peter Saward. As Adler and Fardon observe, like Saward, Steiner lost his sister as an adolescent. Saward is described as gentle and "strangely gay"[623], who endures his own dying with dignified suffering. He is

[620] Ibid., pp. 263-264.
[621] Ibid., p. 265.
[622] Dooley, p. 231.
[623] Murdoch 2000a, p. 23.

Jewish, and, as Murdoch's other characters with Jewish roots, appears as magical, "other-worldly"[624], and taboo[625]. His intimate discussion with Mischa is drawn upon the friendship between Canetti and Steiner, with their spontaneous gatherings in libraries and museums. Mischa is seen by Peter as "the very spirit of the Orient, that Orient which lay beyond the Greeks, barbarous and feral, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon."[626] Peter himself appears to Hunter as "almost a saint"[627]. For Rosa, Peter embodies "the sweetness of sanity and work, the gentleness of those whose ambitions are innocent, and the vulnerability of those who are incapable of contempt."[628] Murdoch's grief over rejecting Steiner's marriage proposal is beautifully reversed in the book's last chapter. Steiner recorded in his journal on 18 November 1952: "I have the love of the best woman imaginable and she won't marry me."[629] In the novel, it is Rosa who proposes to and is rejected by Peter, an overturning of real life events that might have been inspired by the author's own remorse. Murdoch's invention of Steiner in some of the characters of her novels, as we will see, is an endeavour that is best described by George Szirtes as "a form of love"[630], whereby "[w]e address our human inventions with the same solicitude with which we address any other of our own inventions."[631]

The pursuit of freedom, the attempt, with the words of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, to find "lines of flight"[632] from both individual and social repression and to "realiz[e] [our] freedom in difference and through differentiation,"[633] is at the heart of the novel's moral issue. Displacement in this sense as a form of belonging to a minority signifies a political action that challenges all forms of individual or social power and domination. It is a non-static position that involves a continuous metamorphosis, a way of becoming and that altogether de-stabilizes steady social and political norms as well as identities.[634] The Kafkaesque form of becoming an animal is present in the characters' desire to escape from the power they are enslaved to, "to think in terms of degrees of freedom, and to picture, in a non-metaphysical, non-totalitarian and

[624] Conradi 2001b, p. 66.
[625] Ibid.
[626] Ibid., p. 209.
[627] Murdoch 2000a, p. 62.
[628] Ibid., p. 253.
[629] Franz Steiner's diary 18 November 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS6/1/54. My translation. Original text: "Ich habe die Liebe der besten Frau, die ich mir denken kann, und sie wird mich nicht heiraten."
[630] Szirtes, p. 142.
[631] Ibid.
[632] Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Œdipus. Introduction to schizoanalysis* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 121.
[633] Ibid.
[634] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

non-religious sense, the transcendence of reality."[635] Accordingly, the novel is filled with animalistic references. The fox in Mischa's surname recalls Aesop's classical parables. He frequently refers to the ones enslaved to him as his "creatures" and watches Annette "as one might watch a bird"[636]. Nina is described as "a small, artificial animal"[637]. At one point, Hunter is referred to as "an animal whose protection was not teeth but flight and camouflage."[638] Upon their arrival at England, the Lusiewicz brothers appear to Rosa as "dejected and colourless, like half-starved, half-drowned animals."[639]

The symbols of hunting (Mischa's purpose to take over Rosa's feminist journal the *Artemis*) and escaping in the novel are tightly connected to Murdoch's philosophical idea on the ability of attention. Freedom for her, such as love, manifests itself in our ability to acknowledge to the "other-centred reality of the world"[640]. The lack of attention drives Nina to commit suicide. Annette's liberation from the enchantment of Mischa results in her capability of looking at the world and attending to it in all its colours, smells and sounds. For Rosa, this freedom is ambiguous. Her escape from Mischa and her successful attempt to save the *Artemis* from being bought up by him allows her to give a new meaning to her life. Yet, she carries the moral responsibility of being inattentive to Nina and, although indirectly, assisting to her death. This sense of guilt makes any moral reconciliation for Rosa impossible and the closing chapter of the novel is permeated with melancholy.

In her doctoral thesis, Barbara Stettler-Imfeld raises two questions that form some of the bases for Murdochian studies, and, as such, pivotal for this dissertation: "how does the individual person learn to "see the otherness" of his fellowman, and what does he gain by this ideally selfless, objective view of him?"[641]

It is essential to note here that Murdoch borrows the concept of attention from Simone Weil. Weil describes attention as "the rarest and purest form of generosity"[642], by that suffering is given meaning to, and thus, it is "what creates *necessary* connections [italics by her]"[643] between human beings. In *Gravity and Grace* (1947), Weil negates Sartre's view of the will, arguing that "[t]here is a lack of grace (we can give the word its double meaning here) in the

[635] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," in *Existentialists and Mystics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 293.
[636] Murdoch 2000a, p. 81.
[637] Ibid., p. 76.
[638] Ibid., p. 229.
[639] Murdoch 2000a, p. 43.
[640] Trócsányi, p. 8.
[641] Barbara Stettler-Imfeld, "The Adolescent in the Novels of Iris Murdoch," (PhD-dissertation, Zürich: Juris, 1970), p. 145.
[642] Simone Weil and Joë Bousquet, *Correspondance* (Lausanne: Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1982), p. 18.
[643] Simone Weil, *First and Last Notebooks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 90.

proud man. It is the result of a mistake."[644] Weil places attention to a superior position over such solipsist view of the world, saying that "[i]f we turn our mind to the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself."[645] It is through our compassionate and loving attention to the real that the real reveals itself to us.

For Murdoch, "there is a place both inside and outside religion for a sort of contemplation of the Good, not just by dedicated experts but by ordinary people: an attention which is not just the planning of particular good actions but an attempt to look right away from the self towards a distant transcendent perfection, a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of *new* [her italics] and quite undreamt-of virtue."[646] This conceptualisation of attention, that is one of the fundamental elements of Murdoch's moral philosophy, is also the basic principles of her novels. In almost each of her novels, there is a group of characters who are incapable of seeing others, different from their own, obsessed minds. The climax of the plots is the moment, when her egoistic characters, as a result of some unexpected events, are forced to leave their world of daydreaming illusions, and to realise that the objective truth lies somewhere else. This attention to the real provides us with the possibility "to be virtuous, to live morally"[647]. As Stettler-Imfeld claims, "[t]he path towards virtue is the search for objective reality eventually leading to tolerance and even love for other people."[648] This argument is important, since it constitutes a bridge between Murdoch's thinking and the contemporary Holocaust and postcolonial studies, in that only through recognising our differences and turning to other people with compassion would we be able to understand the suffering of others and our responsibilities in the course of events, and to learn from the past. Murdoch called those opposing Nazism and Stalinism in her last, unpublished manuscript on Heidegger, the "reflections of pure goodness, a proof of [Good's] connexion with us as a reality, as a real possibility."[649]

To sum up, Murdoch's novel can be read as a social commentary on the moral catastrophe of the twentieth century and the workings of totalitarian regimes, which were responsible for the collapse of the European civilisation and which produced their own exiles, without the promise of freedom and reconciliation. As Martin and Rowe claim, the novel's conclusion suggests that the end of the World War and the victory of Socialism and the Labour Party both in England and Europe, did not bring the anticipated liberation and that "the age of austerity

[644] Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 117.
[645] Ibid.
[646] Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 383.
[647] Stettler-Imfeld, p. 145.
[648] Ibid.
[649] Conradi 2001a, p. 342.

continued"[650]. Thus, Murdoch uses the concept of displacement to meditate upon the various manifestations of the abuse of power as well as the general social inattention toward the exiled. Her idea on it was inspired by her involvement in the rehabilitation of refugees in Europe as well as by her relationships with Steiner and Canetti, and through them, a group of Central European exiles, among them Adler, with whom she strongly identified. This identification served for her as a basis to understand the social, political, and, also, the psychological implications of being displaced. Her imagination, regarded as altogether pioneering and confusing in the time when *The Flight from the Enchanter* was first published, brings back the horrors of the Holocaust, their traumatic effect on the individual, and, with it, some of the personal narratives about them "which we hesitate to repeat"[651]. In so doing, the novel also expresses sharp criticism on both the ruling totalitarian regimes and raises awareness for the individual's social-political involvements and responsibilities.

[650] Martin and Rowe, p. 33.
[651] Murdoch 2003, p. 95.

Chapter Four

The Two Kind of Jews in *The Italian Girl*

I did not want to be a tragic man, to be the suffering one. I wanted to be light, to be new, to be free –

Iris Murdoch, *The Italian Girl*[652]

Returning to the Mother(land)

In this chapter, I will provide a critical analysis on Iris Murdoch's *The Italian Girl* in the light of her engagement in the concepts of exile, trauma and memory. This chapter's aims at discussing Murdoch's reconceptualization of home, homecoming and homelessness, and the way she uses Freud's unheimlich in order to describe how homecoming is felt differently by both Edmund Narraway, the novel's hero and the Russian Jewish exile siblings, David and Elsa Levkin. Through an extended analysis of *The Italian Girl*'s two exile characters, this chapter will connect Murdoch's ethical concerns on the Holocaust to the problem of the Jewish exile identity, explaining how the notions of survival and memory as well as the dilemma of the acceptance versus rejection of minority identity is central to her fiction. Here, I will identify the concept of home as both a place of loss and trauma and of identity, and homecoming as a revitalization of trauma, and will discuss the question of assimilation, comparing Murdoch's touch on these issues to Steiner's, Adler's and Canetti's theories on German-Jewish exile. In this chapter, I will also discuss the ways the Gothic tradition serve as a helpful guide for Murdoch to draw up the psychosis of a post-war world that was shaken by Hitler's terror and the Holocaust.

Iris Murdoch's *The Italian Girl* is often deemed by critics as one of her least successful novels. According to her biographer Peter J. Conradi, this novel is a testimony of her way of renouncing the same formula as well as her aspiration to convert her Platonic ideas, her vision of goodness, love, human passion, and her views on the ethical role of art into a rhetoric that might be accessible for a wider audience.[653] A significant part of the critics accuses her of being

[652] Iris Murdoch, *The Italian Girl* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 150.
[653] Conradi 2001a, p. 459.

unable to step out of her system of repeating herself, and as a result, a majority of her novels can be read as constant resonances of the previous ones. Accordingly, *The Italian Girl* has been interpreted by many as a frail imitation of *A Severed Head*.[654] This comparison is not without any reason, if one tends to read both works, through their portrayal erotic complexities and adulterous relationships, as post-war reproductions of restoration comedies, employing Freud's ideas on the Oedipal-myth and Medusa. However, as Nicol argues, while in *A Severed Head* these Freudian symbols are key for a clearly developed philosophical problem, in *The Italian Girl*, they can altogether be seen as weak imitations of the previous novel.[655] According to Nicol, although Murdoch effectively combines some of her complex philosophical ideas in *A Severed Head* through its plot and characters, including her notion of contingency as well as her theories on the pursuit of goodness and on erotic love, these problems in *The Italian Girl* remain on the surface of the novel's narrative and some of the expressions of its characters.[656]

The novel is about a family's struggle to be redeemed and the destructive secrets that its matriarch's funeral brings about. After a long absence, the hero, Edmund Narraway, returns to his childhood scenery following his mother's death. During his stay, Edmund witnesses to the tensions and tragedies that resurging secrets generate that ultimately shatter the spiritual and existential balance of his family.

Although in coherence and development *The Italian Girl* is a lesser novel, in Murdoch's oeuvre, it is a major overture to her later novels. The novel signifies a break from the ease and playfulness of her earlier fiction. Furthermore, the problems of the Jewish identity, what it means to be a Jew in a culture with different values, is emphasised much significantly here. Thus, it might be more appropriate to examine this novel as an important step for her toward a more meditative intellectual reflection to the post-Holocaust world, where the grief and the guilt over the past as well as the search for identity in a shaken, morally lost and godless world emerge in a much darker picture.

