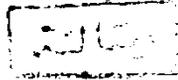


**Man-Woman Relationship In Some
of The Novels of
Iris Murdoch and Kingsley Amis**



Thesis

Submitted to Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University
In Fulfilment of The Requirements
For The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

823
M.A

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5/10/15
✓

1995



Acknowledgements

*I am extremely indebted to **Prof. Ikhlas Azmy** for her indispensable role in guiding, sustaining and promoting my efforts in this study. I wish to express my feeling of obligation for her valuable advice and enriching observations. She never failed to respond to the demands I have repeatedly made on her time and patience. Her recommendations constituted the guidelines of this thesis, and her profound comments and suggestions have been conducive to the integrity of this study.*

Special thanks are also due to the members of the Van Pelt Library of the University of Pennsylvania whose assistance contributed to the accomplishment of the work.



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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and editions have been used:

NOVELS

1. Murdoch, Iris.

- SH** A Severed Head. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963.
IG The Italian Girl. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964.
BP The Black Prince. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
WC A Word Child. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
SS The Sea, The Sea. New York: The Viking Press, 1978.

2. Amis, Kingsley.

- LJ** Lucky Jim. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.
Un F That Uncertain Feeling. London: Gollancz, 1973.
TGLY Take A Girl Like You. New York: Harcourt, 1982.
G Girl, 20. London: Summit Books, 1989.
SW Stanley and the Women. Harmondsworth: Penguin,
1985.

Preface

Iris Murdoch (1919-) was born of Anglo-Irish parents in Dublin. She was brought up in London, in Hammersmith and Chiswick. She returned to Ireland during childhood for holidays. Her early education was at the Froebel Education Institute in London and at the progressive Badminton School in Bristol. From 1938 until 1942, she read 'Classical Moderations and Greats' at Somerville College in Oxford. She also worked on ancient history and philosophy. Desirous of serving in those pressing times, she worked as Assistant Principal in the Treasury from 1942 until 1944, when she became an Administrative Officer with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, working with refugees in London, Belgium and Austria 1944-1946.

After the war, Murdoch decided to study philosophy. She could not accept a proffered scholarship in the United States in 1946 since a student membership in the Communist Party prevented her getting a visa. However, she received the Sarah Smithon Studentship in philosophy, Newnham College, Cambridge 1947-1948. She was named Fellow at St. Anne's College, Oxford in 1948 and was named Honourable Fellow in 1963. She was lecturer at the Royal College of Art 1963-1967. In 1956 she married Mr. John Bayley, Fellow of New College, Oxford, a novelist and a poet who is known primarily as a literary critic.

In addition to her novels and her study of Jean-Paul Sartre, Murdoch published two papers on philosophy in the area of her speciality, moral philosophy. She also published a series of less specialized essays, largely about an area in which aesthetics overlaps with urgent moral and political concerns in a very broad sense. Though Murdoch had subsequently found it impossible to continue with a regular teaching post, she remained closely in contact with the academic world, undertaking lecture tours, publishing philosophical work and participating in the British intellectual scene. Meanwhile, Murdoch's novels won many prizes and her reputation became international. In 1961 it was already being noted that, at the height of the cold war, she was one of the few contemporary British novelists widely read in the Soviet Union. More than three quarters of her fiction is translated into French, Spanish, Swedish, Japanese and Arabic. Murdoch is now an internationally known novelist.

Kingsley Amis (1922-) was brought up in Norbury, south-west London. His father was an export clerk for Colman's Mustard. He went to Marlborough College in Wiltshire and to St. John's College, in Oxford to read English and there he met Philip Larkin. Amis had wanted to be a writer from the age of ten, but he shared Larkin's reticence on the matter. They were supposed to join the armed forces and this engendered a certain seriousness about their attitude towards life.