The Italian Girl is a Gothic novel that follows the tradition laid down by such writers as Daphne du Maurier or Henry James. In an anonymous interview in 1964, Murdoch said "the only writer I am really sure has influenced me is Henry James: he is a pattern man, too."[657] Being a devoted fan of James, Murdoch shared many of James's ideas on personal life, art, the

[654] Johnson, p. 29. and Dipple, p. 152.
[655] Nicol 2004, p. 132.
[656] Ibid.
[657] Iris Murdoch, "Speaking of Writing XII," *Times*, 13 February 1964, in Dooley, p. 15.

role of religion and the human individual.[658] Priscilla Martin hails Murdoch's *An Unofficial Rose* (1962) for being "strikingly Jamesian in subject matter"[659], which appears in "the relationships between love, art, freedom and money, and between frustration and vicarious living."[660] Peter J. Conradi calls Murdoch's *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) a novel that "is fed by Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove*, whose story of two impoverished outsiders plotting an opportunistic marriage it plays with and substantially alters, and whose famous final line ('We shall never be again as we were') it twice echoes."[661]

The Jamesian influence on *The Italian Girl* is observable on at least two levels. First, it is important to note that the spirits in the Gothic stories of both James and Murdoch are not so much detached from our world. They are a part of our psyche, our repressed fears and desires as ambiguous as they can be. Virginia Woolf says in her critical assessment of *The Turn of the Screw* (1898):

> Henry James's ghosts have nothing in common with the violent old ghosts – the blood-stained sea captains, the white horses, the headless ladies of dark lanes and windy commons. They have their origin within us. They are present whenever the significant overflows our powers of expressing it; whenever the ordinary appears ringed by the strange. The baffling things that are left over, the frightening ones that persist – these are the emotions that he takes, embodies, makes consoling and companionable.[662]

In his essay on Henry James, John Bayley makes a statement similar to Woolf's, when he claims that "Henry James's ghosts, notably those in *The Turn of the Screw*, have their being in the mind, the mind and imagination of a master writer."[663] Interestingly, in the same essay Bayley recalls an event, when he and Iris Murdoch, while being accommodated in the Lamb House, "had a disquieting sense - we slept badly - of being aware of the Jamesian mind when it was, so to speak, domiciled in Lamb House. The character of the Master, his fears, hopes, and depressions, his anxieties and his solitudes - his solitudes above all, and the unending process of

[658] Priscilla Martin, "Houses of Fiction: Iris Murdoch and Henry James," in Anne Rowe ed., *Iris Murdoch: A Reassessment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), pp. 124-135.
[659] Ibid., p. 124.
[660] Ibid., p. 125.
[661] Conradi 2001b, p. 325.
[662] Virginia Woolf, "Henry James's Ghosts," in Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), p. 179.
[663] John Bayley, "What Henry Knew," *The New York Review of Books*, 15 July 2004. Available: https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2004/07/15/what-henry-knew/. Access: 27 September 2019.

creation which all these inspired."[664] This argument is reiterated in *The Italian Girl*, when standing by the coffin of his dead mother, Edmund recalls that "[s]he was, in some way, a great spirit; all that power, with some *turn of the screw* [my italics], might have organized some notable empire."[665]

Both *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Italian Girl* have been approached from Freudian perspectives. Mark Spilka calls James's spirits "sex-ghosts"[666] whose presence "connect [the children] still more firmly as the governess records and explains their brief appearances through fears and sympathies which the ghosts alert."[667] For Bran Nicol, the same Freudian issue is at work in *The Italian Girl*, where the hero "wishes to recover a time of innocence, yet one which allows excursions into the dangerous, thrilling world of adult sexuality,"[668] while "[recognizing] all too keenly that the past is also full of things he fears and must escape."[669] In other words, in both works there is a nostalgia for the past, yet this nostalgia is mingled with the fears from the horrors that the past involves. In this respect, both works fulfil perfectly well the requirements of ghost stories. As Audrey Niffenegger says:

> Ghost stories are a literature of loneliness and longing. Ghost stories can be violent, grotesque, thrilling, repulsive. But the quieter, more desperate stories resonate more intensely. They are powered by grief and loss, separation and finality. Death is a mystery, comfort is scarce, but we will play with our bereavements, we will invent little amusements that explode with sorrow, thus we will armour ourselves against inevitable loss.[670]

When discussing the issue of coming to terms with the past, Bran Nicol makes a strikingly similar observation, arguing:

> Murdoch, to my mind, has been one of the most persistent and effective chroniclers of loss in late twentieth-century fiction. Her novels explore what we might call the 'natural' forms of loss we all inevitably experience – time, love, other people – and

[664] Ibid.
[665] Murdoch 1968, p. 16.
[666] Mark Spilka, "Turning the Freudian Screw: How Not to Do It," in James, p. 248.
[667] Ibid.
[668] Nicol 2004, p. 136.
[669] Ibid.
[670] Audrey Nieffenegger, "Introduction," in Nieffenegger, et al., *Ghostly: A Collection of Ghost Stories* (London: Vintage, 2019), ix.

> also a more unexpected, tragic kind of loss, which features in the large number of her novels which are concerned with guilt.[671]

In this sense, the reason why Murdoch's novels fit into the concept of post-war and post-Holocaust fiction is the way she treats the past as not a distant period of occurrences separated from the present consciousness, but a flow of perceptions of, sometimes, traumatic events that remain locked up in the psyche. It is also noted by Nicol:

> Making sense of the past is a common concern among post-war novelists, especially English ones. In *The Situation of the Novel*, published in 1970, Bernard Bergonzi argued that, as a result of the uncertainties brought about by recent history, contemporary fiction was poised somewhere "between nostalgia and nightmare", alternatively or simultaneously imagining a brutal apocalyptic future and "a vanished era", most often that of the "Edwardian summer".1 The desire to escape the future by returning to the past was not of course new to English culture, as any consideration of various reactionary or nostalgic strains in literary history from the Renaissance to modernism would testify […] For a variety of political, social and historical reasons, looking back to a previous age is an integral part of the English psyche. Yet the tendency to look back does take on a new aspect and urgency in the fraught socio-cultural environment of the immediate post-war period in which Iris Murdoch first emerged.[672]

In this respect, Murdoch takes a typically post-war view of the Gothic, i.e. the nostalgic look back to the past to express criticism on the morally nihilistic, anti-metaphysical present, where "[w]e have suffered a general loss of concepts, the loss of a moral and political vocabulary,"[673] and where "[o]ur inability to imagine evil is a consequence of the facile, dramatic and, in spite of Hitler, optimistic view of ourselves with which we work."[674] Evil, for Murdoch, is not primarily a supernatural manifestation of being but a complex and ambiguous force of the human personality whose workings are nowhere more observable than in the concentration camps. Evil

[671] Nicol 2004, p. 31.
[672] Ibid., p. 29.
[673] Murdoch, "Against Dryness," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 290.
[674] Ibid., p. 294.

is a product of the nightmare of modern society, and the Gothic is an instrument for her to reveal its true nature. As Maggie Kilgour argues:

> The gothic villain is frequently an example of the modern materialistic individual taken to an extreme, at which he becomes an egoistical and wilful threat to social unity and order […] The gothic is thus a nightmare vision of a modern world made up of detached individuals, which has dissolved into predatory and demonic relations which cannot be reconciled into a healthy social order. It shows the easy side of the modern Cartesian mind from autonomy and independence into solipsism and obsession, depicting the atomistic individual as fragmented, and alienated from others and ultimately from himself. In the gothic, "normal" human relationships are defamiliarized and critiqued by being pushed to destructive extremes.[675]

Such defamiliarization as the one described above is felt many times in the plot. Edmund Narraway, the novel's hero and first-person narrator calls himself an "intruder"[676] in the opening lines of the novel. Otto, Edmund's brother, is a self-pitying alcoholic with a neurotic and depressed wife (Isabel) and a passionate and sensual daughter (Flora), both of whom are seduced by Otto's apprentice, the Svengali-like David Levkin. Drawing up this line of characters, Murdoch raises the question of how redemption is possible in a world that has reached its "destructive extremes".

The novel opens with the melancholic description of grief and homecoming and ends with the image of journey. Following a long absence, Edmund returns home at her mother's funeral to the scene of his childhood. Like in Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), the mysterious house and its garden emerging from the moonlight in the opening chapter of *The Italian Girl* are just as the symbols of the hero's identity crisis as the dead mother. The dead woman in *The Italian Girl* comes to life in the hero's repressed fears and his smothering anxieties and apprehensions based on maternal love.[677] These repressed psychological symptoms get depicted in the scene of the first chapter, in which the corpse of the mother seems to come to life for the returning Edmund. Standing by her mother's dead body, Edmund gets possessed by the same eerie feeling as the heroine of *Rebecca* (1938), namely the doubt that whether the female figure perceived by him is dead or not, whether there is life in her body or not. His scepticism filled

[675] Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 12.
[676] Murdoch 1968, p. 11.
[677] Ibid., p. 131.

with anxiety is illustrated by the lively description of Lydia, the mother's dead body, her hair appearing "vital still, as if the terrible news had not come to it. It seemed even to move a little at my entrance, perhaps in a slight draught from the door."[678]

Freud's concept of the unheimlich ["unhomely"], the uncanny", is to be meant literally here. In *The Uncanny* (1919), Freud describes the sphere of home, the sphere of the domestic, the familiar as a strange and frightening place, whereby "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar."[679] As Lindsay McCarthy argues, "[t]he unheimlich is located within the walls of the house itself and in the residue of family life; in what appears to be familiar, domestic, friendly settings lurks feelings of homelessness and dislocation."[680] In *The Italian Girl*, Edmund has the uneasy feeling of being an outsider, an invader in the domestic place of the house. Home is the territory of fear and terror for him, an eerie place where the dead mother, the Terra Magna, controls haunts the lives of each residents and family members as an evil spirit of the past. From a wider angle, Freud's notion can be looked at as the diagnosis of displacement, whereby the unheimlich appears as unstable and fluid, i.e. the feelings of being at and out of home can shift in certain psychological, political and historical circumstances, and what was once felt as familiar and safe can become the area of terror and trauma.[681] This notion is finely described in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, where everyone around the suffering Jewish wife Stella assume that she lives in a complete hell "but like all those who do not, they failed to understand that hell is a large place wherein there are familiar refuges and corners."[682] As we can see, Murdoch flawlessly applies the Freudian concept as she similarly aims to explore the pathology of a post-war world with the help of psychoanalysis and the style of the Gothic novel, in which the post-war trauma fundamentally transforms the characters' visions on death, and where the binary of the sexual and ego instincts gets replaced by the life instincts and the death instincts, and where the past haunts all her characters as a dark ghost.

The constant presence of the past can be paralleled with a symbolic representation of homecoming that is also the core of the Gothic novels. Homecoming, symbolised by the house and the garden, which also expresses a conflict with the spirit of the past and the desperate attempt to flee from it, can be perceived in *The Italian Girl* on many levels. It appears in Edmund's

[678] Murdoch 1968, p. 15.
[679] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 340.
[680] Lindsay McCarthy, "(Re)conceptualising the boundaries between home and homelessness: the *unheimlich*." Housing Studies, 2017, p. 7.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 106.

compulsion to return to the mother or, in a Freudian sense, the mother's womb, and thereby to an infantile state of being, while he altogether strives for escaping from her and the past she stands for. His compulsion to go back to his state of childhood is suggested by Nicol as "a form of transference"[683]. Talking to Flora on the lawn, Edmund sees her "as Otto had seen her, radiant with innocence […] a certain simplicity, a certain unashamed prettiness."[684] As Nicol observes it, Edmund constantly refers to Flora as a "child", and is shocked when she tells him about her pregnancy "because it tarnishes the sense of childhood innocence he associates with her."[685] If Lydia, the mother has a ghostly presence in the novel, so does Edmund himself and Flora. Nicol powerfully recaptures the opening sequence of the novel, where, entering his bedroom, Edmund "is shocked by the ghostly 'hallucination' of a girl (Flora) upon his bed."[686] As Nicol argues, "Edmund and the sleeping girl are, appropriately, compared to ghosts: he, the ghost of the adult the child will become, she the ghost of the child he once was."[687] This is a curious argument that confirms that Murdoch's novel is indebted to James, for the novel's ghosts are all within Edmund's consciousness, "something hollow and incompletely perceived, the conjuration of a tired or frightened mind,"[688] that is based on his melancholy for the past and his constant fear from it.

Edmund's compulsive return to the home makes Freud's idea of the unheimlich sound in Murdoch's novel, since it gives the homely and the unhomely as constantly shifting and merging concepts, whereby the house appears for Edmund as a detached and familiar place, a place that arouses fear and anxiety in Edmund, yet that epitomises his urge to repeat and his inability to flee from the past as a consequence. Murdoch's use of the uncanny, the unheimlich, is finely represented in the first chapter. Like in a theatrical scene, Edmund appears in the place of his past as an outsider in the dark of the night. He first steps in is his mother's room. He observes his mother's dead body "with a horror which was not love or pity or sadness, but was more like fear."[689] He adds: "Of course I had never really escaped from Lydia. Lydia had got inside me, into the depths of my being, there was no abyss and no darkness where she was not."[690] Then, he enters his own room, where he finds Flora sleeping in his bed, describing the moments after that as "like an evil spirit put to flight, I was stumbling away from the stairs."[691] There he meets

[683] Nicol 2004, p. 134.
[684] Murdoch 1968, pp. 46 and 48.
[685] Nicol 2004, p. 134.
[686] Ibid.
[687] Ibid.
[688] Murdoch 1968, p. 18.
[689] Ibid., p. 17.
[690] Ibid.
[691] Ibid.

Maggie, the housekeeper, one in "a series of Giulias and Gemmas and Vittorias and Carlottas [who] moved and merged dreamlike in my mind."[692] This scene remarkably gives back Edmund's repetition compulsion, his urge to return to an infantile state: first, he looks at his mother's deadly face, arguing that he had never been capable of flying from her presence, then he sees the "childlike" Flora, the reflection of his own infantile being, and finally, it is Maggie, the Italian girl, an older woman and a mother-substitute for Edmund, that he encounters.

Although in the novel, it is Edmund who is referred to by Isabel as the one being *in loco parentis* ["an adult responsible for children in the place of a parent"][693] - there is also a chapter heading, "Uncle Edmund *in loco parentis*", emphasising it -, it is apparent that Edmund has chosen a mother-substitute, as the chapter heading "Edmund Runs to Mother" would give it, to the very extent that he has been chosen to be a father-substitute for his family. This "fixation of trauma," or "repetition-compulsion" makes the Freudian touch even more palpable in Murdoch's novel. Thereby Edmund, as Freud's Oedipal man, having "spent his childhood in an excessive and since forgotten mother fixation may all his life seek for a woman on whom he can be dependent, who will feed and keep him."[694] As Nicol argues, Edmund's ultimate decision to start a new life, to escape from his home to the world with Maggie, is therefore a failure, since he is only capable of doing that with a mother-substitute.[695]

Home, homecoming and homelessness are as applicable terms in Edmund's case as they are in David's, although their horizon of experiences of being-at-home and being-out-of-home are notably different. For both Edmund and David, home involves an uncanny experience that arouses "dread and horror"[696], yet it is an inorganic state to which both are inclined to return. However, the differences between Edmund and David come from the fact that Edmund is English and non-Jewish, i.e., he exemplifies the social centre who lacks all those experiences of displacement that Murdoch's Russian Jewish siblings share. This difference much more obvious in the play adaptation of the novel (1969), where David argues that his sister Elsa "has what we call Polizeiangst. She thinks always that she is persecuted."[697] The experiences of David and Elsa thus signify what Homi Bhabha calls "the unhomely moment"[698], which "relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political

[692] Ibid.
[693] Ibid., p. 164.
[694] Freud 1939, p. 122.
[695] Nicol, p. 132.
[696] Freud 1985, p. 339.
[697] James Saunders and Iris Murdoch, *The Italian Girl: A Play* (London: Samuel French Ltd., 2015), p. 25.
[698] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), p. 11.

existence."[699] As Sture Packalén argues, for Bhabha, "the 'other', the different, which we experience is not something that exists outside of us, but is something within and at the centre of every cultural system."[700] This experience is commonly felt by Murdoch's displaced characters both in *The Flight from the Enchanter* and *The Italian Girl*.

The difference between Edmund's perception of home and that of the Levkins is that while for Edmund, home involves not so much a spatial than a spiritual mode of being, for David and Elsa, as exiles, home is both a spiritual and a social reality. In the Levkins' case, the home becomes a place of cultural intersections, whereby the notion of being "homeless" involves the absence of the home as a commodity and implies that in order for this absence to come into existence, one should have some prior image of the home. As Mara Kaika argues, "there can be no homelessness without an economic, political and social process that produces 'the home' as a commodity; no refugees without practices of exile from a 'country of origin'; no margin without a centre; no periphery without a core."[701] This makes the notion of "home" a culturally shifting and transferable one, whereby the dialectical relationship of interdependence between the social margin and the centre implies that the centre needs the margin to define and separate itself from it to the same extent as the margin demands the centre to function in the same way. This dialectical relationship constitutes the intersections between Edmund's notion about home and unhomely, and that of the Levkins, who live through the same thing on a quite different level as refugees.

Survival and Assimilation in *The Italian Girl*

The characters of David and Elsa Levkin in *The Italian Girl* epitomise what Murdoch thinks about exile as an English author with Irish origins, an outsider herself, whose writings on the other hand mirror the traditions of Western and British culture in which she had been brought up. Like the refugees in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, the Levkins are based on Murdoch's encounters with the Central and Eastern European exiles, whose characters are mixed with her own romantic imagination of Russia, either exerting a demonic power to pass on their traumatic

[699] Ibid.
[700] Sture Packalén, "From the 'Third Reich' to the 'Third Space': Paul Celan, Erich Fried, and Peter Weiss," in Alexander Stephan ed., Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 123.
[701] Maria Kaika, "Interrogating the Geographies of the Familiar: Domesticating Nature and Constructing the Autonomy of the Modern Home," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 28. 2 (2004) :

experiences that includes suffering and the various faces of oppression of a higher power, and thereby directing each of their steps and relationships as puppeteers, or being long-suffering victims of the same power themselves. As Murdoch remarks it in a 1968 interview with W.K. Rose on the Russian siblings in *The Italian Girl*:

> One could look on them as sort of demon children. The notion of the demon child is one that interests me – the sort of changeling that suddenly appears and alters the destiny of the people round about. But I don't think there's anything quite close-knit there. I needed some kind of outsiders, and these two presented themselves. I was thinking about, well, I'm always thinking about Russia – but I mean something to do with the homeless emigré Russian, the counterforce to the very deep-rooted hominess of the rest of the scene. It is a story about home and mother, coming back to mother and settling down with mother and so on, and these homeless people passing through, and then something tragic happening: they are not really children and this is not their home, and they are banished.[702]

Murdoch's argument reveals her sympathy for the Central European refugees, yet it altogether tells much about her tendency to exoticize her outsider characters, as she does with Canetti and Steiner. It is suggestive that David appears in the novel as a Svengali, who animates the love affair between his sister and Otto, Edmund's brother, while being the lover of both Flora and Otto's wife, Isabel, leaving both women pregnant. The Svengali-Trilby theme is marvellously played out in the scene where Isabel announces her pregnancy with David's child as well as her decision to leave Otto, to return to Scotland to her father and to retrieve her maiden name, which altogether would be the name of her child with David, Learmont, the family name of the Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov.[703] This naming of his enchanter character reflects Murdoch's love for Russian literature, and its "kings," Turgenev and Mihail Lermontov.[704] As a Svengali-figure, David can also be seen as a distant literary relative to Boris Lermontov, a ballet company director in the 1948 film musical *The Red Shoes*[705], who enchants a ballerina into becoming a

[702] W.K. Rose, "Iris Murdoch, Informally," in Dooley, p. 24.
[703] Murdoch 1968, p. 163., see also Boddington, p. 266.
[704] Olga Chuprakova, "Depictions of Russian Culture in Cold War British Fiction: An Examination of the works of Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)." Available: https://www.europenowjournal.org/2017/12/05/depictions-of-russian-culture-in-cold-war-british-fiction-an-examination-of-the-works-of-iris-murdoch-1919-1999/. Access: 09 December, 2020.
[705] Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger dir., *The Red Shoes*, written by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, General Film Distributors, 1948.

professional performer, even if it involves that her personal life completely falls apart. Pointing to Murdoch's inclination to portray her exiles as magicians, Susan Sontag notes that "[t]he artist who is a polymath (or vice versa), and whose vocation is wisdom, is not a common figure in English culture, for all the numbers of bookish exiles from this century's more implacable tyrannies who have lugged their peerless learning, their unabashed projects of greatness, to the more modestly nourished English-speaking islands, large and small, offshore of the European catastrophe."[706] Thus, the Svengali leitmotif in *The Italian Girl* suggests that however Murdoch identified with exiles, she was incapable of stepping entirely out of the area of that British social and cultural centre in which her novels are set.

Murdoch's description of the Levkins as being banished and without a home returns the questions of displacement and assimilation, this spiritual wall between English society and the exiles, a theme that recurs in *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), where Stella McCaffrey feels "her particular Jewishness as an alienation from English society, as a kind of empty secret freedom, as if she were densely made than ordinary people."[707] Thus, Murdoch's views on it are worthy of comparison with the German Jewish writers of exile, and most notably with those of Steiner, Adler and Canetti. In the first chapter, I explained how these questions are applicable to these authors. I have drawn comparison between the lived experiences of survival, their look on the English life as exiles, as "others". I have stated that there is a gap for Adler and Steiner between those who went through the most unimaginable ordeal in history and those who did not. For Adler, this different horizon of experiences creates a wall between English society and its exiles and between the exiles themselves. As Sven Kramer argues:

> [In Adler's *Die unsichtbare Wand*,] [t]he suffering, the atrocities, and the murder remain unreported. These events rest behind the wall. But because the wall pervades the whole novel, it unremittingly points to the unspoken. Hence, the wall indicates the presence of an absence. The wall is always insurmountably present as the awareness of an inaccessible sphere located in the centre of the protagonist's imagination. Although the wall is a predominantly imaginary (i.e., invisible) feature, its existence interferes with Landau's everyday life. He avoids certain places and bans memories that are connected to the Holocaust. Thus, the wall influences the way in which he leads his life after the catastrophe.[708]

[706] Susan Sontag, "Mind as Passion," *The New York Review of Books*, 25 September 1980, p. 47.
[707] Murdoch 1985, p. 106.
[708] Sven Kramer, "Belated Exile in H.G. Adler's novel *Die unsichtbare Wand*," in Stephan, p. 234.

Kramer recalls an element in *Die unsichtbare Wand*, when Arthur Landau, living for over a year in his town despite his feeling of being spiritually banished from it, takes a hiking in the mountain with Anna, a friend from his childhood. Arthur's nostalgia appears in his association of the mountains with the home where he used to feel safely enclosed from the outside world with its barbarities. Returning to the sites where he spent the happiest times of his past, "his postcatastrophic state of being blends into these remnants of happiness, thus devaluing and revoking them."[709] More importantly, argues Kramer, Arthur's fear and anxiety of revisiting this scenery is tightly connected to his memory on his dead wife Franziska, and the happiness that was utterly destroyed by the horrors that were bound to come. As Arthur says, "the memory was too strong, my fear of the encounter overtaking me […] [t]here she and I were together, and there we first got to know each other. That is now forbidden ground; I don't want to go there."[710] The nightmare of the Holocaust made the past a forbidden, tabooed ground for him, and as Kramer argues, Arthur "can tolerate a small dose of memory, but fears being overwhelmed, and subsequently destroyed, by the presence of the memories evoked by some of those places."[711]

As I argued in the first chapter, *Panorama* is about a revivification of the past with a certain distance from it, and the hero Josef's quest is to give meaning to his being past and present. I have stated that his exile is compliant with his Jewish identity, a part of which is the sting of the past, the Holocaust, and the memory of the Holocaust without which no forward step is possible. He is barred from two worlds for his identity, and this doubled banishment constitutes a crisis that was commonly felt by many exiled survivors during and after the war. Nevertheless, it is yet another question that whether and how much assimilation can deter the hardships that otherness might entail and how much might the pursuit of emancipation succeed.

Discussing the Jewish question in Germany from a historical angle, Gershom Scholem calls this form of assimilation "a dangerous dialectic"[712], arguing:

> By [the Jews'] readiness to give up their peoplehood, by their act of disavowal, they did not put an end to their misery; they merely opened up a new source of agony. Assimilation did not dispose of the Jewish question in Germany; rather it shifted

[709] Kramer, p. 233.
[710] Adler 2015, pp. 136 and 142, cited in the original by Kramer, p. 233.
[711] Kramer, p. 233.
[712] Scholem, p. 33.

> the locus of the question and rendered it all the more acute, for as the area of contact between the two groups widened, the possibilities of friction widened as well. The "adventure" of assimilation, into which the Jews threw themselves so passionately (it is easy to see why) necessarily increased the dangers which grew out of heightened tension. Added to this was the fact that there was something "disordered" - and in a double sense-about the Jews who were exposed to this new encounter with the Germans: they were "disordered" by the personal and social consequences of the undignified conditions under which they were forced to live; and they were "disordered" by the deep insecurity that began to hound them the moment they left the ghetto in order, as the formula had it, "to become Germans."[713]

This "insecurity"[714] resulted in "the high lustre that fell on all things German."[715] We can see that here, the case is somewhat similar to the problem of the German-Jewish exiles arriving at England during or after the war, and Scholem speaks up against those who were willing to give up their German or Jewish identities because they were mentally incapable of facing the horrors they had lived through. As Scholem complains in a letter to Manfred Schlösser, the obstacle that prevented the communication between the Germans and the Jews was that "the endless ecstasy of the Jewish enthusiasm has never received an answer that in any way was familiar to a response to the Jews as Jews, as it were, the Jews had been addressed only for what they gave as Jews, and not for what they gave up as Jews."[716] In *Feststellungen und Versuche*, Steiner reflects on this problem, when he says:

> Wherever the Jews, living among peoples, gave up the natural character of their peoples ["volkhafte Eigenart"], they had to be aware of their separateness as a spiritual trait, and feel not as a people but as a specially endowed part of the people of the host nation. This means an elite consciousness, a phenomenon which enters the punctuality of natural events, and whose historical legitimacy or moral foundation, or whose absence it is senseless to discuss, and consequently, has two evil outcomes. A society can have only one acknowledged elite. Where the Jews felt to be

[713] Ibid.
[714] Ibid.
[715] Ibid., p. 34.
[716] Gershom Scholem, *Briefe,* Band II., 1948-1970 (München: C.H. Beck, 1995), p. 88. My translation. Original text: "[D]em unendlichen Rausch der jüdischen Begeisterung hat nie ein Ton entsprochen, der in irgendeiner Beziehung zu einer produktiven Antwort an die Juden als Juden gestanden hätte, das heißt der sie nur auf das angesprochen hätte, was sie als Juden zu geben, und nicht auf das, was sie als Juden aufzugeben hätten."

elite, they tried to socialize with the already established people of the host nation, to rise up to them.

[…]

The hostility that must result in such circumstances between the Jews and the most tolerant host communities is only one of the evil consequences.

The second evil consequence is namely that the elite formation within the Jewish community gets prevented and stops. The Jewish group becomes completely amorphous. The Jewish communities of the Middle Ages and the modern ghettos possessed spiritual hierarchies, they were structured, and structured not only through the religious formation of the community, but by the way in which each autonomous group is structured according to constitution; and yet in every crisis not only the authorized leaders and representatives of the congregations are standing by, but they as such a singular "best of the people". These natural phenomena no longer exist in the Jewish communities who claim to be elite. The Jew, who counts among his peers, is considered to be due to the respect or position he has acquired in the society of the host nation. If all the people of such a Jewish group lose that respect and position among the host people, the group collapses into a completely amorphous pariah-trash ["Pariahäuflein"], leaderless, unstructured, aimless, afflicted with social mistakes that the loss of religion alone has not caused.[717]

Steiner here points to a fundamental element of Jewish identity in the context of modernity. On the one hand, he sees the risks of assimilation to a host country as a source of irreconcilable

[717] Steiner 2009, pp. 187-188. My translation. Original text: "Überall, wo die Juden unter den Völkern lebend ihre volkhafte Eigenart aufgegeben haben, mußten sie sich ihrer Sonderung als eines geistigen Merkmals bewußt sein, sich also nicht als ein Volk, sondern als ein besonders ausgestattetes Teil des wirtvolkes fühlen. Dies bedeutet ein Elitenbewußtsein, eine Erscheinung, die mit der Pünktlichkeit von Naturereignissen eintritt, und über dessen historische Berechtigungoder sittliche Gründung, beziehungsweise deren deren Abwesenheit zu diskutieren sinnlos ist, hat zwei üble Umstände im Gefolge. Eine Gesellschaft kann nur eine Elite haben, die sie anerkennt. Wo sich die Juden als Elite fühlten, haben sie versucht, sich mit der schon bestehenden des Wirtvolkes zu vermischen, in ihr aufzugehen. […] Die Feindschaft, die sich unter solchen Umständen zwischen den Juden und den tolerantesten Wirtsvölkern ergeben muss, ist nur die eine der beiden üblen Folgen. Die zweite üble Folge ist dass die Elitenbildung innerhalb der jüdischen Bevölkerung unterbunden wird und aufhört. Die jüdische Gruppe wird völlig amorph. Die Judenschaften des Mittelalters und des neuzeitlichen Ghettos besaßen geistige Hierarchien, waren gegliedert, und nicht nur durch die religiöse Gemeindebildung, sondern gegliedert, wie jede autonome Gruppe konstitutionsgemäß gegliedert ist; und doch in jeder Krise nicht nur die bevollmächtigten Führer und Vertreter der Gemeinden bereit sind, sondern sie als solche ausgeonderten Besten des Volkes. Diese natürliche Erscheinungen gibt es nicht mehr in Judenschaften, die sich als Eliten gebärden. Der Jude, der unter seinesgleichen gilt, gilt auf Grund der Achtung oder der Stellung, die er in der Gesellschaft des Wirtsvolkes erworben hat. Verlieren alle Menschen einer solchen jüdischen Gruppe jene Achtung und Stellung beim Wirtsvolk, so stürzt die Gruppe in ein völlig amorphes Pariahäuflein zusammen, führerlos, ungegliedert, richtunglos, mit sozialen Fehlern behaftet, die der Religionschwund allein nicht verursacht hat."