In 1942, while most of his contemporaries including Larkin, proved unfit for service, Amis was called up and served for three years with the Royal Corps of Signals. He was out of danger but it was a good experience which reinforced his seriousness about life and his future career as a novelist. In 1945 he returned to

Oxford and took another four years to complete his first-class degree in English. By 1949 the job problem was looming. He was married then to Hilary Bardwell and he had two children, Philip and Martin. He decided on teaching as the only thing he could possibly do and aspired to a quiet country school where he could get on with his writing. However, at the suggestion of an Oxford contemporary John Wain, he opted for university lecturing. This was a rare calling in those days before the expansion of higher education.

Later, he visited Leicester University where Larkin had become a librarian. It was a Saturday morning and Larkin had some work to do, so he left Amis in the common room and he watched the lecturers as they moved about. They were a new breed to Amis, provincial academics with new orders, rituals and anxieties and it gave him an idea. Then he took a job at University College, Swansea, and settled down to teaching and writing his second novel, materializing the idea he had in the common room of Leicester University. Lucky Jim, which deals with a young assistant lecturer in a provincial university established his fame as a writer.

By 1961, Amis had published many novels and became established as a leading literary figure representative of the new realism of the 1950s. In 1963 his life was turned upside down. His father died and he separated from his wife and children. He left his job to write full time and went to live in London with novelist Elizabeth Jane Howard. Meanwhile, the mainstream novels continued to flow steadily together with poetry and some nonfictional work.

The thesis aims at establishing a correspondence between Murdoch and Amis, highlighting points of agreement and difference on the basis of their interest in the tragic human and social situation which afflicted both man and woman during the post war years. As members of the 'Angry Young Men' group and advocates of the Left Wing, they are obsessed with the vacuity of peoples' life and how human beings accordingly behave towards each other. In an age of cynicism and restlessness, people take nothing for granted. Men and women are confused and there is no steady and consistent framework to inform their contacts. Both Murdoch and Amis are aware of the contradictions, inconsistencies and sense of otherness in man-woman relationship and try to enlighten their readers about the intricacies of this situation.

The thesis tackles five novels for each: A Severed Head (1961), The Italian Girl (1964), The Black Prince (1973), A Word Child (1975) and The Sea, The Sea (1978), written by Murdoch. Lucky Jim (1954), That Uncertain Feeling (1955), Take A Girl Like You (1960), Girl, 20 (1970), and Stanley and The Women (1984) written by Amis.

The thesis consists of a preface, an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The preface gives a brief biographical account of Iris Murdoch and Kingsley Amis. The introduction, Society, People and The Artist tackles the social and intellectual background of the twentieth-century novel. The chapter aims at placing Murdoch and Amis amongst their contemporaries in the literary world. They are both concerned with presenting intensified aspects of contemporary reality and the

great effect of World War II on society and art. People experienced changes in the political, social and economic life. Thus, art has new difficulties, new functions and new fields to explore.

Chapter one Love and Marriage investigates the concept of love and marriage as embodied in the works of both writers. In Murdoch the relationship of opposite sexes manifests an endless unresolved struggle to communicate with each other on a sound and satisfactory basis in the hope of transcending the inner schism. Unfortunately, they are unable to reach the ultimate aim of self-fulfilment. The protagonists' intimate interchanges with the opposite sex intensify their internal split between the self and the world. Often, the marital bond exercises pressures on both partners resulting in their mutual alienation from each other. Murdoch uses love to point out not the permanence but the transience of human passion. A volatile confrontation explains man-woman emotional interactions. Passion functions in a way that reveals its helplessness and powerlessness in determining events. The prevalent atmosphere of worry, anxiety, alienation and boredom aggravate the pressures on modern people. In Amis, the plight of man-woman relationship is closely knit to the theme of class consciousness and the awareness of the psychological unbridgeable gap between the different classes in society.

Chapter two The Artist and The Professional reveals how the artist and the professional occupy a privileged position in the narratives of Murdoch and Amis. Through their interaction with the opposite sex, the artist and the professional explore the predicament of the modern man in its intensity. In Murdoch and Amis the artist's rich and responsive consciousness struggles towards the acceptance of

the upper society. The interaction of the protagonists as professionals reveals the hostility, deceit and social intimidations.