conflicts between the host countries and their Jewish community. The emancipation of the Jewish people, i.e. their aspiration to mingle with the host society, to rise to their standards conflicts with their treatment by society as people with special and different spiritual traits. On the other hand, their failure to join the elite of an already established society leads to the collapse of their own community into an amorphous mess with no standards and no directions. As a result, what we get is a community of people isolated from themselves, with no moral values, fumbling on the margins of a society who demands from them a complete rejection of their identity that they are not entirely capable of. As Scholem explains to Schlösser, "[w]here the Germans engaged in an argument with the Jews in a human spirit, such an argument was always based […] on the spoken and unspoken presupposition of the self-abandonment of the Jews, on the progressive atomisation of the Jews as a dissolving community, whereby the individual is merely accepted either as the conveyor of pure humanity, or the carrier of a heritage that has meanwhile become historical."[718]

What Scholem and Steiner provide us here with is a particularly harsh comment on modernity, an anti-religious and anti-metaphysical age where the individual, rootless and standing without any secure community and any religious and moral beliefs, is suffering on the margin of a culture and a society which is not his/her own. As I suggested in the first chapter, writing in German was a conscious effort for Adler, Steiner and Canetti, to dissolve this suffering and to make a mutual conversation between the Germans and the Jews possible by purifying the language from the filth of Nazi ideology. Yet, it should be noted that for Steiner, the oppression of marginalised people seemed to be a national characteristic of England, something that the made the distinction between the provincial and colonial English society not that far from the Germans. In his notes, Steiner complains that "[t]here is hardly any English book, which, to some extent, does not deal with a betrayal without the possibility to touch upon oppression or to portray another act of oppression […] The English are so surrounded by the possibility of oppression that they are constantly [aware of] this."[719] Steiner's attitude to the English society is detectable in his poem "Kafka in England". Here, Steiner satirizes the general English tea-

[718] Scholem 1995, p. 88. My translation. Original text: "Wo Deutsche sich auf eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Juden in humanem Geiste eingelassen haben, beruhte solche Auseinandersetzung stets auf der ausgesprochenen und unausgesprochenen Voraussetzung der Selbstaufgabe der Juden, auf der fortschreitenden Atomisierung der Juden als einer in Auflösung befindlichen Gemeinschaft, von der bestenfalls die Einzelnen, sei es als Träger reinen Menschentums, sei es selbst als Träger eines inzwischen geschichtlich gewordenen Erbes rezipiert werden konnten."

[719] Steiner 2009, p. 189. My translation. Original text: "Es gibt kaum ein englisches Buch, das, auf welchem Niveau immer, ein Verbrechen behandelt, ohne die Möglichkeit der Erpressung zu berühren oder einen Erpressungkt zu schildern […] Engländer sind so von Möglichkeiten der Erpressung umgeben, daß sie sich dessen ständig [gewärtig] sind."

time babbling in a poem whose tone is rather bitter than harsh, and that blames both the Jews and the English for their incapability "of absorbing contemporary reality,"[720] while expressing its sadness over the hopelessness of creating any "transnational frame by which communication could occur."[721]

Neither via Belsen, nor as a maid of all work
The stranger came, by no means a refugee.
And yet the case was a sad one:
His nationality was in doubt,
His religion occasioned lisping embarrassment.

"Have you read Kafka?" asks Mrs. Britle for breakfast.
"He's rather inescapable and fundamental, I feel."
"Have you read Kafka?" asks Mr Tooslick at tea.
Then you'll understand the world much better –
Though nothing in him is real."
Miss Diggs says: "Is that so?
I thought that was reactionary, don't you?"
Only little Geoffrey Pilzman
Dreams "Who?"

"I mean, who does well out of this,
They must be dead, after all,

I mean those people in Prague – well, no matter, what name…"
Yet the glory of him shines through the gateway all the same.[722]

While mocking English middle-class society, the poem recollects the character of the unnamed character of the nameless, rootless refugee, the "stranger," the wandering Jew who stands without any real nationality, with a religion that causes "embarrassment" for everyone. Society is a

[720] *Selected Writings 2*, p. 83.
[721] Ibid.
[722] James E. Miller, Robert O'Neal and Helen M. McDonnell eds., *Teutonic Literature in English Translation* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1970), p. 264.

burden with many intersecting lines that is clearly evidenced by the poem's little boy character Geoffrey Pilzman. Having a traditional English forename to his German second name, this character represents those Jewish refugees who aim to assimilate yet are not entirely capable of doing so. He has connection to those who perished in the gas chambers, like Kafka's family did. The tragic consequence of his assimilation, as Jeremy Adler puts it, is that, while "[conforming] to the stereotype of the Jew,"[723] he "treats [Kafka] as a commodity"[724] in a similar manner as English society does. Thus, the disaster that assimilation might involve is a religious one: without a single identification as a refugee, one loses the religious horizon that would be necessary "to formulate an adequate response to the fate of his own people,"[725] being forever imprisoned in a culture that is not his own, without roots, without moral convictions, all alone.

The social and ethical problem of assimilation and survival is echoed in Murdoch's exiled Jewish characters. As Frances White notes, "[a]wareness of marginalization is always uncomfortably present in the middle-class world Murdoch's characters inhabit."[726] It is noteworthy that many of her exile characters are assimilated and comfortably settled in the English middle-class world, including Mischa Fox in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, or the Levkins have traditional English forenames or last names. The Lusiewicz brothers rise to power above their social circle by gaining command above the English language. Elaine Morley argues that as a resistance to Canetti's thought on power in *Crowds and Power*, i.e. the argument that the power figure suffers from an urge to possess, and thereby "are characterized by their non-transformative nature, suggesting that they cannot become good,"[727] Murdoch presents a set of characters, like Peter Saward in *The Flight from the Enchanter* or Tallis Browne in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, "who are more successful in their endeavour to be good."[728] According to Morley, however, Murdoch seems to have misunderstood Canetti's conceptualization of transformation as "the potential for countering the exercise of power"[729] through the endorsement of "understanding and tolerance of what is other than oneself."[730] This misunderstanding, suggests Morley, is obvious from her notes in her annotated copy of *Crowds and Power*, where she remarks that "EC interested in greatness (and the

[723] *Selected Writings 2*, p. 82.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Ibid.
[726] White 2010b, p. 8.
[727] Morley, p. 102.
[728] Ibid.
[729] Ibid., p. 88.
[730] Ibid., p. 89.

temptatns [temptations] of power but not in goodness,"[731] calling his thought "[a] pessimistic ethic – he sees the sources of evil & silent about the sources of good."[732] Where Canetti uses the term of "Verwandlung" [transformation], Murdoch employs the concept of unselfing in a Weilian respect, i.e. the "[antithesis] to the powerful character's activities where he is blind to the other, lives in isolation to avoid confronting the other, and attempts to possess the other with a view to rendering it extinct by subsuming it and making it an extension of himself."[733]

In the first chapter I explained survival in Canetti as a character trait of the power figure to secure his position and to keep everybody else in enslavement. As Morley suggests, "[i]n the figure of the autonomous, powerful man, the power drive is not curbed,"[734] since "[t]he king is always characterized by his solitude and inaccessibility."[735] For Canetti, the tyrant, in order to be successful, *must* necessarily lack of any traces of survivor guilt, since "[f]eeling guilty and thinking of oneself as prey are thus basically the same."[736] As we have seen in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, the two character types, the suffering hero traumatized by war and the powerful magician figure are abstract patterns of Murdoch's theory, according to which survival cannot be circumscribed on the exclusive definitions of survivor guilt versus power, but rather as a combination of the two terms. In this respect, as Osborn puts it, while in Canetti's theories survival is a form of power that requires the sacrifice of others, for Murdoch survival involves both the compulsive strengthening of power and with it the denial of the traumatic past, and the inheritance of guilt to generations.[737] This concept is embodied by David and Elsa in *The Italian Girl*. Edmund is introduced by David to the notion of the "two kinds of Jew"[738], i.e. that "[t]here are the Jews that suffer and the Jews that succeed, the dark Jews and the light Jews. [Elsa] is a dark Jew. I am a light Jew"[739]. For David, this kind of duality serves as an evidence to the theory that survival is provided only for those who are able to float in a world of light with the absence of survivor guilt, without the pressure of remembering, passing on their mourning over the past to those who did not have a direct experience on terror. Elsa is a counterpart to this aspect of survival as struggling in the custody of inherited guilt she "is all memory – she remembers so

[731] Iris Murdoch's copy of *Crowds and Power*, held at Kingston University Archive, p. 464., cited by Morley, p. 89.
[732] Iris Murdoch's copy of *Crowds and Power*, held at Kingston University Archive, p. 484., cited by Morley, p. 89.
[733] Morley, p. 102.
[734] Ibid., p. 70.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Canetti 1981, p. 347.
[737] Osborn, p. 114.
[738] Murdoch, p. 68
[739] Ibid.

much, she remembers the memories that are not hers."[740] Owing to her impulse to revitalize trauma, she is the representative of the survivor who is unable to fit into society, and whose fate is suffering and early death.

In this respect, two alternatives of survival appear in this novel. Firstly, the memory of the Holocaust can be understood as a revival of trauma than a reference point to the development of processing. From this perspective, the survivor can be similarly declared as a victim of a morally twisted world, above which the dead god and his dark angels reign. This view is articulated in Edmund's description of Elsa: "I recalled the waxen face and the staring eyes. Yes, a little mad perhaps. Another victim of a wicked world."[741] Elsa's character can be therefore interpreted as a fictional alter ego of Franz Steiner, whom Murdoch called "a victim of Hitler", and for whom memory and suffering were totally inseparable from one another.

However, the remorseless survivor's character as a representative of power is given a special emphasis in the novel. Here, Murdoch reinstates her view on the vulnerability of monsters, an idea that she already developed in *The Flight from the Enchanter*, whereby tyranny is determined as a victim of its own inherent compulsion to consolidate its power by subjugating other people. This makes David's instinct of survival a basis for that lifelong denial that can come about through his rejection of memory and trauma along with it, their settlement to Elsa. And although David attempts to compensate for his survivor guilt coming along with his minority existence through his constant denial of his Russian roots ("… for I am as British as you are…"[742]), his lies get finally unveiled by Elsa's death. As he confesses to Edmund by the end of the novel: "'Why did I lie. Well, why should I tell the truth, such a truth, to anyone who asks? Why should I wear such a story always round my neck and be such a figure of the world? And oh, there were worse things, worse than she said. I did not want to be a tragic man, to be the suffering one. I wanted to be light, to be new, to be free –'"[743]

David's struggle can this way be paralleled to Edmund's; on the one hand they both try desperately to escape from the dark spirits of their past, on the other they strive for holding onto the past through their constant recollections of it. The experience of marginality that exile involves leads David to both a rejection of his Jewish identity and the traumatic lived experiences coming from it, and his inability of integrating himself to the dominant culture as well as a deep attachment to his own Jewishness. This ambivalence gets dissolved at the end of the novel by

[740] Ibid.
[741] Ibid.
[742] Ibid., p. 67.
[743] Ibid., p. 150.

the picture of travelling that also implicates for Edmund the possibility for a new life with Maggie, and from David's part a final return to his roots. For David, coming to terms with his past is coupled with the recognition of his own minority identity as well as his acknowledgement of grief, pain, and guilt that manifests itself in his reckoning of rootlessness and his return to the motherland. The Freudian term of returning to mother or going back to the mother's womb might be grasped as a destination point of minority existence. Thus, the motherland involves the return to an inorganic state that supersedes the binaries of life and death through the arrival to a de-energised state of non-existence, and that dissolves the statelessness and past traumas associated with the Jewish minority form of life through the confrontation with the past.

Consequently, *The Italian Girl*, the trauma and the memory of the Holocaust as well as the instinct of survival is closely tied to the dilemma of the Jewish minority existence, the affection for roots and at the same time the past, and the urge to escape from the shadows of the past in a godless world of moral turmoil. The merit of this novel is that through its dramatic description of mourning and survivor guilt as well as the hopeless struggle against them, it represents the psychotic disorder of the last century that was greatly influenced by Hitler's power and the trauma of the war. In this world of post-war moral crisis, the concepts of cultural diversities and border-crossings, as well as the relations between the social margin and the centre are necessary to be reassessed. *And although the Holocaust serves in Murdoch's fiction as a mere instrument to grasp the post-war ordinary human condition,* in her novels, including *The Italian Girl*, she clearly opts for speaking about it as a historical and cultural trauma. Her endeavour might be brought into agreement with her idea that literature and art can be educative forces, and that the task of literature is to offer a true portrait of the prevailing human situation through rescuing humankind through the post-war moral chaos. Accordingly, the memory through speaking becomes to be an essential element for literature in Murdoch's later novels, including *The Message to the Planet* and *Jackson's Dilemma* (1995) as it eliminates the traumatic experience of the Holocaust with the attentive and guiding help of art and the reliable and careful use of literary imagination.

Chapter Five

Reconciliation and Forgiveness in *The Nice and the Good*

> *To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only this matters. All power is sin and all law is frailty. Love is the only justice. Forgiveness, reconciliation, not law.*
>
> Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good*[744]

Attention and Murdoch's Religious Consciousness

In the present chapter, I will discuss the concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness in Iris Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good*. Linking these concepts in Murdoch's novel to her philosophical view on them, I will explain how these are at work in her view on religious consciousness and attention, both of which are pivotal ideas to her attitude to literature, and how her Western Christian view differs from the traditional Judaism's approach to it. Here, I will argue that however great Murdoch's sympathy was to Judaism through her Jewish teachers and Steiner, she could not liberate herself from the constraints of Anglican Christianity. In this chapter, I will explain the way Murdoch employs attention as an instrument by which empathy and reconciliation is possible. Through the novel's survivor character, Willy Kost, the literary epitome of Steiner, I will explain how much Murdoch's views on survival and guilt were moving increasingly away from Canetti's. Moreover, I will describe how skilfully Murdoch she challenges Adorno's dictum on the poetry about Auschwitz by silencing her narrative in the scene of Willy's confession about his experiences in the camps. In her questions on how much the experiences and the moral implications of the Holocaust can be understood, I will make comparison with H.G. Adler's notion on this issue. In Murdoch's treatment of forgetting as a prerequisite to forgiving, I will locate her fiction in the views of "coming to terms with the past" in the 1960s and will discuss the ways the debates on reconciliation and forgiveness in memory culture have evolved ever since.

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Iris Murdoch writes the following about religion:

[744] Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 305.

> Religion is about reconciliation and forgiveness and renewal of life and salvation from sin and despair. It lives between cosy sentiment and magic at one end of the scale and at the other a kind of austerity which can scarcely be expected from human beings. As an institution, religion may covertly recognise that the highest teaching is for the few only.[745]

In her essay "Existentialists and Mystics" (1970), as opposed to the existentialist novel that leaves the individual alone with his or her own self-absorbed being, Murdoch raises the idea of another sort of 20th century fiction, a mystical novel "both newer and more old-fashioned"[746] that "keeps in being, by one means or another, the conception of God,"[747] portraying humanity as divided between a sinful existence and a spiritual world, and thereby articulates "a religious consciousness without the traditional trappings of religion."[748] In this respect, both literature and religion attempt to reach toward a moral vision of goodness, the highest form of being, and that in a post-war civilisation that is "an untheological time"[749] in nature.

Murdoch's view here is problematic for various reasons. She strives toward a moral philosophy by throwing numerous, many times contrasting religious elements, directions and explanations into the mix from Judaism and Christianity. In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, she discusses the image of Christ upon the cross as "the ultimate picture of human suffering"[750], claiming that the most terrible human fates, such as starvation, oppression, torture, terrorism, or the Jews suffering under Hitler as "a symbol of the capacity and strength of human wickedness"[751], exceed art as the television series on the Holocaust (1978) starring Meryl Streep exemplifies.[752] In another place, she says that while great art is "a place where the (unfashionable) concept of beauty is at home, and is pre-eminently tested and clarified,"[753] "the evils and the miseries of human life are not beautiful or attractive or formally complete."[754] She eventually raises and answers the rhetorical question: "How can such a terrible planet dare to have art at all? ('Who can write poetry after Auschwitz' Adorno.) (An answer, Paul Celan.)"[755] The problem with her argument is that while she discusses the Holocaust as an illustration for a universal

[745] Murdoch 2003, p. 129.
[746] Murdoch, "Existentialists and Mystics," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 225.
[747] Ibid.
[748] Ibid.
[749] Ibid., p. 232.
[750] Murdoch 2003, p. 94.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Ibid.
[753] Murdoch 2003, p. 122.
[754] Ibid.
[755] Ibid, pp. 122-123.

human suffering, wickedness and the terrible nature of the world, she has a typically Western and Christian eye for the concepts of suffering and exile, and the role of literature and religion in the course of developing a moral sensitivity. Thereby, while she convincingly sees the Holocaust as the ultimate manifestation of evil, she fails to observe it as a symbol of Western societies striving for oppressing and annihilating other cultures.

Moreover, while Murdoch develops the term of attention, her directions are radically different from its conceptualisation in Judaism. Attention in the Jewish thought is one of man's endeavours to maintain a direct relationship with God, the creator of the world and at the same time the supreme good. The fourth tenet of the six constant mitzvah is to love God, and to love God with all our heart, giving him our constant charity, all our material goods, and our full attention.[756] Maimonides says: "What is the path to love (and awe) of God? When one ponders God's great and wonderful acts of creation, and sees in them a genius that has no comparison, then automatically a person will love, praise, glorify -- and deeply desire to know the greatness of God."[757] In "Religious Praxis: The Meaning of Halakhah" (1953), Yeshayahu Leibowitz condemns Christianity for its tendency to put God in servitude to mankind, whereby the redemption of mankind rests on the sacrifice, symbolised by the cross, that God brought about.[758] In contrast, Leibowitz describes Judaism as "a demanding religion".[759] It has its own tasks, requires humility and absolute piety from man, and its foundation lies in religious practice. Its highest image is that of the Abrahamic man, whereby "all human values were annulled and overridden by fear and love of God,"[760] as Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac epitomizes it. It has its own tasks, requires humility and absolute piety from man, and its foundation lies in religious practice. Its highest image is that of the Abrahamic man, whereby "all human values were annulled and overridden by fear and love of God,"[761] as Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac epitomizes it.

These are essential observations because they enlighten some notable differences between Murdoch's and Steiner's view on religion and religious consciousness. As I explained in the first chapter, their argument on religion is based on the fact that while Steiner's concept of God and his love for God rests on his affiliation to the traditions of Judaism, Murdoch's religious

[756] Rabbi Noah Weinberg, "The Six Constant Mitzvahs." Available: http://thepleasantway.com/lovehashem.html. Access: 29.10.2019.
[757] Maimonides, "Foundations of Torah 2:2," cited in "The Six Constant Mitzvahs." Available: http://thepleasantway.com/lovehashem.html. Access: 29.10.2019.
[758] Yeshayahu Leibowitz, "Religious Praxis: The Meaning of Halakhah," in Eliezer Goldmann, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 14.
[759] Ibid.
[760] Ibid.
[761] Ibid.

thought remains within the threshold of the Anglican Church. Therefore, despite all her sympathy for Judaism, it should not be overlooked that when she talks about religion and religious belief, her primary scope is essentially a Christian religious belief. This is evidenced by Anne Rowe and Avril Horner, who claim that Murdoch "returned to Christianity in 1948, much to the surprise of her friends,"[762] and that it was only upon the persuasion of Canetti that Murdoch left the Christian religious practice in 1953. In an interview with Stephen Glover, she says that although she rejects beliefs in a personal God, "I feel very close to the Christian church, both Anglican and Catholic."[763] One of her most controversial statement in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is that "[w]e need a theology which can continue without God."[764] This view might be clearer, if we consider Murdoch's idea of Goodness without the need for God, i.e. humankind's everlasting task to be good without the fear of punishment or the hope for a possible reward.[765]

Murdoch's idea of attention, that is, "a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality,"[766] is closer to Simone Weil who denied that man is capable of loving God, since "God is not present for him in a concrete and direct way."[767] In her review of Weil's *Notebooks* (1956), while firmly taking on Weil's mysticism, she takes a critical look at Weil's aversion to Judaism, and notes that "[s]he seems at times too ready to embrace evil and to love God as its author; many readers may find it a repellent and self-destructive quality in her austerity."[768] Whereas attention is for Weil a constant waiting for God, Murdoch observes it as the only way for human beings to free themselves from their solipsism through their experience of the reality of other people and other things in the world.[769] Perhaps not without any hidden agenda, Elias Canetti calls Murdoch "a housewife on a shopping expedition",[770] adding that "[s]he also takes on board religions, cumulatively, if you like, never out of any despair of her own, she has her suppliers. Simone Weil is quoted with as much respect as Wittgenstein or Plato."[771]

For Murdoch, both religion and literature have the tendency to direct the individual's attention toward goodness, yet both might be corrupted by self-indulgent fantasies and dogmas.[772]

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[762] Horner and Rowe, p. 94.
[763] Stephen Glover, "Iris Murdoch Talks to Stephen Glover," in Dooley, p. 41.
[764] Murdoch 2003, p. 511.
[765] Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 358.
[766] Murdoch, "The Idea of Perfection," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 327.
[767] Gábor Szmeskó, "A távolság közelében I.: Simone Weil hatása Pilinszky János misztika-fogalmára." Unpublished manuscript, p. 4.
[768] Iris Murdoch, "Knowing the Void," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 160.
[769] Murdoch 2003, p. 52.
[770] Canetti 2005, p. 163.
[771] Ibid.
[772] Murdoch, "Existentialists and Mystics," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 233.

Both tend to show the individual how to be morally better despite the terrible nature of human reality as it is exemplified by the Holocaust and, as such, identify the ways of reconciliation and forgiveness. As Frances White argues, "though she is never a didactic writer, Murdoch's art, as well as her metaphysics, is offered as 'a guide to morals', in that she sees the novel as an educative force for good."[773]

"Something About the Past": Memory and Making Sense of the Past in *The Nice and the Good*

Reconciliation, forgiveness, and the attempt to be good are central themes of *The Nice and the Good.* Combining the elements of crime fiction, thriller, and romantic comedy, the novel tells the story of sexual and spiritual entanglements. It begins with the criminal investigation of the alleged suicide of Joseph Radeechy, a civil servant, whose death leads the department's head, Octavian Gray, to shocking discoveries. The novel's parallel plot details the complex relationships among the friends and residents at the Dorset house of Octavian and his wife, Kate, including Paula Biranne, the wife of another senior member of the department, the widowed Mary Clothier, and the Dachau-survivor Willy Kost. In the book, almost each character is confronted with the unsettling existence of death, the guilt over acting badly, and the struggle to learn to live with their past.

The novel was published in 1968, seven years after Adolf Eichmann's trial, and five years after the publication of Hannah Arendt's book on it with its discussion of "banality of evil". These two events in politics and philosophy are essential, since, after the Nuremberg Trials, the Paris Peace Conference and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they provided a new ethical and legal basis on which the novel bases its discussions and approaches to justice, humanity and coming to terms with the past.[774] Aleida Assmann argues that the Eichmann trial was a turning point, a starting point for memory culture, in view of the fact that "the survivors of the Holocaust got for the first time the possibility to speak publicly about their suffering,"[775] whereby they "turned with even more interest to their past that they had kept at distance for so

[773] White 2011, p. 93.
[774] Stonebridge, p. 2.
[775] Assmann 2016, p. 181. My translation. Original text: "Im Eichmann-Prozess in Jerusalem erhielten Überlebende des Holocaust zum ersten Mal die Gelegenheit, öffentlich von ihren Leiden zu sprechen."

long."[776] Michael Berg in Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* (1995) calls this period in the transforming German legal system and ethical consciousness a way of "[e]xploring the past"[777], whereby not merely the camp guards but also an entire generation of German people "that had been served by the guards and enforcers, or had done nothing to stop them, or had not banished them from its midst as it could have done after 1945, was in the dock, and we explored it, subjected it to trial by daylight, and condemned it to shame."[778]

In English literature, the question that preoccupied the novelists of the period was that "what form the novel of the future will have to take in order to do some kind of imaginative justice in the wake of the refugee."[779] As Lyndsey Stonebridge explains, the novelist of the time, and Muriel Spark is a chief example here, who herself witnessed the Eichmann trial and was the first among the English authors to write about it in *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965), realised fiction as a powerful source to give meaning to the outcomes of the Eichmann trial and to observe the workings of justice with different eyes.[780] Murdoch, along with Elizabeth Bowen whose *Eva Trout* (1968) came out the same year as *The Nice and the Good*, was engaged both as a philosopher and as a novelist with this problem. Her moral vision even goes beyond that of Spark or Bowen in the sense that, together with Hannah Arendt[781], she apparently takes a stand in favour of the "Konzept einer ethischen Erinnerung"[782], the concept of an ethical commemoration, whereby her fiction constitutes "the spiritual basis of the new memory culture"[783]. Thus, all references to the Holocaust in *The Nice and the Good* are more than bare "implications of that cameo of horror"[784] as Frances White puts it. Although the novel undeniably identifies progress as its most essential direction, it articulates the need for "a general understanding of the reality in which we live"[785]. According to Assmann, such initiatives started not in the 1950s and 1960s, but much later, in the 1980s and 1990s in the social spirit, therefore it can be no

[776] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Die Überlebenden wandten sich seitdem wieder starker ihrer Vergangenheit zu, die sie so lange von sich ferngehalten hatten."
[777] Bernhard Schlink, *The Reader* (New York: Vintage, 1997), p. 91.
[778] Schlink, p. 92.
[779] Stonebridge, p. 136.
[780] Stonebridge, pp. 73-99.
[781] Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft. Antisemitismus, Imperialismus, totale Herrschaft* (München: Piper, 2003), p. xxxi., cited by Assmann 2016, p. 188.
[782] Assmann 2016, p. 189.
[783] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Arendts vier Punkte […] bilden die geistige Grundlage der neuen Erinnerungskultur."
[784]
[785] Ibid. My translation. Original text: "Denn so lange hat es gedauert, bis sich die implizite Wert- und Zeitorientierung verschob, die Fortschrittserzählung verblasste und sich ein allgemeines Verständnis dafür entwickelte, dass dies tatsächlich 'die Wirklichkeit (ist), in der wir leben."

coincidence that Murdoch's later novels *The Message to the Planet, The Good Apprentice* and *Jackson's Dilemma*, debate the Holocaust from a broader ethical spectrum.