Chapter three Ways and Means deals with Murdoch and Amis' technical achievement and the different devices they use to convey their ideas, beliefs and convictions. The narrative perspective, comic vision and variety of tools which Murdoch and Amis employ help the reader understand the contemporary condition. The novels under consideration are critical of the egoistical protagonists and the price they pay for their self-centred follies. Comedy in Murdoch and Amis arises from the character's inability to adapt. In both Murdoch and Amis the hero's need to fantasize reflects his desire to expand and create his version of reality. There is an implicit amount of humour in both writers' examination of various matters, especially human follies.

The conclusion is an evaluation of the main points examined throughout the thesis in the hope of giving an accurate picture of the two writers' view concerning the modern situation and the dilemma of modern people.

Introduction

Society, People and The Artist

The period between the first and second world wars was one brimming with social and economic problems. As early as the 1920s, unemployment soared and was not finally reduced until twenty years later. Alan Sinfield writes,

... social and welfare services remained woefully inadequate and were subjected to degrading conditions of eligibility such as ... the rigorous application of the 'genuinely seeking work' clause; and the gap between rich and poor remained as wide and as visible as it had been in the nineteenth century (13)

Mass unemployment, sharp class antagonism and wide-spread poverty represented the daunting problems of the inter-war years.

The 1939-45 war was often referred to as the first people's war in the sense that the battlefield comprised the conscripted armies and caused the death of millions of innocent civilians and the misery of many families. Ordinary men and women who enlisted in the armed forces as well as those who did not participate directly in the war, suffered the agony and anguish of the continued bombing of the towns and cities. An overwhelming feeling of misery and frustration prevailed in Britain in the early 1940s. It resulted in the dire need for a new start.

Social problems were given a priority in the concerns of the government. Committees were set to explore and investigate various possible ways to improve the deteriorating conditions. They sought to overcome the main causes of poverty. They attempted to insure everyone against unemployment and sickness. They aspired to recommend a new free system of compulsory secondary education which aimed to guarantee the suitable education for all children. Sinfield writes that they "suggested a new scheme of comprehensive land-use planning, designed to prevent speculative profit-making during the post-war reconstruction and to ensure public control over proposed building developments" (14). There was a serious attempt on part of the government to help people settle down and control the chaos which prevailed.

There was a great enthusiasm for change. With an optimistic outlook, the Labour Party was given the reign to effect the sought-for improvements. Alan Sinfield states that the new Labour Government laid "the basis for free and universal national health, social security and education system as part of the welfare of the state" (14). It guaranteed free elementary education to children up till the age of fourteen. Secondary education was restricted to those who could afford to pay for it. However, they provided financial assistance in the form of scholarships for those who could not afford to pursue school education. Often, a considerable financial burden fell on the parents of working-class children. University education was almost exclusively a privilege enjoyed by the middle and upper-classes. The Education Act of 1944 was intended to remedy this exclusiveness. Sinfield explains the change which the Education Act effected; "It raised the minimum school-leaving age to fifteen and instituted a "two-tier" system of

free secondary education consisting of "Grammar Schools" and "Secondary Modern Schools" (23).

In the 1950s, the Education Act did achieve its aim of broadening the university intake to include more working-class students, with the intention of helping them, Philip Gardner writes,

to assimilate, and be assimilated by the culture of the higher classes by whom the universities had been dominated; but the process—since the attitudes of society change less quickly than administrative fiat might wish—gave rise to a significant number of deracinated and disoriented young men, no longer at home in their working-or lower-middle-class attitudes and environments, but at the same time not feeling accepted by the social system into which their education appeared to be pushing them (24).

These young men, seething with uncertainty, envy and resentment struggled to establish for themselves a place in that world to which they could have a sense of belonging. Gardner adds that there was "an attempt on their part to change social patterns so that working-class attitudes and the possession of a university degree would no longer appear incompatible (24)."

During this period, the government laid the foundations for many nationalized industries such as coal, iron and steel, gas and electricity, all of which were crucial to the future economic revitalization. However, the optimistic mood did not last for a