The issue of coming to terms with the past is one of the key elements of Murdoch's fiction. The present cannot be separated from the past in the sense that the past has and will always have a permanent effect on our contemporary social, political and cultural realities. Gary Browning argues that what gives a dialectical nature of her novels is the notion "that we are what we have become," i.e. that "the past lives on in the present perspective, which has emerged from the reflection on the past."[786] Bran Nicol discusses Murdoch's novels in an even more specific aspect. According to Nicol, the tendency to look back on the past and our efforts to come to terms with it was pretty much a common feature in post-war and particularly post-modern English literature. [787] Nicol claims that Murdoch's treatment of the past is highly psychoanalytical in nature. This notion is guided by two principles. The past is constantly present in the individual's consciousness, independently from the will. Yet, due to the constant existence of the past the individual is obliged to give meaning to it, in other words, to attribute importance to it.[788] Indeed, the past appears in Murdoch's novels in many different forms and on many different levels: it constitutes the background of a post-war world in its materialized existence (the ruins of London in *Under the Net*), it haunts the characters as a wicked spirit of the past (the ghost of the mother in *The Italian Girl*), or it emerges on the ethical scenery of the novels with regards to the dilemmas of silence, speech, and memory (the two kind of Jews in *The Italian Girl*, the theme of guilt and speaking in *Jackson's Dilemma*).

As Bran Nicol notes, "[i]n some of [Murdoch's] books, the metaphorical presence of the past is given a more material expression."[789] The obsession of some of Murdoch's characters to make sense of their past allows the past to return to their mindset time and again, either in a series of dreamlike sequences, such as in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (1974) and *The Green Knight*, or in the characters' manic urge to revitalise their trauma.[790] A great number of characters in *The Nice and the Good* have some guilt-ridden preoccupations with the past, and each of them are in desperate search for redemption. The investigation around Radeechy's death reveals that he had murdered his wife Claudia in a rage of jealousy by pushing her out of the window, and that his final act was the outcome of his remorse for what he had done. Paula Biranne is tormented by her adulterous affair with Eric, and an accident that befell her lover,

[786] Gary Browning, *Why Iris Murdoch Matters* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 2-3.
[787] Bran Nicol, *Iris Murdoch: A Retrospective Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 29.
[788] Ibid.
[789] Nicol 2004, p. 40.
[790] Ibid., p. 41.

which she and her husband Richard were both unintentionally responsible for. The terrible memory of her husband's death and her grief over their unhappy marriage leads Mary Clothier "to go back, to revive and refresh those dull old memories and those dull old pains."[791] Thus, we might see that, as in *The Italian Girl*, the past has an everlasting presence and, as such, is reinvented in the characters' consciousness. Walking on the seashore with Mary and Kate, Paula ponders: "Is it fruitless to think about the past and build up coherent pictures of how one's life went wrong? I have never believed in remorse and repentance. But one must do something about the past. It doesn't just cease to be. It goes on existing and affecting the present, and in new and different ways, as if in some other dimension it too were growing."[792]

Here, the integration of the past into the present becomes particularly heightened through the interweaving stream of consciousness of the three women, and the similarity to Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) is striking. Like Woolf's novel, this scene starts with an uncannily beautiful depiction of the dawn beach, which picture flows almost unnoticed into the three women's consciousness. Like Woolf, Murdoch addresses her characters through the internal movements of their consciousness in this scene, and within this framework, not only their attitude to the past, their constant desire to incorporate into the present is revealed, but also their sensorial relation to the "thingy world"[793], which the past is a part of.[794]

Yet, there is another scene in the novel in which the past reveals itself in its "thingy" reality, and that is the graveyard. Strolling among the tombs of a cemetery with the Dachau survivor Willy Kost, Mary takes note of "the shimmering forms of the graves"[795], wondering what the dead bodies are transformed into, having "no images of skulls or rotting bones. She saw them all as sleepers bound about in white dark empty eyes, open-eyed sleepers."[796] Canetti writes in *Crowds and Power*:

> What does someone who finds himself in a graveyard actually do? How does he move and what occupies his thoughts? He wanders slowly up and down between the graves, looking at this stone and that, reading the names on them and feeling drawn to some of them. Then he begins to notice what is engraved beneath the names. He finds a couple who lived together for a long time and now lie together

[791] Murdoch 2000b, p. 138.
[792] Ibid., p. 120.
[793] „A letter to Harry Weinberger, 4 April 1982," cited by Conradi 2001a, p. 588.
[794] *The Sea, the Sea* (1978), Murdoch's Booker Prize-winning novel, opens with an almost identical description of the sea.
[795] Murdoch 2000, p. 158.
[796] Ibid., p. 159.

> for always, as they should; or a child who died quite young; or a girl who just reached her eighteenth birthday. More and more it is periods of time which fascinate the visitor. Increasingly they stand out from the touching inscriptions on the headstones and become simply periods of time as such.[797]

For Canetti, the survivor is a lonely figure, who "is in a position where it would be difficult not to feel some superiority, and the natural man does feel it."[798] Murdoch takes on that idea with suspicion. As Pamela Osborn notes, after *Crowds and Power* came out, Murdoch moved increasingly away from Canetti's ideas.[799] She challenges Canetti's theory on the survivor's euphoria, i.e. the enthralling feeling that the one who survives, triumphs above death while others lie dead around him, by drawing all those social interactions or personal responses by which we react or attempt to counteract to the existence of death. In *The Nice and the Good*, the graveyard is a place of commemoration and also a site where love affairs get established and reconciliation becomes possible.

Here, it should be noted that although Murdoch *does* make the Holocaust vital for her moral vision in the character of Willy Kost, she altogether avoids being labelled as a Holocaust novelist by portraying not merely the survivor guilt of the Holocaust but survivor guilt in many other aspects in her narrative. Nevertheless, her vision of the past as a reality that reveals itself in its own materialized form in the present, a notion that is also a main organising principle in Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), undeniably allies her with post-Holocaust literature. In 1974, she wrote to Georg Kreisel that she had visited Auschwitz with John Bayley, being dismayed for "how rational beings could have proceeded in such a way."[800] What makes the reality of the past horrifyingly alive in the present is the thousands of shoes, children's toys and glasses, all having once worn by people turned into mere ashes in the crematoriums. However, traces of the past are not only preserved by tangible objects, but also those places that keep the moments in the past alive, as Adler suggests, when describing Arthur's return to his town and his hiking tour with Anna in the mountains. As Arthur explains:

> This I had often felt, and loved it. A lookout, where whoever entrusted himself to the peak of such mountains shared its power and might, and the allure of both. He

[797] Canetti 1981, pp. 275-276.
[798] Ibid., p. 276.
[799] Osborn, p. 121.
[800] "A letter to Georg Kreisel, 15 August 1974," in Horner and Rowe, p. 425.

> becomes part of the mountain itself. He relinquishes his own human fears and cannot be harmed. If his duty becomes too much to bear, then he runs straight off into the protection of the forest, becoming small again and, once small, safe again. Anna didn't entirely understand.[801]

The last sentence from this passage is particularly vital as it touches upon one of the most sensitive and much debated issues of Holocaust teaching, i.e. that places and objects of commemoration have vastly different meanings for the survivor, who has direct relation to such places and objects, and for the external observer, who does not. Personal attachment through memories is at the core of Arthur's crisis, whereby he feels not only tied to the mountains, but he also becomes part of them, a state of mind that Anna does not share with him. Here lies the problem that Murdoch does not fully represent in her novels, i.e. that the compulsion to repeat trauma, to visit sites where mass murders occurred mostly, if not exclusively, applies to those who did not have a direct relationship to them. In contrast, for the survivors, visiting the same sites many times has caused an unconscious terror, as a result of which many survivors have abandoned their language, their true nationality, or simply refused to go back to places of commemoration such as Auschwitz or Theresienstadt. Yet, the indisputable merit of her vision is that she is among the first to suggest a form of external look or "loving gaze" is much needed, since that look or "gaze" triggers compassion in us for the suffering, such suffering that is not ours but others'.

In 1992, Murdoch wrote to Michael Hamburger: that "Franz's presence, his being, is very alive in me."[802] Two years later, she added that "Franz was absolute goodness, absolute being, absolute love - his loss was terrible."[803] *The Nice and the Good* can be seen as an act of love, a form of commemoration of Franz Baermann Steiner. One of the novel's main characters, the Dachau survivor Willy Kost, is seen by many as a literary alter ego to Steiner. Like Steiner, Willy is a German-speaking Jewish refugee scholar from Prague, whose experiences of the war and the Holocaust have left him mentally detached from other people. In the novel, Murdoch reproduces Franz's accent ("What ees eet?") and his way of teaching other people about German through reading German classics, an endeavour that Murdoch called "a mission for a lifetime"[804]. As Chris Boddington notes, the image of the graveyard by the sea, a reference to Paul

[801] Adler 2015, p. 153.
[802] "A letter to Michael Hamburger, 1992," in Horner and Rowe, p. 576.
[803] "A letter to Michael Hamburger, 1994," in Horner and Rowe, p. 590.
[804] Vető Miklós' keynote speech at the Iris Murdoch Centenary Conference, St Anne's College, University of Oxford, 13 July 2019.

Valéry's poem, "Le Cimetière marin", is a scene not only for demise but also a remembrance to the dead, and, as such, is a place for two of Kost's encounters, with Mary Clothier and later Jessica Bird. [805] Boddington cites Conradi, who describes Mary as a literary substitute for Murdoch: she lost one love, her engagement with Franz remained futile, then married another scholar, John Bayley.[806] What is more important to note, however, is that Murdoch subjects Franz's character to the issues of collective memory, redemption and forgiveness, thereby raising her private encounter with him to the level of public discourse about coming to terms with the past.

Almost everybody around Willy tries to unmask him, to solve his mystery and to unveil the truth about his experiences in Dachau by making him speak. When urged by Mary in the graveyard, Willy does not choose to talk about Dachau, but rather he recalls a traumatic experience in his childhood involving a dog. Murdoch's own despair for failing with Franz is perhaps nowhere more viable than here. Following Willy's account, Mary seeks to woo him, only to receive a somewhat hesitant answer from him about his impotence, a fact that physically makes their love an impossible matter. Jeremy Adler cites an acquaintance of Murdoch and Steiner, who describes Franz's funeral in the following way:

> I remember his funeral – the weather was bleak and cold: in my memory there is even some snow on the ground. But the only *person* that I remember there was Iris Murdoch standing somewhat apart from the rest and near the grave, dressed unconventionally for a funeral in those days, that is to say in her in her usual day-to-day clothes, and looking utterly desolate.[807]

In the same place, Adler alludes to another friend who recounts "how [Murdoch] regretted not having 'the consolation of widowhood'."[808] Murdoch recorded in her diary on 30 November 1952, two days after the funeral:

> What can I do with such a degree of misery? Memories of F. I must catch. They fade already. How I overtask him on my bicycle in Mask Rd in the summer & how his eyes shone so glad thro' his glasses & he ran a little toward me - & I took his

[805] Boddington 2015, p. 8.
[806] Ibid.
[807] *Selected Writings I.*, p. 99.
[808] Ibid.

> briefcase from him. And how we lay in the grass in the park & he took photos of me. And how he would say"ridyed!", and whistle like a bird & move his ears. And how I would feel him moving them when we lay against us & we would both laugh. Mein Franz – dein Franz indeed - & more than you know. Ganz steinerisch. Steiner and Steinerism. The poem Über dem Tod, that Franz showed me on Wednesday evening. He said: notice it is dem not der – not about death but above death. I looked at it & said I couldn't understand it. I was tired after meetings. F. said, never mind it! & tossed it aside: you relax now & be quiet![809]

It seems that, even after a decade, Murdoch felt a certain anguish for failing to understand Steiner, to fully love him as well as to attend to his suffering and his search for and love of God, elements closely tied to his Judaism that Murdoch, despite all her endeavours for goodness, could not identify with. One of the most telling segments of the novel is that Willy is only capable of opening up about his trauma, including his betrayal of two people who subsequently were gassed as an outcome, to Theo, the novel's saintly figure, who turns to him with complete attention without the attempt to force the truth out of him. Murdoch here seems to follow her argument already developed in *Under the Net*, i.e. that we are only capable of knowing the truth after we have given up our desire for knowledge and let the truth reveal itself to us. Thus, Theo peacefully realises that whatever comes out of Willy, "he's not really telling it to me."[810] This observation leads us to one of the fundamental problems of Murdoch's novel and of post-Holocaust narratives in general, i.e. the ethical question of silence and speech, and the way Murdoch's narrative deals with it.

When discussing the ethical limitations of Holocaust narratives, Anna Richardson notes that the unspeakability of the Holocaust involves not "a physical impossibility here, but rather a moral prohibition"[811], a taboo. For her argument, Richardson quotes Berel Lang, who claims that any form of representation is only a "representation-as" that might be contradicted by another "representation-as".[812] In other words, since every representation is subjective in its nature, since the Holocaust entails a totally different experience for the camp survivor, for whom

[809] Iris Murdoch's Journal 30 November 1952, Iris Murdoch Special Collections, Kingston University, Archives and Special Collections, KUAS202/1/7.
[810] Murdoch 2000b, p. 343.
[811] Anna Richardson, "The Ethical Limitations of Holocaust Literary Representation," *Borders and Boundaries*, p. 2. Available: https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_41171_smxx.pdf. Access: 01.11.2019.
[812] Ibid.

the Holocaust was a living hell, and for the SS-guard, for whom working in the camps offered an excellent career opportunity.[813] Richardson asks:

> If no form of representation is adequate to convey the extreme pain and suffering experienced by the Holocaust survivor, that experience itself being a mediation of the original object, is it morally and/or ethically correct to attempt representation at all? As a corollary to this question, who precisely should make that decision? Arguably that choice might fall to the survivors themselves, but in making this supposition we forget that although linked by collective memory, each survivor of the Holocaust is an individual and has his or her own idea of what is/is not appropriate. Is it then a possibility that the very question of the representation of the Holocaust could in some cases cause offence?[814]

Clearly, when talking about ethical limitations, Richardson does not question, whether it should be appropriate to talk about the Holocaust, but rather *the way* it should be talked about, especially in the light of such threatening moral factors as Holocaust denial and ethnical intolerance, including anti-Semitism. Discussing Alain Resnais's movie *Hiroshima, mon Amour* (1959), Cathy Caruth raises the ethical dilemma that literature needs to face, which is "the unremitting problem of *how not to betray the past* [her italics]"[815]. As Richardson notes, literature, as a conveyor of truth. is a possible, if not the best medium to comply with this task, taking particular care not to "reproduce the cultural values of the society that generated the Holocaust"[816] through excessive aesthetics.

In his novels, Adler follows this line of thought. For him, the use of literary imagination is a means by which we can confront ourselves and others with the reality of terror and power, thus preventing historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust from ever being repeated. As Peter Filkins explains:

> No "rule" had more limits of the German literary imagination than Adorno's dictum that "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric." Adler believed instead in the need to use *all* [his italics] means of confronting "the catastrophe". Amid

[813] Ibid.
[814] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[815] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 27.
[816] Richardson, p. 1.

> widespread acceptance of Adorno's stance, Adler could not go his own way without encountering scepticism of any "poetic" style that smacked of bourgeois traditionalism or an aesthetics that others felt distanced the reader from "what happened", or risked fostering the decadence and escapism that had failed to mitigate the Nazi threat in the first place.[817]

As Adler's novels prove it, literary imagination after the Holocaust might lead us to many paths, all of which, as Lang points out, are reliant on one basic direction, that is, "knowing and following the contours of what that event was, as it was and how it came to be,"[818] which reliance altogether "attests to a moral order"[819]. This moral order or moral sensibility entails a sense of responsibility, whereby the Holocaust is set in cultural memory not merely as an event in history, burdened by ideologies and didacticism, supported by historical data and inserted in chronological order, but also as part of a dialectical thinking, it becomes in our moral perception a parable on the regular existence of evil, the mechanisms of power and the nature of suffering.

Murdoch's moral vision entails strikingly similar traits to Adler's. In "The Sublime and the Good" (1959), Murdoch draws a line between the concepts of fantasy and imagination. Here, she describes fantasy as "the enemy of art, the enemy of true imagination: Love, an exercise of the imagination."[820] In "Existentialists and Mystics", she says that "[t]he novelist is *potentially the greatest truth-teller of them all* [her italics], but he is also an expert fantasy-monger."[821] For Murdoch, all artists are exposed to the dangers of self-serving fantasy,[822] and this view is consistent with Lang's notion that "a condition of Holocaust representation is the possibility of Holocaust misrepresentation - as a condition of Holocaust images is the possibility of their defacement, and a condition of Holocaust history the possibility of its denial."[823] A careful use of imagination might improve our moral vision of reality, while fantasy distorts it. This view involves both moral and wider socio-cultural implications. As Maria Antonaccio notes:

> [M]oral psychology, as Murdoch developed it, cannot simply limit itself to the examination of inner psychic processes; it must also include an analysis of the creative

[817] Filkins 2019, p. 310.
[818] Berel Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 11.
[819] Ibid.
[820] Murdoch, "The Sublime and the Good," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 216.
[821] Murdoch, "Existentialists and Mystics," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 233.
[822] This problem is a central theme in *The Black Prince*.
[823] Lang, p. 11.

> externalization of psychic processes in the socio-cultural world. It is not only *individuals*, therefore, who need to purify their moral vision, but *societies* as well. A cultural hermeneutic along Murdochian lines would serve the ends of critique by scrutinizing the imaginative processes by which human beings invest values in the socio-cultural order, and by unmasking the distortions in that process that prevent a truthful vision of reality and destroy the basis for a just and tolerant respect for other persons.[824]

Individual involvement is thus also a social involvement, as it rests on an attitude in which the individual, as an essential component of society, recognizes his or her own responsibilities and, by confronting the past, is able to purify the social and cultural morals from the blot that has fallen upon it. Assmann argues:

> Although empathy exists in every human being and is empirically apparent from the age of 18, this ability must also be culturally supported and learned, otherwise it endangers being reduced to unconditional identification with one's own group that categorically excludes empathy with others and strangers. Empathy as well as respect are human virtues that have been acquired and practiced by people in all cultures since childhood. Empathy and respect are also the grounds of human duties, which form the ground and prerequisite for a peaceful coexistence.[825]

Murdoch echoes Assmann's view when she says that "a good man may be infinitely eccentric, but he must know certain things about his surroundings, most obviously the existence of other people and their claims."[826] What thus makes Theo a rightful candidate for goodness in *The Nice and the Good*, is that, instead of manipulating Willy into breaking his silence, he identifies the moment when Willy is ready to speak about his past, and thereby occupies the moral sensitivity that allows him to see the truth behind Willy's silence and the simple fact that there is a

[824] Maria Antonaccio, "The Virtues of Metaphysics: A Review of Iris Murdoch's Philosophical Writings," in Broackes, p. 179.
[825] Aleida Assmann, *Menschenrechte und Menschenpflichten: Schlüsselbegriffe für eine humane Gesellschaft* (Wien: Picus Verlag, 2019), p. 96. My translation. Original text: "Die Fähigkeit zur Empathie ist zwar in jedem Menschen angelegt und tritt ab dem 18. Lebensmonat auch empirisch in Erscheinung, doch diese Fähigkeit muss auch kulturell unterstützt und erlernt werden, sonst läuft sie Gefahr, sich auf die bedingungslose Identifikation mit der eigenen Gruppe zu reduzieren, was Empathie mit anderen und Fremden kategorisch ausschließt. Empathie ebenso wie Respekt sind humane Tugenden,die von Menschen in allen Kulturen vom Kindesalter an erlernt und eingeübt wurden. Empathie und Respekt sind auch die Grundlage der Menschenpflichten, die die Grundlage und Voraussetzung eines friedlichen Miteinanders bilden."
[826] Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p. 349.

form of suffering, that is also the suffering of other people, which is immeasurable by any normal standards.

In terms of speech and silence, what makes the narrative technique in Willy's confession is not what it reveals for the reader but what it does not. When talking about his childhood trauma, the narrative allows the reader to look into the details of Willy's account with the use of direct speech. In contrast, when Willy confesses to Theo about his time in the concentration camp, there is a sudden shift in the narrative from direct to indirect speech that leaves the majority of his experiences locked away from the reader. We know about his betrayal of two people, but we are not informed about the reason behind it. Who were these people? How were they betrayed? What was life like in the camp during the time that Willy spent there? Murdoch here employs a narrative technique that is comparable with what Luis Buñuel does in the famous box scene of his film *Belle de jour* (1967).[827] The silence in Murdoch's narrative leads to two possible directions. One of these is unlikely as it suggests that for Murdoch, the moral implications and consequences of the Holocaust are more important, therefore they deserve much greater attention from the reader, than the events themselves. The other one is curious: since no words are capable of and are entitled to describe suffering in the camps, it should be left to the reader to fill the blank pages with the power of his or her imagination. Another movie, the Oscar-winning *Son of Saul*, where the cinematography "stays glued to the protagonist in all but a handful of shots, while almost blocking out almost everything else,"[828] leaving the audience to rely merely on the suggestions of the sound "to imagine the whole, horrible picture."[829] Murdoch's narrative does something similar. We, as witnesses to Willy's confession, are glued to Theo's character who is half-listening while committing the mercy killing of a dying seagull, and in that way, get introduced to what goodness involves for Murdoch. As the narrative goes:

> Theo got up and went into Willy's little kitchen. He thought, what is the point here, what is the point. What can I say to him. That one must soon forget one's sins in the claims of others. But how to forget. The point is that nothing matters except

[827] Roger Ebert wrote in his review of Buñuel's movie: "The most famous single scene - one those who have seen it refer to again and again -- involves something we do not see and do not even understand. A client has a small lacquered box. He opens it and shows its contents to one of the other girls, and then to Severine. We never learn what is in the box. A soft buzzing noise comes from it. The first girl refuses to do whatever the client has in mind. So does Severine, but the movie cuts in an enigmatic way, and a later scene leaves the possibility that something happened." Roger Ebert, "*Belle de jour*." Available: https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-belle-de-jour-1967. Access: 02.11.2019.
[828] Boyd van Hoei, "'Son of Saul' ('Saul Fia'): Cannes Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 May 2015. Available: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/son-saul-saul-fia-cannes-795688. Access: 03.11.2019.
[829] Ibid.

> loving what is good. Not to look at evil but to look at good. Only this contemplation breaks the tyranny of the past, breaks the adherence of evil to the personality, breaks, in the end, the personality itself. In the light of the good, evil can be seen in its place, not owned, just existing, in its place. Could he explain all this to Willy? He would have to try.[830]

Here is a revealing confusion in Murdoch's thought regarding the Holocaust. She proposes forgetting as a preliminary for forgiving and reconciliation, an act to turn our attention away from the evil of the world to the good. As research of the Holocaust has proved, the idea of forgetting involves the potentiality that such horrific events may be repeated in history, therefore Murdoch's idea is disputable. Thus, forgetting about the past and turning toward the good for Murdoch is rather an ethical issue that is on par with overcoming guilt and seeking for redemption that is for her the ultimate issue of post-war civilisation.

Murdoch's thinking about the evil in politics in the 20th century is thus rather a moral issue that deals with the ideas of good and evil, the evil of our times and the goodness that turns our attention away from the evil. These ideas depart significantly from those of such political thinkers like Arendt or Aleida Assmann and turn back to the notions of Simone Weil. Weil says in *Gravity and Grace* (1947) that "[a]s soon as we do evil, the evil appears as a sort of duty […] The innocent victim who suffers knows the truth about his executioner, the executioner does not know it."[831] Murdoch echoes Weil's words in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, talking about ordinary people serving as guards in concentration camps, "evil as a job to be carried on […] evil as a duty."[832] Frances White argues that such obedience to evil constitute a basic dilemma for Murdoch's thinking, i.e. that "good and evil might prove not to be distinct."[833] As White suggests, since "[t]hinking and writing are not neutral activities, they are potentially dangerous"[834] and, as such, "[t]hey can lead to permitting murder and genocide,"[835] there is a responsibility of imagination that each writer should deal with. This task is not an easy one and, as White claims, it was a fundamental struggle that preoccupied Murdoch. At this point, White raises the questions: "Should the stories be never-endingly re-told, the terrible memories be kept alive? Should forgetfulness prevail, and maybe bring in its train, forgiveness?"[836] The

[830] Murdoch 2000b, p. 344.
[831] Weil 1999, pp. 71-72.
[832] Murdoch 2003, p. 120.
[833] White 2010a, p. 135.
[834] Ibid., p. 136.
[835] Ibid.
[836] Ibid.

problem with such questions is that, although they represent the dilemma of how to deal with evil and evil-doers in our societies, it ultimately does not respond to the perpetrator narratives, i.e. the efforts made in Germany and Europe, to safeguard a peaceful way of living together by looking deep into our family histories and to recognize responsibilities by facing the past. In *Über sociale Differenzierung* (1890), Georg Simmel emphasizes the task of collective responsibility for generations when he writes:

> [A]ny forms of inheritance that places a seed of sin in us is not given from eternity, but its origin must be rooted in the behaviour of a predecessor. And even if the majority of the threads by which the action of the individual is guided have been initiated by previous generations, generations are also emerging from the current ones, which will also be influenced by future generations; and the responsibility for these must be all the more deeply emphasized, the more we are convinced by the fact that no action remains without its consequences within the social cosmos, and that individual immorality continues to have an effect up to a thousandth member.[837]

The social need that stems from Simmel's argument foregrounds collective responsibility, which has gained a peculiar importance for the post-war German generations. As Assmann points out, only by a social responsibility and a collective coming to terms with the past that involves a dialogical discussion of victim and perpetrator narratives, is a common European framework based on cooperation and solidarity, possible. As the German example of the post-1978 generation shows, responsibility implicates the realization that is poignantly described in Rachel Seiffert's *The Dark Room*, that "[w]e did this, it wasn't done to us"[838] In other words, forgiveness is only possible where a collective commemoration prevails.

A possible explanation for Murdoch's treatment of the concepts of forgiveness and forgetting is the period in which *The Nice and the Good* was written. As Aleida Assmann explains it,

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[837] Georg Simmel, *Aufsätze 1887-1890*; *Über sociale Differencierung*; *Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (1892)*: *Gesamtausgabe Band 2* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1989), p. 159. My translaion. Original text: "[J]ede Vererbung, die ein Keim eines Lasters in uns liegt, ist doch nicht von Ewigkeit her vorhanden, sondern muß ihren Ursprung in irgend einem primären Verhalten eines Vorfahren haben. Und wenn nun auch die Mehrzahl der Fäden, von denen das Handeln des Individuums geleitet wird, von früheren Generationen her angesponnen sei, so gehen doch auch von ihm wiederum neue aus, die die künftigen Geschlechter mitbestimmen; und die Verantwortung für diese müsse gerade um so schärfer betont warden, je tiefer man davon durchdrugnen sei, daß keine That innerhalb des socialen Kosmos folgenlos bleibe, daß die Wirkung einer individuellen Unsittlichkeit sich bis ins tausendte Glied geltend mache."

[838] Rachel Seiffert, *The Dark Room* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 289.

the 1950s and 1960s were an age where the concept of the "dialogical forgetting" reigned. Assmann says:

> The society of the 1950s and early 1960s is characterized by what was then called "coming to terms with the past" and what is today called a policy of the dividing line. From the German perspective, the past in the 1950s and 1960s was the equivalent of a debt to be dealt with through various measures such as reparation, diplomatic relations with Israel, the Action of Reconciliation and other activities in the hope that the problem could be eliminated or at least left behind. At that time, forgetting was not automatically equated, as we do today, with "repressing", but, in the context of the then generally compulsory improvement in thinking about progress and modernisation, with "renewal" and an opening in favour of the future. One hoped positive change and renewal from the future, that was the central premise of modernisation theory, which was shared in the West and the East after 1945 as a compulsory value orientation of all European countries.[839]

Thus, I may suggest that, however ground-breaking Murdoch's notions are, they reflect a public thinking of an era where forgetting, rather than remembering, seemed to be an adequate preliminary for coming to terms with the past and looking forward with hopeful eyes. Thus, although Murdoch finds great inspiration in both Canetti and Steiner, and her thoughts have immense intertextual connections with Adler's, her notion about how to make sense of the past deviates significantly from theirs at this point. While Steiner, Canetti and Adler encourage a constant awareness of the past to prevent its errors to happen again, Murdoch promotes forgetting and forward-looking as preliminaries for reconciliation and forgiveness. This forward-looking is articulated by the legal advisor John Ducane after he rescues Mary's son Pierce, himself and Pierce's dog Mingo from a cave: "[I]f I ever get out of here I will be no man's

[839] Assmann 2016, pp. 185-186. My translation. Original text: "Die gesellschaft der 1950er und frühen 1960er Jahre ist durch das charakterisiert, was man damals 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' genannt hat und heute eine Politik des Schlusstrichs nennt. Aus deutscher Perspektive war Vergangenheit in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren glichbedeutend mit einer Schuld, die durch unterschiedliche Maßnahmen, wie Wiedergutmachung, diplomatischer Beziehungen zu Israel, die Aktion Sühnezeichen und andere Aktivitäten zu bearbeiten war, in der Hoffnung und Erwartung, sie damit aus der Welt zu schaffen oder wenigstens hinter sich zu bringen. Vergessen wurde damals nicht automatisch, wie wir das heute tun, mit 'Verdrängen' gleichgesetzt, sondern - im Rahmen des damals allgemein verbindlichen Fortschritts- und Modernisierungsdenkens - mit 'Erneuerung' und einer Öffnung zugunsten de Zukunft. Von der Zukunft erhoffte man sich positive Veränderung und Erneuerung, das war die zentrale Wert-Prämisse der Modernisierungstheorie, die nach 1945 in West und Ost als verbindliche Wertorientierung von allen Ländern Europas geteilt wurde."

judge. To love and to reconcile and to forgive, only this matters. All power is sin and all law is frailty. Forgiveness, reconciliation, not law."[840]

Such recognition might explain the novel's optimistic ending: Mary becomes engaged with John Ducane, the lovesick Jennifer Bird pursues Willy, Richard and Paula make amends, and Theo decides to devote his life for Buddhism. In other words, like in a Shakespeare comedy, old wounds heal, new romances bloom, and this is one of the reasons why Peter J. Conradi calls the novel "a Song of Innocence, restoring fertility to the wasteland,"[841] "a summer's tale"[842]. Nevertheless, the novel is an impressive conveyor for Murdoch's ideas on which direction post-war morality should take: to achieve solidarity in a common European society, we need to see goodness and attention as our highest moral standards within which reconciliation and forgiveness can take place. One of her closing thoughts in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is:

> [T]here appears to be an internal relation between truth and goodness and knowledge. I have argued in this sense from cases of art and skill and ordinary work and ordinary moral discernment, where we establish truth and reality by an insight which is the exercise of virtue. Perhaps *that* [her italics] is the beginning, which is also our deepest closest ordinary experience.[843]

To conclude, I may argue that *The Nice and the Good* is a novel of its time that altogether forecasts the direction memory culture in fiction would take after the 1970s. Her proposal of forgetting as essential for reconciliation and forgiveness clearly represents the general thought on "the policy of the dividing line" that Assmann calls the "dialogical forgetting" of the 1960s. Yet, the fact that already in her early novels, Murdoch discusses the moral implications of the Holocaust and the moral responsibilities of post-war civilisation to prevent genocide, shows her ceaseless interest in it as an intellectual and as a person having intimate relationships with Franz Baermann Steiner and Elias Canetti. In this respect, some aspects of the detailed meditation on the Holocaust that is a central theme in two of her later novels, *The Message to the Planet* and *Jackson's Dilemma*, as well as her discussion of remorse and forgiveness in *The Good Apprentice*, can already be found in *The Nice and the Good*. What makes Murdoch's vision unique is her endeavour to draw up characters in complex moral situations, and to examine the social and

[840] Murdoch 2000b, p. 305.
[841] Conradi 2001b, p. 179.
[842] Ibid., p. 180.
[843] Murdoch 2003, p. 511.

political problems of the 20th century that touched upon the people of the time. Her use of loving attention in her philosophy and her novels reveal a thinker's awareness of tolerance and human rights, both of which are core concepts of the European Union. In doing so, she creates a moral psychology that demands from each individual a responsible action for a peaceful and respectful cohabitation.

Conclusion

Iris Murdoch wrote to her friend, the Austrian refugee painter Harry Weinberger that "I remember seeing pictures of figures that gave us, I think, that sense of menace which you can put in your work."[844] Anne Rowe suggests that the menace that characterises a group of Weinberger's paintings, "icons, images, mythical figures, gods portrayed with mystical fervor, his images are alive, are majestic presences vividly emerging from a seething darkness: Akhenaton, Punch, jokers, gods,"[845] are all images of the human psyche tormented by the demons of the past, pictures that appear in a similar manner in Murdoch's later novels preoccupied with the effects of the Holocaust. In the same place, Rowe points to the unique and merely intellectual relationship between Murdoch and Weinberger, claiming that the letters she wrote to him "are quite different in tone and content to those she wrote to men with whom she was sexually involved. Weinberger's life experiences, his life as a painter, and his theories about art forged this friendship."[846] Murdoch's relationship with Weinberger, which Rowe calls the meeting of two "kindred spirits"[847], can remind one of her encounters with Steiner, Canetti and Adler. Added to her experiences in the refugee camps in Europe during the war, these encounters influenced her and widened her horizon of thinking about human nature and human suffering.

Accordingly, in the first chapter, I discussed extensively the questions of traumatised minority identity, the lived experiences of displacement and the role of language and literature in the processing of the Holocaust. In this chapter, I attempted to establish a theoretical framework for the topic of the dissertation, clarifying the main conceptual and aesthetic issues in Steiner, Adler, and Canetti, which I would later discuss in Murdoch's novels. In addition, in this chapter I wanted to explain why it might be essential to compare the works of these authors with Murdoch's novels, how they relate to one another, and how they contributed to what we call today processing and memory culture. As I stated it in the introduction, a great number of scholarly works have been published on the personal and intellectual relationship between Murdoch and Canetti. In this respect, a major challenge of this dissertation was to examine Canetti's works not only in their own right, but in a comparative analysis with those of Steiner and Adler. Such

[844] Anne Rowe, "'Near the Gods': Iris Murdoch and the Painter Harry Weinberger," in Mark Luprecht ed., *Iris Murdoch Connected* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2014), p. 66.
[845] "Iris Murdoch's commentary in the exhibition catalogue for one of Harry Weinberger's exhibitions at the Ducane Campbell Gallery, 1988 and 1994," cited by Rowe 2014, p. 66.
[846] Ibid., p. 59.
[847] Ibid.

an analysis is also necessary because, as I have pointed out several times in the first chapter, these authors were in constant dialogue with each other, reading and reflecting on each other's works, and transferring certain elements from one another at a conceptual, a content and a symbolic level. I tried to position Murdoch's early ideas in this circle, explaining how the concepts and theories of Canetti, Adler and Steiner served as a bedrock for her as a novelist in the making.

In the second chapter, I discussed how the issues of identity, rootlessness, and the pursuit of new ways in post-war English fiction established the bases for Murdoch's *Under the Net* and *A Severed Head*. Here, I clarified the concept of cultural transfer, which created new perspectives on reality, identity and the moral responsibility of the individual in these works. Through the protagonists of the novels, I interpreted how views of masculinity, of man, had changed through the traumatic experience of war. An interesting feature of both novels is that, although they undeniably look forward, they also give tribute to Murdoch's dead loves, most notably to Steiner, whose name and scholarly significance is palpable in them. Moreover, I attempted to find answers the question of what comparison can be made between the concepts of power as they appear in Steiner, Canetti, and Adler and the way they are represented in these novels.

In the third chapter, I addressed the issues of displacement and the refugee crisis in Murdoch's *The Flight from the Enchanter*. The chapter identified the two types of displaced characters, the survivor who exists without any conscience, and who needs to pass his own traumas onto others in order to triumph and the nameless victim who lives in a constant fear and guilt for his or her outliving of others. Here, I discussed how Murdoch uses Canetti's theory on the transference of power, as well as how the crisis that unfolds in this novel mirrors the contemporary socio-political issue concerning refugees. I argued that this novel is Murdoch's most outspokenly political one that reflects not only the crisis of its time, voicing her disappointment that the liberation after the war resulted in yet another totalitarianism, but also the general Western attitude that lacks any attention toward suffering and tolerance to the displaced persons, a view that was generated both by her time as a U.N.R.R.A., and also by her relationship to the three authors discussed.

In the fourth chapter, I examined the way trauma and memory is present in *The Italian Girl*. In this part, I identified the Gothic as a suitable genre for Murdoch to represent the themes of bereavement and the dialectic relations between the past and the present, whereby the horror of the scene is constituted by the past's harbouring spirit that affects the characters' actions and relations to one another. Here, I focused especially on the novel's Russian Jewish twins who personalise the two endpoints of survival: the survival technique that requires the rejection of identity, the integration to a foreign society, and, with it, the obscuration of the traumatic

experiences, as well as the intergenerational suffering of traumatic memories that is not one's own. In doing so, I positioned Murdoch's theory of survival in the intersections of the notions of Canetti (the surviving tyrant), Steiner (survival and suffering) and Adler (survival as a task) and tried to explain how it serves as a response to them.

In the final chapter, I sought to place Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good* in the theories about reconciliation and forgiveness in memory culture. Firstly, I recognised Murdoch's views as Western Christian in their dealing with the concept of attention that by and large deviate from what Judaism approaches it. It proved to be important to highlight, since on this point Murdoch's notion about suffering differs from what Judaism takes it to be: while for Judaism, man has to be a sufferer for his sin against God, and attention and servitude should be paid to God, for her, a loving attention should be provided for the world that the sufferer inhabits. In *The Nice and the Good*, I examined how this form of attention might be employed in the course of reconciliation. I also drew attention to Murdoch's use of the concept of forgetting as a precondition to forgiving, discussing how this approach in her novel mirrors the general view of the 1960s that was characterised by a "dialogical forgetting". Furthermore, I discussed how memory culture has progressed ever since and places "dialogical memory", i.e. beside the victim narratives, concentrating also on the narratives of the perpetrators, and thereby striving toward a collective European cooperation.

Rereading these chapters, I am convinced that not only the three authors discussed in the thesis, but through them, the entire Central European Jewish world, had a great impact on Murdoch as a writer and a thinker. I consider this important to emphasise in several respects. Firstly, they represented the European culture that had brought up Franz Kafka and Max Brod, who laid in their works the foundations of what today is called "minority literature" or "the literature of the displaced". These figures were also the expulsed ones of a mad and inhuman world, who recorded their own lived experience and that of the Jewish people in their scholarly and literary works, extending them to the moral and political crisis of the European civilisation. Moreover, their efforts brought to light the crisis in the post-war cultural, political and social life, which altogether called for a reassessment of the relationship between the individual and society, the moral life and moral and social responsibility of the individual. For both literature and visual culture, philosophy, and social anthropology and social theory, experimenting with new forms and breaking new paths involved the foundation of a new wave of representing reality. These processes took place in different steps and at different stages, as well as in different social and political dimensions in Europe and the United Kingdom. The works of Steiner, Canetti and Adler, along with Murdoch's novels and philosophy, are embedded in these waves and currents,

therefore it was necessary to examine their legacies in the 20th social and cultural context that laid the foundations of the contemporary European memory culture.

As I explained, this collective remembrance could not have been established, or perhaps only with in a different form and manner, without the cultural transfer that involved a kind of intellectual reciprocity between the English intellectual élite and the Central European Jewish refugees carrying their entire cultural *Geist* with them during and after the war. There is evidence for this form of cultural mobility and reciprocity even in the 1970s. Besides Weinberger, we should also take note of the Romanian painter and a survivor of the Holocaust in Transnistria, Moldova, Arnold Daghani, who emigrated to England in 1977, and whose English journal *The Grave is in the Cherry Orchard* (1961) and his images about the human condition in the camps, both made during his time as a prisoner, are perfect imprints of not only the horror of the Holocaust, but also of the identity that might be linguistically and ethnically alienated from society, but that might also be positioned in new contexts and narratives by language and artistic imagination.[848] The formal limits of the dissertation and the effective implementation of its topic do not allow me to expand further on this phenomenon. It should be emphasised, however, that the Central European artists coming to England during and after the war invigorated the English fiction with their implication of "the relationship between how art is taught and practiced and the resulting failures in society as a whole."[849]

Social responsibility, the question of morals and the various social and individual mechanisms that result in the total oppression of complete populations are central to Steiner, Canetti and Adler, and these issues constitute many of the ethical bases for Murdoch's fiction. In the chapters of this dissertation, I wished to explore the problems of minority self-awareness resulting from social exile, the trauma of the Holocaust and the social and ethical issues of making sense of the past in the works under discussion. In doing so, I aimed at putting these works into dialogue with each other and with other theories about the Holocaust and memory culture.

What I find here essential to suggest was that Murdoch's ideas, however old fashioned they might be by today's standards, paved the way for English fiction to focus more elaborately on the human condition that was highly impacted by the memories of the war and the Holocaust. Such a recognition might be more efficient, if we take into consideration the work and the lived experiences of those who suffered and survived during that period, in this case Steiner, Canetti and Adler, examining how they transformed the way we think about the past, and providing

[848] Deborah Schultz and Edward Timms eds., *Arnold Daghani's Memories of Mikhailowka: The Illustrated Diary of a Slave Labour Camp Survivor* (London, Vallentine Mithell, 2009).
[849] Rowe 2014, p. 59.

possible answers for the questions of how they might contribute to the achievement of a European society that is based on tolerance, respect and solidarity.

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